



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** Mindless human development has only exacerbated negative impacts on ecologically vulnerable regions of the Western Ghats. In the light of the statement discuss the measures needed to conserve the fragile ecosystem. (250 Words)

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### Approach

- Start with the relationship with development and environment.
- Discuss the threats to the Western Ghats caused by mindless human development.
- Also discuss the measures needed to conserve the fragile ecosystem.
- Conclude suitably.

### Introduction

There is an established close relationship between development and the environment. Development cannot be done without environmental resources. Therefore, the disruption of resources has negative repercussions on the development process itself and the violation of the objective of holistic development..

### Body

#### Threats to Western Ghats

- **Developmental Pressures:** Urbanisation together with agricultural expansion and livestock grazing are posing serious threats to the region.
  - About 50 million people are estimated to live in the Western Ghats Region, resulting in developmental pressures that are orders of magnitude greater than many protected areas around the world.
- **Biodiversity Relates Issues:** Forest loss, habitat fragmentation, habitat degradation by invasive plant species, encroachment and conversion also continue to affect the Ghats.
  - Fragmentation caused by development pressure in the Western Ghats is shrinking the availability of wildlife corridors and suitable habitats outside Protected Areas.
- **Climate Change:** In the intermediate years, the climate crisis has gained momentum:
  - Landslides and flash floods ravaged the ghat areas of Konkan in 2021
  - Cyclones are also gaining intensity with the warming of the Arabian Sea leaving the west coast especially vulnerable.
- **Threats from Industrialisation:** More polluting industries, quarries and mines, roads, and townships are likely to be planned due to the absence of the Western Ghats ESA policy.
  - This implies more damage to the fragile landscape of the region in future.

#### Measures to be taken-

- **Preventive Approach:** Considering the changes in climate, which would affect the livelihood of all people and hurt the nation's economy, it is prudent to conserve the fragile ecosystems.
  - This will cost less compared to the situation prone to calamities than spending money /resources for restoration / rejuvenation.
  - Thus, any further delay in the implementation will only accentuate degrading of the most prized natural resource of the country.
- **Engaging With All Stakeholders:** A proper analysis based on scientific study followed by consensus among various stakeholders by addressing respective concerns is required urgently.
- **Addressing the Concerns of Local People:** Arguments go that the idea of demarcating an ecologically sensitive area(ESA) is inherently against people and their developmental aspirations.
  - The issue can be discussed through detailed public consultations so that the policy is not seen to have a top-down approach.
- **Role of State Governments:** The states must recognise the dangers of destroying the ecosystem, especially when India has been facing the brunt of the climate crisis.
  - They must realise that the climate crisis is a reality, and instead of delaying the decision-making process, devise more decisive climate-proofing actions to save the valuable Western Ghats.
- **Empowering Local Communities:** The various committees emphasised that it is the people at the grassroot level who have the knowledge and are tied to the environment should have the motivation to safeguard the region.
  - The way forward lies in the pursuit of genuine democratic decentralisation and empowering local communities in villages and cities.

## Conclusion

There are no two views on protecting the Western Ghats, but also, there is a need to strike a balance between safeguarding the forests and the right to livelihood of the local people.

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