



Uttarakhand Lifts Restrictions on Char Dham Tourists | Uttarakhand | 20 Aug 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the Uttarakhand government decided that there will be no limit on the number of pilgrims visiting the [Char dhams](#), despite multiple [landslides](#) that have blocked the route for pilgrims.

- The yatra starts in May and continues till the first week of September every year.

Key Points

- The state government has set a **daily limit of 12,000 pilgrims for the dhams, but in 2018, a Supreme Court-appointed committee recommended a limit of 5,000 pilgrims per day for Kedarnath.**
- At a **2023 investor summit**, the state government reported that the **tourism sector contributes 15% to the state's [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#).**
 - They also outlined plans to attract investments totaling Rs 20,000 crore and initiate 200 projects through the **[Public-Private Partnership \(PPP\) model](#) by 2030.**

Char Dham Yatra

- **Yamunotri Dham:**
 - **Location:** Uttarkashi district.
 - **Dedicated to:** Goddess Yamuna.
 - River Yamuna is the second-most sacred river in India after River Ganga.
 - **Gangotri Dham:**
 - **Location:** Uttarkashi district.
 - **Dedicated to:** Goddess Ganga.
 - Considered the most sacred of all Indian rivers.
 - **Kedarnath Dham:**
 - **Location:** Rudraprayag district.
 - **Dedicated to:** Lord Shiva.
 - Situated on the bank of the Mandakini River.
 - One of the 12 Jyotirlingas (divine representations of Lord Shiva) in India.
 - **Badrinath Dham:**
 - **Location:** Chamoli district.
 - Home to the sacred Badrinarayan Temple.
 - **Dedicated to:** Lord Vishnu.
 - One of the holy shrines for Vaishnavites.
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Gross Environment Product Index | Uttarakhand | 20 Aug 2024

Why in News?

Uttarakhand has become the first Indian state to launch a **Gross Environment Product Index**.

Key Points

- The **Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation** is the creator of the Gross Environment Product Index.
- There are **four pillars of the Gross Environment Product Index**: air, soil, tree and water.
 - The formula is, **GEP index = (Air-GEP index + Water-GEP index + Soil-GEP index + Forest-GEP index)**.
- **Significance**:
 - It helps in assessing the **impact of anthropological pressure** on our ecosystem and natural resources.
 - It provides a **robust and integrated method for assessing a state's ecological growth**, capturing various facets of environmental well-being as a result of human actions.
- **Recommendation**:
 - Activities should be **prohibited; regulated and promoted**.
 - Regulated activities should be allowed only as per carrying capacity and **environmental impact assessment**.

Himalayan Environmental Studies and Conservation Organisation

- It is a **Non-governmental Organisations**, formed in **1979**.
- Its **aims** are:
 - Resource based **ecological and economical development of Himalayan community**.
 - Building and empowering community organisation for **socio economical independence**.

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

EIA is a study conducted in the early stages of development project planning to predict and address potential environmental impacts



- Statutory Status:** Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 (Made EIA mandatory)
- Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)
- Project Categorisation:** EIA Notification of 2006 categorised the developmental projects in:
 - Category A Project:** Needed prior Environmental Clearance (EC) from MoEF&CC
 - Category B Project:** Needed prior EC from State/UT Govt.
 - Category B1 projects** (Mandatorily requires EIA)
 - Category B2 projects** (Do not require EIA)

There are 39 categories of projects that require an EC process and are subject to EIA

EIA Process as per EIA Notification, 2006

Step	Objective	Carried Out By
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need of EIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Expert Appraisal Committee (SEAC) (Category B)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scoping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies important issues for EIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard Term of Reference (ToR) prepared by MoEF&CC with EAC/SEAC for Category B Projects*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses concerns of affected people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Pollution Control Board (SPCB)/ UT Pollution Control Board (UTPCB)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Appraisal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny of Final EIA Report/ Environmental Management Plan (EMP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAC for category A Projects and SEAC for category B1 Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision Making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Granting EC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category A: MoEF&CC Category B: State EIA Authority (SEIAA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring (Post EC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compliance of general and specific conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPCB / UTPCB and Regional Offices

Government Initiatives For EC

- PARIVESH (Proactive and Responsive facilitation by Interactive, Virtuous, and Environmental Single Window Hub):** Single Window System for EC
 - Developed by MoEF&CC and National Information Centre (NIC)
- Environmental Information System (ENVIS):** Collect, Collate, Storing, Retrieving and Disseminating Information Related to the Environment Sector
- Draft Environmental Impact Assessment Notification 2020:** Published by MoEF&CC to replace existing EIA Notification, 2006

