IUCN's First Global Tree Assessment

Why in News?

Recently, the **first Global Tree Assessment** was published as part of an update to the **IUCN Red List** of Threatened Species, with its findings announced at the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP16)** in Cali, Colombia.

COP16

- The **2024 UN Biodiversity Conference of the Parties (COP)** to the **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** was held recently in Cali, Colombia with an objective to assess how countries are advancing towards the **2022 Montreal commitment** to **protect 30% of the planet's land and marine areas by 2030.**

What is the Global Tree Assessment Report?

- **About:**
  - **Purpose:** It aims to **evaluate all tree species globally** for inclusion in the IUCN Red List, improving conservation information for decision-making.
  - **Launch:** Started in 2015, the **GTA helps prioritise conservation action**, research, and funding for species most at risk of extinction.
  - **Partnerships and Collaboration:** It collaborates with over 60 botanical organisations, 25 IUCN groups, and numerous tree experts worldwide.
- **Key Findings of the Report:**
  - **Species at Risk:**
    - Of the 47,282 tree species analysed, 16,425 are threatened with extinction. Iconic species, such as **magnolias, oaks, maples,** and ebonies, are among those most endangered.
      - Threatened tree species exceed the combined total of **threatened birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians,** with trees at risk in 192 countries.
    - The **South Western Ghats of Kerala** host **Buchanania barberi,** a small tree classified as **Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List since 2018**.
      - **Urgent conservation initiatives,** including **germination** trials that revealed **high seed viability**, have been undertaken to save this species.
  - **Main Threats:**
    - **Deforestation:** Land clearing for crops and **livestock** production is a leading driver of tree extinction, especially in tropical and forest-rich regions like South America.
    - **Logging:** Many tree species are exploited for timber and other forest products, putting additional pressure on natural populations.
      - Over **5,000 tree species are used for timber,** and more than 2,000 for

food, medicine, and fuel.
- **Invasive Species, Pests, and Diseases: Non-native species** and pathogens are increasingly affecting tree health, particularly in temperate zones.
- **Climate Change:** Warming temperatures, **rising sea levels**, and more frequent and intense storms pose significant risks, especially in tropical and island ecosystems.
    - **Ongoing Conservation Efforts:**
        - Initiatives in regions such as the Juan Fernández Islands, Cuba, Madagascar, and Fiji have **successfully protected endangered tree species**.
        - Countries like Ghana, Colombia, Chile, and Kenya have developed national strategies focused on tree conservation.
        - Gabon has **designated key conservation areas** specifically for trees, demonstrating a proactive approach to biodiversity preservation.

What is the IUCN Red List?

- The IUCN Red List is the foremost global resource for **assessing the risk of extinction among animals, fungi, and plant species.**
- The list Categories define the extinction risk of species assessed. Nine categories extend from **NE (Not Evaluated) to EX (Extinct). Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) and Vulnerable (VU)** species are considered to be threatened with extinction.
    - It is also a key indicator for the **Sustainable Development Goals** and **Aichi Targets.**
- The List includes the **IUCN Green Status of Species**, which **assesses the recovery of species' populations** and measures their conservation success.
    - **There are eight Green Status Categories:** Extinct in the Wild, Critically Depleted, Largely Depleted, Moderately Depleted, Slightly Depleted, Fully Recovered, Non-Depleted and Indeterminate.
- A Green Status assessment examines **how conservation actions have affected** the current Red List status.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Consider the following pairs (2019)

Wildlife : Naturally found in

1. Blue-finned Mahseer : Cauvery River
2. Irrawaddy Dolphin : Chambal River
3. Rusty-spotted Cat : Eastern Ghats

Which of the pairs given above are correctly matched?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Q. Which one of the following is not a site for in-situ method of conservation of flora? (2011)

(a) Biosphere Reserve

(b) Botanical Garden

(c) National Park

(d) Wildlife Sanctuary

Ans: (b)