



# India–Republic of Korea Strategic Vision (2026–2030)

## Why in News?

India and the Republic of Korea (ROK) unveiled a Joint Strategic Vision (2026–2030) during a high-level state visit.

The vision provides a roadmap to deepen the India–ROK Special Strategic Partnership across security, economy, technology, and culture.

## Nature of the Strategic Vision

The Strategic Vision marks a shift from primarily economic engagement to a comprehensive strategic partnership covering:

- Indo-Pacific security cooperation
- Defence collaboration
- Emerging technologies
- Climate and sustainability cooperation

## Political and Institutional Engagement

- Annual leader-level meetings institutionalised
- Expansion of ministerial dialogues and joint commissions
- Creation of India–ROK Industrial Cooperation



- Committee
- Promotion of parliamentary exchanges, youth engagement, and sub-national cooperation

## Defence and Security Cooperation

- ▶ Establishment of Defence Industry Joint Committee

- ▶ Launch of 2+2 Dialogue (Vice-Minister level)
- ▶ Expansion of defence industrial cooperation (e.g., artillery platforms)

## Indo-Pacific Alignment

- Alignment of India's Act East Policy with Korea's New Southern Policy
- Commitment to free, open,

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inclusive Indo-Pacific

- Korea's participation in Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)

## Technology and Innovation

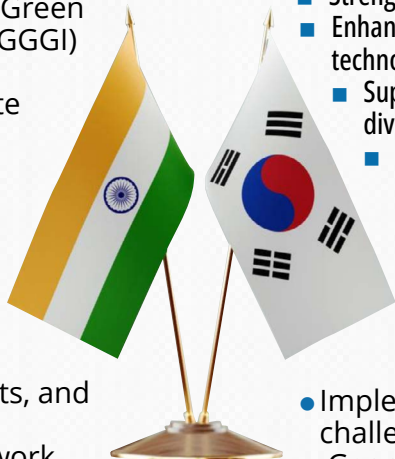
- India-Korea Digital Bridge initiative
- Cooperation in AI, semiconductors, IT
- Focus on clean energy technologies and advanced manufacturing

## Climate and Sustainability

- Korea joins International Solar Alliance (ISA)
- India joins Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)
- Focus on green growth and climate cooperation

## Maritime and Infrastructure Cooperation

- Cooperation in shipbuilding, ports, and logistics
- VOYAGES framework



## Economic and Trade Cooperation

- Target to double trade to around \$50 billion by 2030
- Launch of Economic Security Dialogue
- Proposal for Korean Industrial Township in India
- Focus sectors: semiconductors, electronics, shipbuilding, critical minerals

for maritime growth

complexities

## Cultural and People-to-People Ties

- 2028-29 declared Year of India-ROK Friendship
- Establishment of cultural centres and exchanges

## Strategic Significance

- Strengthens Act East Policy
- Enhances defence and technology cooperation
- Supports supply chain diversification
- Boosts India's Indo-Pacific role

## Challenges

- Trade imbalance concerns
- Implementation challenges
- Geopolitical alignment

## Conclusion

The India-Republic of Korea Strategic Vision (2026-2030) represents a major shift towards a multidimensional strategic partnership covering defence, technology, and Indo-Pacific cooperation, strengthening India's global position while highlighting the need for effective implementation.

## Prelims Practice Question

**Q. With reference to India-ROK Strategic Vision (2026-2030), consider:**

1. Aligns Act East Policy with New Southern Policy.
2. Includes cooperation in IPOI, ISA, and GGGI.
3. Limited only to economic cooperation.

**Answer:** (a) 1 and 2 only

# Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III (PMGSY-III)

## Context

PMGSY-III has been extended till March 2028 with a revised outlay of Rs. 83,977 crore to complete rural road and bridge works and improve connectivity. What is PMGSY?

- ▶ **Launched:** 25 December 2000
- ▶ **Objective:** All-weather road connectivity to rural habitations
- ▶ **Funding:** Initially 100% Centre; later 60:40 (Centre:State)
- ▶ **Achievements:** ~8 lakh km roads; ~1.8 lakh habitations connected



## What is PMGSY-III?

Approved in 2019

- Focus: Consolidation of through routes and major rural links
- **Target:** 1,25,000 km
- **Connectivity to:**
  - Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)
  - Higher secondary schools
  - Hospitals

## Recent Cabinet Decision (2026)

- Extended till March 2028
- Revised outlay: Rs. 83,977 crore
- **Reason:** Delays in bridges and difficult terrain projects

## Revised Timelines

- Plains & hill roads: till March 2028
- Bridges in hilly areas: till March 2029
- Pending works allowed for execution
- 161 Long Span Bridges approved (Rs. 961 crore)

## Importance for Rural Development

- Better market access for farmers
- Reduced transport cost and post-harvest loss
- Improved access to education and healthcare
- Employment generation (direct & indirect)

## Governance Significance

- ▶ Shift from basic connectivity to infrastructure consolidation
- ▶ Supports inclusive growth and rural-urban balance
- ▶ Links infrastructure with economic and social outcomes

## Implementation Challenges

- Land acquisition issues
- Tendering delays

- Terrain and climate constraints
- Contractor capacity limitations

## Conclusion

PMGSY-III strengthens rural connectivity by linking villages with markets, schools, and hospitals. The extension reflects both its importance and implementation challenges.

## Prelims Practice Question

**Q. With reference to PMGSY-III, consider the following:**

1. Focuses on consolidation of through routes.
2. Connects villages to markets, schools, hospitals.
3. Bridge deadline in hilly areas extended till 2029.

**Answer:** (d) 1, 2 and 3

# Defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026



## What is the 131st Amendment Bill, 2026?

It is a constitutional amendment bill introduced in the Lok Sabha to fast-track women's reservation (33%) in Parliament and State legislatures by linking it to delimitation based on the 2011 Census.

**Aim:** To break the freeze on readjustment of parliamentary and assembly seats and move implementation of women's reservation forward from around 2034 to 2029.

## Why was it introduced?

The 106th Constitutional Amendment (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) came into force on 16 April 2026, providing 33% reservation for women.

However, Article 334A ties implementation to delimitation after the next Census (post-2027), delaying it to ~2034.

The 131st Bill aimed to enable delimitation using 2011 Census data to fast-track implementation.

## Core Constitutional & Procedural Point

Under Article 368, a constitutional amendment requires:

- Majority of total membership of the House
- At least two-thirds of members present and voting

### In this case:

- Members present: 528
- Required votes: 352
- Votes secured: 298
- ▶ Hence, the Bill was defeated.

## Delimitation & Census Linkage

- 42nd Amendment (1976): Freeze based on 1971 Census
- 84th Amendment (2001): Extended freeze till post-2026 Census

**Reason:** To avoid penalizing states that controlled population

## Link with Connected Bills

- Delimitation Bill, 2026
- Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026
- Both withdrawn after failure of 131st Amendment (as they depended on it)

## Federalism & Regional Concerns

### Opposition concern:

- 2011 Census-based delimitation benefits North-Central states
- Southern & Northeastern states may lose representation

**Demand:** Delink women's reservation from delimitation

## Effect on Women's Reservation Timeline

- Article 334A still applies
- Implementation only after post-2027 Census delimitation

- Expected around 2034 or later

## Political & Constitutional Significance

- First major defeat of a government constitutional amendment in Lok Sabha since 2014
- Highlights conflict between:
  - Gender justice (women's reservation)
  - Federal equity (seat distribution)

## Conclusion

The defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 highlights the difficulty in balancing women's reservation with federal representation concerns. Due to lack of special majority, implementation remains delayed until post-2027 delimitation, likely around 2034.

## Prelims Practice Question

**Q. With reference to the Constitution**

**(131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, consider the following statements:**

- The Bill failed because it did not receive 50% of total membership.
- The Bill failed as it did not secure both majority of total membership and two-thirds of members present and voting.
- The Bill was withdrawn before voting.
- The Bill aimed to abolish women's reservation.

**Answer:** (b)

# Project Him Sarovar

## Introduction

Project Him Sarovar is a Centre-initiated sustainable water management project in Ladakh aimed at addressing year-round water scarcity.

It focuses on capturing and utilising glacier-melt and snow-melt water which is otherwise wasted due to lack of storage systems.

## Need for the Project

- Ladakh is a cold desert region with extremely low rainfall and high dependence on glaciers and seasonal snow-melt.
- Climate change has accelerated glacial retreat, reducing long-term water availability.
- Increasing demand from tourism, local population and defence forces has intensified water stress.

## Objectives

- To store meltwater for irrigation and strengthen agriculture and horticulture.
- To meet domestic water requirements in rural areas.
- To develop climate-resilient water management systems.



## Geographic Coverage

- Focus areas include Leh (Nimoo, Nubra, Diskit) and Kargil (Suru, Padum).
- First artificial water body constructed at Phikar village in Stok (Leh).
- Target to construct around 50 water bodies covering ~25% villages.

## Technical Features

- Construction of percolation tanks and

small reservoirs.

- Use of gravity-based systems to minimise energy consumption.
- Solar-powered lift mechanisms for water movement.
- Low maintenance and suitable for remote high-altitude regions.

## Eco-Agriculture Linkages

- Promotion of plantation drives along riverbanks and roads.
- Improves micro-climate and

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► From P5

- reduces soil erosion.
- Encourages crops like apricot, seabuckthorn and apple.
- Strengthens horticulture-based livelihoods.

### Community Participation

- Local communities involved in planning and implementation.
- Participation in site selection and water usage rules.
- Ensures sustainability and equitable water distribution.
- Generates employment in construction and maintenance.

### Institutional Support

- Supported by Indian Army, ITBP and BRO.
- Provides technical expertise, logistics and manpower.
- Enhances border area development and troop sustainability.

### Environmental Significance

- Stores excess meltwater during peak flow periods.
- Ensures water availability during dry seasons.
- Creation of 'blue assets' (water bodies) and 'green assets' (plantation).
- Enhances climate resilience in fragile ecosystems.

### Governance & Policy Relevance

- Aligned with India's sustainable water management goals.
- Promotes climate-resilient infrastructure in vulnerable regions.
- Mission-mode implementation with multi-agency coordination.

### Conclusion

Project Him Sarovar is a strategic initiative combining water security, livelihood support and ecological sustainability while strengthening border infrastructure in Ladakh

### Prelims Practice Question

**Q. With reference to Project Him Sarovar, which one of the following statements is correct?**

- Coastal afforestation project along Bay of Bengal
- Snow-harvesting and meltwater storage initiative in Ladakh
- River interlinking project diverting Brahmaputra waters
- Solar irrigation scheme in Thar Desert

**Answer:** (b)

# Muthuvan Tribe

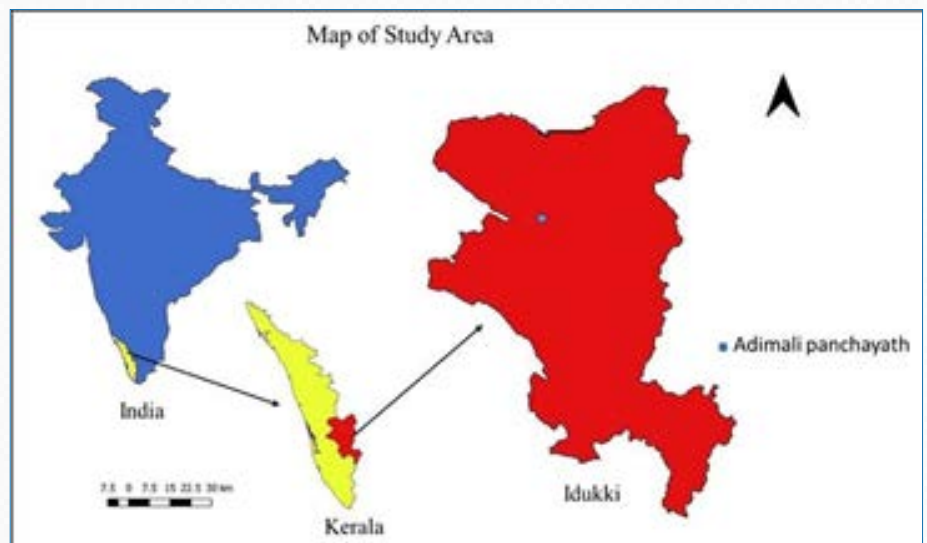
### Why in News

A report by the Kerala Food Commission highlighted irregularities in ration distribution in Edamalakkudy, Kerala's only tribal panchayat dominated by the Muthuvan tribe.

This issue reflects gaps in welfare delivery mechanisms in remote tribal regions.

### Location & Distribution

- The Muthuvan tribe is an indigenous community residing in the Western Ghats.
- They are mainly found in Kerala (Idukki district) and Tamil Nadu (Anaimalai hills).
- They live in remote forest



settlements known as 'kudi'.

- Their settlements are often located in difficult terrain with limited accessibility.

### Ethnicity & Language

- The Muthuvan tribe is also known as Mudugars or Muduvar.
- They speak the Muthuvan

language, which belongs to the Dravidian language family.

- There are two major sub-groups: Malayalam Muthuvan and Pandi Muthuvan.

## Social Organization

- The tribe is divided into six clans called Koottams.
- They follow endogamy within the tribe and exogamy at the clan level.
- Their social structure is hierarchical and lineage-based.
- In some regions, matrilineal tendencies are observed.

## Governance System (Kani System)

- The village is governed by a traditional headman called 'Kani'.
- He is assisted by a council of elders.
- This system maintains law, order, and customary justice.
- It plays a key role in conflict resolution and social regulation.

## Culture, Religion & Beliefs

- The Muthuvan tribe primarily follows animistic beliefs.
- They worship nature, forest spirits, and ancestral spirits.
- Their lifestyle is closely linked to forests and natural cycles.
- In recent times, Hindu religious practices have influenced their traditions.

## Economy & Livelihood

- Their primary occupation is shifting cultivation, locally known as Virippukrishi.
- They practice subsistence agriculture rather than commercial farming.
- Major crops include millets



(ragi, thina, varagu), maize, and chama rice.

- They also grow vegetables such as potato, tomato, and carrot.
- Tubers like sweet potato are an important part of their diet.
- They possess deep knowledge of forest ecology and biodiversity.
- They are known for their traditional herbal medicine practices.

## Settlement & Lifestyle

- The tribe lives in isolated forest settlements.
- Their houses are constructed using bamboo, reeds, and leaves.
- Their lifestyle is largely self-sufficient and minimally dependent on markets.
- They maintain a strong connection with nature.

## Unique Features

- The tribe represents a sustainable and eco-friendly way of living.
- They have a clan-based governance structure.
- They possess rich indigenous knowledge systems.
- They are located in the biodiversity-rich Western Ghats region.

## Issues & Challenges

- They face poor access to Public Distribution System (PDS).
- Healthcare and education facilities are limited.
- There are administrative gaps in implementation of welfare schemes.
- Cultural assimilation is leading to erosion of traditional practices.
- They face challenges related to land rights and forest dependency.

## Conclusion

The Muthuvan tribe exemplifies a forest-dependent indigenous community with strong ecological knowledge and traditional governance systems. However, governance challenges and welfare gaps highlight the need for inclusive development while preserving their cultural identity.

## Prelims Practice Question

**Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Muthuvan tribe:**

1. They are found mainly in the Eastern Ghats.
2. They follow clan exogamy and community endogamy.
3. Their governance system is known as the Kani system.

Which of the statements are correct?

**Answer:** 2 and 3 only.

# R-37M Missile

## Why in News

- Russia has approved the export of the R-37M missile to India.
- It is expected to be integrated with Su-30MKI fighter aircraft.
- This development strengthens India's long-range air combat capability.

## What is R-37M Missile?

- It is a long-range air-to-air missile (AAM) developed by Russia.
- NATO designation: AA-13 Axehead.
- It falls under Beyond Visual Range (BVR) category.
- It is designed to destroy aerial targets at extremely long distances.

## Purpose / Role

- Used to destroy enemy aircraft beyond visual range.
- Targets high-value airborne assets like AWACS, tankers, and surveillance

## Technical Specifications



- **Range:** 300–400 km (one of the longest in the world).
- **Speed:** Up to Mach 6 (hypersonic).
- **Guidance:** INS + mid-course updates + active radar homing.
- **Trajectory:** Lofted trajectory for efficiency.

## Platform Compatibility

- Compatible with MiG-31, Su-35, Su-57.
- Likely integration with India's Su-30MKI.

## Strategic Significance

- Provides long-range interception capability.
- Enables stand-off attack capability.
- Enhances deterrence by creating no-entry zones.
- Supports network-centric warfare.

## Significance for India

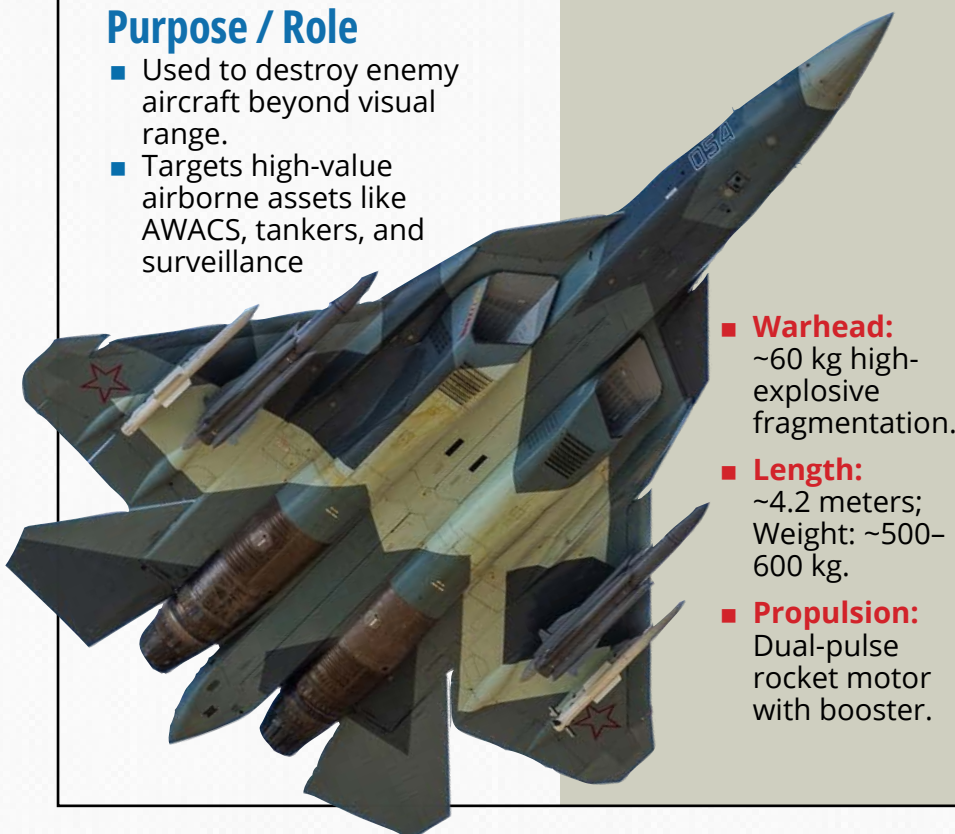
- Boosts Indian Air Force long-range strike capability.
- Helps counter adversaries like Pakistan and China.
- May replace older missiles like R-77.
- Possibility of technology transfer and local production.

## Limitations

- Less effective against highly maneuverable fighter jets.
- Long flight time at extreme range.
- Vulnerable to electronic warfare and stealth.

## Conclusion

The R-37M missile marks a decisive shift to long-range, high-speed aerial combat, dramatically boosting air superiority and strategic deterrence for modern air forces.



- **Warhead:** ~60 kg high-explosive fragmentation.
- **Length:** ~4.2 meters; Weight: ~500–600 kg.
- **Propulsion:** Dual-pulse rocket motor with booster.

# Ashwagandha Regulation by FSSAI



## Context

- Widely used adaptogen in Ayurveda and wellness industry
- Used in capsules, powders, tonics, functional foods
- Regulation reflects risk-based approach

## What has FSSAI done?

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has issued an advisory on the use of Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) in food products such as health supplements, nutraceuticals, and foods for special dietary or medical purposes.

- Prohibits use of Ashwagandha leaves and their extracts
- Permits only roots and root extracts within prescribed limits

## Legal and Regulatory Basis

- Based on FSS (Health Supplements, Nutraceuticals, etc.) Regulations, 2016
- Applies to all Food Business Operators (FBOs)
- Non-compliance punishable under FSS Act, 2006

## Why are leaves banned?

- Leaves contain higher levels of withanolides (e.g., Withaferin-A)
- Potential risks: liver toxicity, neurotoxicity
- Aligns with Ministry of AYUSH guidelines

## Permitted Use & Labelling

- Only roots and root extracts allowed
- Must follow prescribed limits
- Mandatory labeling of plant part used ("root only")

## Enforcement

- State Food Safety Commissioners to ensure compliance
- Violations may lead to penalties, product seizure, legal action.

## Governance Angle

- Integration of traditional medicine with modern regulation
- Focus on consumer protection in nutraceutical sector
- Important for public health governance

## Conclusion

FSSAI has restricted Ashwagandha usage to roots and root extracts while banning leaves due to safety concerns, ensuring a balance between traditional use and scientific regulation in India's food safety framework.

## UPSC Prelims Question

**Q. With reference to FSSAI advisory on Ashwagandha, consider the following statements:**

- Leaves are freely permitted in all supplements.
- Only roots and root extracts are allowed; leaves are prohibited.
- Ashwagandha is completely banned.
- Only fruits and stems are permitted.

**Answer:** (b)

# Aoleang Festival



## What is Aoleang Festival?

Aoleang (Aoleang Monyu) is the premier festival of the Konyak Naga tribe, celebrated annually from 1–6 April, marking the end of the old year and the beginning of the New Year. It coincides with spring and completion of sowing, making it both a New-Year and pre-harvest festival.

## Where is it celebrated?

Primarily in Mon district of Nagaland, homeland of the Konyak tribe. Also showcased at Kisama Heritage Village (Kohima) during Mini Hornbill events.

## Agrarian and Ritual Significance

- Pre-harvest festival seeking blessings for good health and crop yield
- Rituals linked to jhum (shifting cultivation)

## Six-Day Celebration

## Pattern

- Initial days: Hunting and preparations
- Main days: Feasts, dances, songs, log-drum performances
- Later days: Ancestor remembrance and rituals
- Final day: Cleaning of houses and village (symbolic renewal)

## Cultural Elements

- Traditional attire, warrior dances, headgear and bead ornaments
- Log drums, folk songs, storytelling traditions

## Social Role

- Strengthens community bonds and kinship
- Transmits traditions to younger generations

## Tourism and Identity

- Promoted at Kisama Heritage Village
- Linked with Hornbill Festival branding
- Symbol of Konyak identity

## Governance and Soft Power

- Enhances state-tribe engagement
- Promotes India's cultural diversity globally

## Conclusion

Aoleang Festival is a six-day spring New-Year festival of the Konyak tribe in Nagaland, rooted in agriculture and cultural traditions, symbolising renewal, identity, and community cohesion.

## Prelims Practice Question

**Q. With reference to Aoleang Festival, consider the following statements:**

- It is a harvest festival of Ao tribe in October.
- It is a New-Year and pre-harvest festival of Konyak tribe in April.
- It is a Buddhist festival of Arunachal tribes.
- It is a monsoon river festival in Mizoram.

**Answer:** (b)

# Sundarbans Under Microplastics Threat

## Context

A study by IISER Kolkata reports widespread presence of microplastics (<5 mm) in the Sundarbans ecosystem, including water, sediments, mangrove roots, and air.

Indicates even protected ecosystems are vulnerable.

## Sources of Microplastics

- Urban runoff and river-borne plastic waste
- Fishing nets, ropes, and litter
- Industrial discharge
- Cyclone-related relief waste (e.g., Amphan)
- Embankment repair materials

## Carbon Cycle Disruption

- Microplastics (~90% carbon) act as artificial carbon sources
- Release Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC)
- Leads to microbial overgrowth and altered carbon cycling

## Impact on Mangroves

- Reduces efficiency of carbon sequestration
- Affects blue-carbon ecosystem function
- Alters soil structure and root health

## Bioaccumulation

- Ingested by zooplankton, fish, crabs, etc.
- Leads to biomagnification up the food chain
- Affects predators like birds and small mammals



- Sundarbans National Park is India's largest mangrove forest.
- It's located in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district and shares borders with Bangladesh

## Wildlife Evidence

- Found in scats of jungle cats and fishing cats
- Detected in multiple edible fish species
- Raises human health concerns

## Chemical Risks

- Microplastics carry heavy metals and pollutants
- Increase toxicity inside organisms
- High ecological risk indices observed

## Governance Implications

- Sundarbans: UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Ramsar

site, Tiger habitat

- Threat to biodiversity and climate functions
- Need for stricter plastic regulation and monitoring

## Conclusion

Microplastic pollution in the Sundarbans is disrupting ecological balance, carbon cycles, and food chains, highlighting the urgent need for integrated waste management and conservation policies.

## Prelims Practice Question

**Q. With reference to microplastics in the Sundarbans, consider the following statements:**

- Found only in open sea, not mangroves.
- Act as artificial carbon sources affecting microbial dynamics.
- Enhance mangrove productivity.
- Present only in surface water.

**Answer:** (b)