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CURRENT AFFAIRS



Date –08- March 2025

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

International Women's Day (IWD) is an annual global celebration that aims to educate society on the remarkable women's rights movement while celebrating the cultural, political, and socio-economical achievements of women and girls. It is annually celebrated on March 8 every year, and in 2025, it will be falling on a Saturday. This day marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity and highlighting the ongoing efforts for continued advocacy and action worldwide.



BACKGROUND OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Vladimir Lenin declared March 8 as International Women's Day in 1922 to honour the women's role in 1917 Russian Revolution; it was subsequently celebrated on that date by the socialist movement and communist countries. The holiday became a mainstream global holiday following its promotion by the United Nations in 1977.

Origins & Key Milestones

1908: 15,000 women marched in New York for better rights.

1910: Clara Zetkin proposed IWD at a socialist conference.

1911: First IWD observed in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland.

1913: March 8 became the official date.

1917: Russian women's protests led to voting rights.

1975: UN officially recognized IWD.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN INDIA

1. Government Schemes for Women Empowerment

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (2015): Promotes the survival, protection, and education of girls.

Mahila Shakti Kendra (2017): Provides skill development and employment opportunities.

One Stop Centre Scheme (2015): Supports women facing violence with legal and medical aid

Ujjwala Yojana (2016): Provides free LPG connections to women from poor households.

Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (2015): Savings scheme for girls' education and marriage.

Working Women Hostel Scheme: Ensures safe accommodation for working women.

Nari Shakti Puraskar: National award recognizing women achievers.

2. Legal Acts for Women's Rights

The Dowry Prohibition Act (1961): Ban dowry in marriages.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005): Protects against domestic abuse.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013): Ensures a safe work environment.

The Maternity Benefit Act (1961, amended in 2017): Provides paid maternity leave.

The Hindu Succession Act (2005 Amendment): Grants equal property rights to daughters.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006): Prevents early marriages.

3. Policies for Women's Empowerment

National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001): Focuses on education, health, and economic empowerment.

Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj (1993): 33% reservation in local governance.

Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP): Supports women-led startups.

Mission Shakti (2022): Merges various women's welfare schemes for better implementation.

ISSUES HINDERING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

1. Cultural & Social Barriers: Patriarchal Mindset Restricts women's choices and public participation.

2. Education Disparity: Rural girls face limited access to quality education, leading to lower literacy rates and fewer opportunities.

3. Economic Dependence: Restricted access to jobs, finance, and land ownership keeps women financially dependent on men.

4. Child Marriage: Early marriage deprives girls of education, increasing poverty and dependence.

5. Domestic Violence: Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse limits women's ability to assert their rights.

6. Dowry System: Dowry demands lead to financial strain and violence, including bride burning.

7. Workplace Discrimination: Women face unequal pay, limited promotions, and sexual harassment at work.

8. Legal Awareness & Enforcement Issues: Laws exist but are poorly implemented, and women struggle to access justice.

9. Gender Bias in Healthcare: Poor access to reproductive and general healthcare affects women's well being.

10. Rural-Urban Divide: Rural women face greater challenges in education, healthcare, and employment than urban women.

WAY FORWARD

- 1. Strengthening Education & Awareness:** Encourage STEM education for girls and integrate gender sensitization into school curricula.
- 2. Economic Inclusion:** Promote women-led entrepreneurship and ensure equal pay for equal work.
- 3. Strict Law Implementation:** Improve legal enforcement and create fast-track courts for gender-based crimes.
- 4. Social Change Campaigns:** Run media campaigns to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality.
- 5. Enhancing Political Representation:** Advocate for women's participation in governance beyond 33% reservation.
- 6. Better Healthcare Access:** Increase affordable healthcare services, especially in rural areas, focusing on maternal health and family planning.
- 7. Technology & Digital Inclusion:** Bridge the digital divide by ensuring women's access to technology and financial literacy programs.

CONCLUSION

While significant progress has been made in women's empowerment, challenges persist due to deep-rooted societal norms and economic disparities. A multi-sectoral approach involving the government, private sector, and civil society is crucial to achieving true gender equality. International Women's Day serves as a powerful reminder to continue the fight for women's rights and create a more inclusive and equitable society for future generations. **"Empowered women empower the nation!"**

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme aims to improve child sex ratio and promote girls' education.
2. The Maternity Benefit Act, 2017, increased paid maternity leave to 36 weeks for all working women in India.
3. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, makes the giving and receiving of dowry a punishable offence.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Answer: A

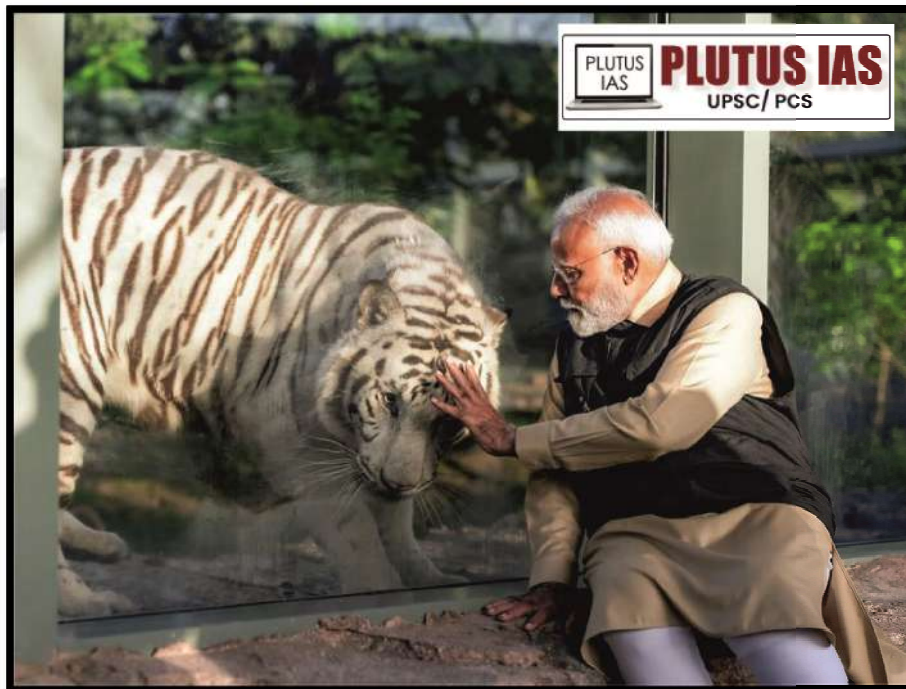
MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Discuss the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in India. How can policies be strengthened to support them? (250 words, 15 marks)

NATIONAL BOARD FOR WILDLIFE (NBWL): A CRITICAL INSTITUTION FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN INDIA

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has recently been in the spotlight as Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired its latest meeting to discuss critical decisions regarding wildlife conservation and habitat protection. During this meeting, key policies were deliberated upon, including new proposals for protected areas, mitigation measures for developmental projects affecting wildlife corridors, and strategies for enhancing biodiversity conservation. The board's decisions have far-reaching implications for India's environmental policies, especially in the context of balancing development with ecological sustainability.



WHAT IS NBWL?

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is the apex advisory body in India responsible for wildlife conservation and protection. It is formed under the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, and plays a crucial role in shaping policies related to wildlife conservation, approving developmental projects in eco-sensitive zones, and recommending necessary measures to protect biodiversity.

FORMATION OF NBWL

NBWL was established in accordance with **Section 5A of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**. It was created to replace the Indian Board for Wildlife, which was earlier responsible for advising the government on matters related to wildlife preservation.

The board has a statutory status, and its recommendations are significant for ensuring that developmental activities do not negatively impact India's rich wildlife heritage. Over the years, NBWL has played a decisive role in shaping India's conservation policies and implementing measures to safeguard the country's diverse flora and fauna.

COMPOSITION OF NBWL

NBWL is chaired by the **Prime Minister of India** and includes various members, such as:

1. **Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change** (Vice-Chairperson)
2. **Members of Parliament**
3. **Secretaries of Various Ministries** (such as Power, Tribal Affairs, and Agriculture)
4. **Chiefs of State Forest Departments**
5. **Representatives from NGOs and Conservationists**
6. **Experts in Wildlife Conservation**

The board also includes **official and non-official members** who contribute their expertise in conservation, policymaking, and governance.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF NBWL

NBWL is tasked with multiple responsibilities aimed at strengthening wildlife conservation efforts in India:

1. **Approval of Projects Affecting Protected Areas:** Any developmental project impacting wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, or eco-sensitive zones must receive NBWL's approval before proceeding.
2. **Formulating Conservation Policies:** The board advises the central government on framing policies and laws to protect endangered species and habitats.
3. **Reviewing Conservation Measures:** It assesses the effectiveness of conservation projects and suggests improvements where necessary.
4. **Monitoring Wildlife Protection Efforts:** The board evaluates compliance with wildlife laws and ensures that conservation strategies are effectively implemented.
5. **Promoting Sustainable Development:** NBWL works on balancing ecological preservation with infrastructure development by recommending mitigation measures.

MAJOR DECISIONS BY NBWL

Over the years, NBWL has made several landmark decisions that have significantly impacted India's conservation landscape:

1. **Expansion of Protected Areas:** The board has approved new protected areas, including wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, to enhance biodiversity conservation.
2. **Mitigation Measures for Infrastructure Projects:** NBWL has recommended eco-sensitive measures such as constructing wildlife corridors and underpasses to reduce human-animal conflicts.
3. **Stricter Regulations for Mining and Industrial Activities:** The board has scrutinized projects that could lead to deforestation and habitat destruction, ensuring compliance with environmental norms.
4. **Approval of Tiger Reserves and Conservation Plans:** The board has played a crucial role in approving and implementing tiger conservation projects under the **Project Tiger initiative**.

ISSUES RELATED TO WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN INDIA

Despite NBWL's efforts, wildlife conservation in India faces several challenges:

1. **Habitat Destruction:** Rapid urbanization, deforestation, and encroachment have led to significant habitat loss for many species. The expansion of infrastructure projects like highways and railways has fragmented wildlife corridors, affecting animal migration patterns.
2. **Human-Wildlife Conflict:** As human settlements expand into forested areas, incidents of human-wildlife conflict have risen. Cases of elephant and leopard attacks on villages and retaliatory killings of animals highlight the urgent need for better mitigation strategies.
3. **Illegal Wildlife Trade:** Poaching and illegal wildlife trade continue to threaten species like tigers, rhinos, and pangolins. Despite stringent laws, organized wildlife crime remains a challenge.

4. Climate Change: Changing climate patterns are affecting wildlife habitats, leading to alterations in food availability and migration routes. Rising temperatures and unpredictable monsoon patterns are impacting species survival.

5. Weak Implementation of Laws: Although India has robust wildlife protection laws, enforcement remains weak in many areas due to lack of resources, corruption, and political interference.

WAY FORWARD FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

To strengthen wildlife conservation efforts in India, the following steps must be undertaken:

1. Strengthening Conservation Laws: Amendments to the Wildlife Protection Act should focus on stricter penalties for illegal activities and improved monitoring mechanisms.

2. Community Involvement in Conservation: Local communities should be empowered through eco-tourism and sustainable livelihood programs to encourage them to protect wildlife.

3. Enhancing Wildlife Corridors: Infrastructure projects must integrate wildlife corridors and safe passageways to reduce habitat fragmentation.

4. Use of Technology: Advanced tracking systems, camera traps, and artificial intelligence can help monitor wildlife populations and prevent poaching.

5. Stronger International Cooperation: India should collaborate with global conservation organizations to tackle issues like illegal wildlife trade and habitat destruction.

CONCLUSION

The **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** plays a crucial role in shaping India's wildlife conservation policies. While it has taken significant steps to balance development with ecological sustainability, challenges like habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict, and climate change continue to pose serious threats. Strengthening conservation laws, involving communities, and using technology effectively can go a long way in ensuring a sustainable future for India's wildlife. With proactive measures and strong political will, NBWL can continue to be a guiding force in preserving India's rich biodiversity for future generations.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q: Which of the following statements about the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is correct?

- a) NBWL is a statutory body formed under the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- b) The Prime Minister of India serves as the Chairperson of NBWL.
- c) NBWL does not have any role in approving infrastructure projects affecting wildlife.
- d) The board primarily focuses on marine biodiversity conservation.

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. India has a robust legal framework for wildlife conservation, yet challenges like habitat destruction and poaching persist. Critically examine the role of NBWL in addressing these issues and suggest ways to improve its efficiency. (250 words, 15 marks)

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