CIVILS360
infocus
CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY
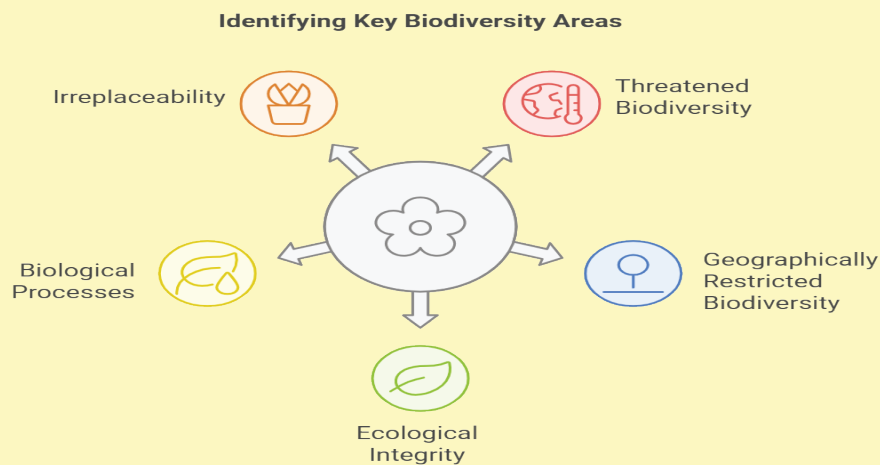# CURRENT AFFAIRS

5. Environment and Ecology

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)

Why in news?

• A recent study has revealed that key biodiversity areas in tropical forests have shifted to higher temperature regimes as a result of global warming and climate change.

Key Facts

•**Initiated by BirdLife International** with the identification of **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).**

• In 2004, IUCN recognized the need for a global framework, leading to the **2016 KBA Standard.**

• **Definition:** KBAs are sites that are globally important for the persistence of biodiversity, identified based on globally standardised criteria.

Identifying Key Biodiversity Areas

Irreplaceability

Threatened Biodiversity

Biological Processes

Geographically Restricted Biodiversity

Ecological Integrity

• **Biodiversity Hotspots:** Areas with high biodiversity facing significant threats.

• **India has 862 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)**, which are crucial for the conservation of biodiversity **E.g : Western Ghats.**

Previous Year Question

Momentum for Change: Climate Neutral Now" is an initiative launched by (2018)

(a) The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

(b) The UNEP Secretariat

(c) The UNFCCC Secretariat

(d) The World Meteorological Organisation

Answer - C

Green Washing

Why in news?

• The government has now issued specific guidelines to restrain false or misleading climate-friendly claims about products claims

Key Facts

•Misleading practice where companies **falsely portray their products or practices as environmentally friendly.**

•Used to attract eco-conscious consumers without substantial environmental benefits.

•Common tactics: vague terms ("natural," "eco-friendly"), irrelevant claims, or false labels.

Types of Greenwashing

Greenhushing

Avoid scrutiny by underreporting sustainable credentials.

Greenrinsing

Regularly change ESG targets before achieving them.

Greenlabeling

Label unsustainable products as green or sustainable.

Greenlighting

Highlight a green feature to divert attention from harmful actions.

Previous Year Question

Which one of the following best describes the term "greenwashing"? (2022)

(a) Conveying a false impression that a company's products are eco-friendly and environmentally sound

(b) Non-inclusion of ecological/environmental costs in the Annual Financial Statements of a country

(c) Ignoring the disastrous ecological consequences while undertaking infrastructure development

(d) Making mandatory provisions for environmental costs in a government project/programme
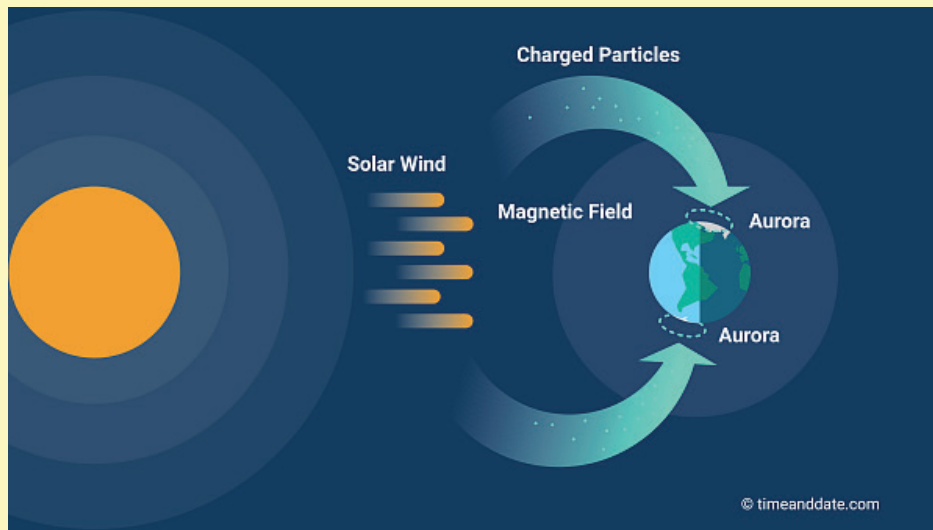
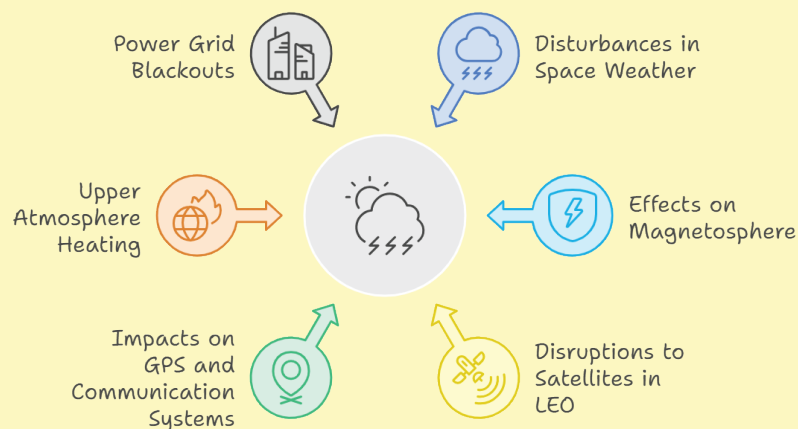**Answer - A**

Ladakh Aurorae

Why in news?

Aurora lights in red hues were visible from Ladakh's pristine skies late at night.

Auroras are often witnessed in the extreme northern or southern latitudes, such as near the North and South Poles.

Key Facts

- Auroras occur due to **interactions between charged solar winds and Earth's magnetosphere** during geomagnetic storms.

- Mechanism: Ejected solar particles get trapped in Earth's magnetic field and collide with atmospheric atoms, releasing energy as light.

- **Types:** Northern Hemisphere: Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) & Southern Hemisphere: • Aurora Australis (Southern Lights)

- Made of oxygen and nitrogen gases.

- Color variations depend on the type of gas and altitude of collisions.

- **Reason for Auroras in Ladakh:** Heightened solar flare activity from Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) leading to auroras visible in lower-latitude regions like Ladakh, as well as parts of the US and UK.

Impact of Solar Storms

- Power Grid Blackouts
- Disturbances in Space Weather
- Upper Atmosphere Heating
- Effects on Magnetosphere
- Impacts on GPS and Communication Systems
- Disruptions to Satellites in LEO

GRAP(Graded Action Response plan)

Why in news?

The Air Quality Index in Delhi dropped following Dussehra celebrations, leading to the invocation of Stage 1 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP).
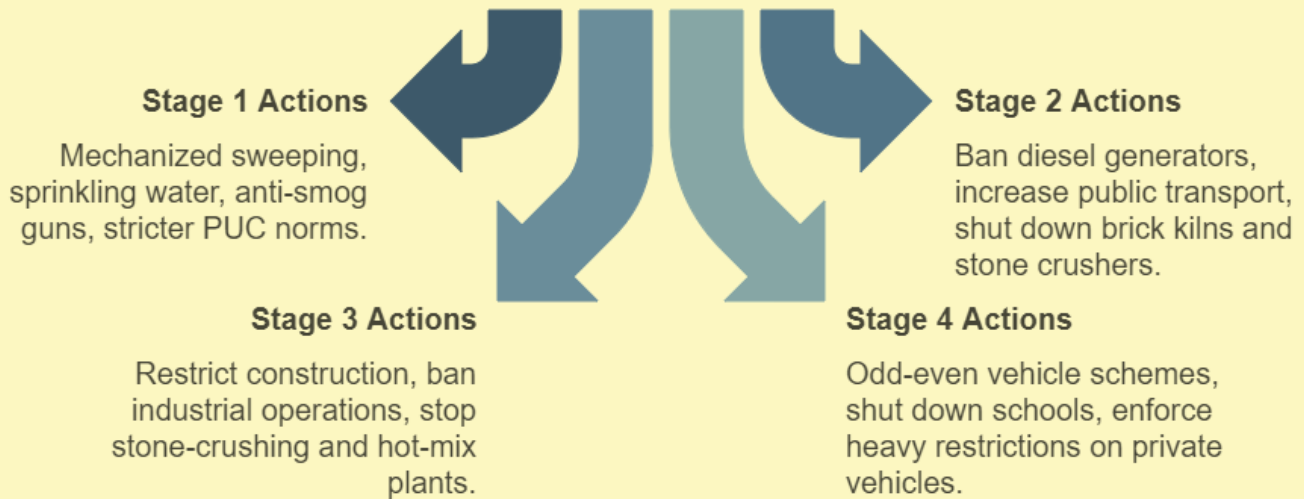
Key Facts

- The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is a set of specific emergency measures designed to combat air pollution in the **National Capital Region (NCR) of India.**

- It was developed by the **Environmental Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA)** and is implemented by the **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** to respond to different levels of air pollution.

- GRAP is activated based on the **Air Quality Index (AQI)** levels, which determine the severity of air pollution, and it is enforced in stages to reduce the harmful effects of pollution on public health and the environment.

Stage-wise Implementation of GRAP

Air Quality Management Stages

Stage I - Poor Air Quality

Stage II - Very Poor Air Quality

Stage III - Severe Air Quality

Stage IV - Severe Plus

Which actions to implement based on AQI levels?

Stage 1 Actions

Mechanized sweeping, sprinkling water, anti-smog guns, stricter PUC norms.

Stage 2 Actions

Ban diesel generators, increase public transport, shut down brick kilns and stone crushers.

Stage 3 Actions

Restrict construction, ban industrial operations, stop stone-crushing and hot-mix plants.

Stage 4 Actions

Odd-even vehicle schemes, shut down schools, enforce heavy restrictions on private vehicles.

Previous Year Question

In the cities of our country, which among the following atmospheric gases are normally considered in calculating the value of the Air Quality Index?

1. Carbon dioxide

2. Carbon monoxide

3. Nitrogen dioxide

4. Sulfur dioxide

5. Methane

Select the correct answer using the code given below

(a)1,2 and 3

(b)2,3 and 4

(c)1,4 and 5

(d)1,2,3,4 and 5

Answer - B

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