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Powai Lake

Why in the News?

A proposed silent "Save Powai Lake" human chain by residents and environmental activists was recently called off after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) demanded an event fee of ₹11,000. The event, aimed at raising awareness about the lake's ecological degradation and pollution, was to be held peacefully at the lakeside. Organisers found the demand unreasonable for a non-commercial, citizen-led environmental initiative, sparking debates over civic apathy and public participation in conservation efforts.

Background: Powai Lake - An Urban Wetland Under Stress

- **Purpose:** Originally built to augment the water supply to Bombay
- **Location:** Northern suburb of Mumbai, Maharashtra
- **Creation:** Artificial lake constructed in 1890 by the British through two dams
- **Catchment area:** 6.6 sq. km; Depth: 3 to 12 metres

Ecological Importance:

- Hosts resident and migratory birds, including the Watercock, Woolly-necked Stork, Peregrine Falcon, etc.
- Part of the Powai Bird Sanctuary, a crucial urban biodiversity hotspot
- **Adjacent institutions:** IIT-Bombay and NITIE, adding scientific relevance and visibility

Environmental threats:

- Encroachment, untreated sewage inflow, and algae bloom
- Solid waste, recreational disturbances, and loss of wetland vegetation
- Features of the Issue



Public Environmental Mobilisation:

- The campaign planned by residents was aimed at highlighting unchecked pollution, plastic waste, sewage discharge, and loss of avian habitats.
- It represents citizen-led climate and conservation activism, a growing trend in Indian urban centres.

BMC's Bureaucratic Response:

- The ₹11,000 fee was cited as part of standard protocol for public gatherings at civic spaces.
- BMC's rigid stance drew criticism as counterproductive to environmental awareness and civic engagement.

Urban Ecological Fragility:

- Powai Lake, though man-made, now performs vital ecosystem services—urban cooling, habitat provision, and groundwater recharge.
- Its gradual deterioration reflects the urban ecological crisis faced by Indian megacities.

Absence of Effective Wetland Protection Laws:

- Despite its importance, Powai Lake is not notified under Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, which restricts its legal protection.



- Lack of scientific management, continuous inflow of sewage, and real estate encroachment have weakened its ecological balance.

Challenges

Weak Civic and Institutional Coordination:

- BMC's fee imposition shows a disconnect between the government and local citizens willing to contribute to conservation.
- Lack of institutional frameworks for community participation in wetland conservation.

Absence of Legal Wetland Status:

- Powai Lake lacks formal notification under India's Wetlands Rules, making it vulnerable to pollution, encroachment, and neglect.

Pollution Load and Sewage Inflow:

- The lake receives wastewater and stormwater from surrounding residential and commercial areas. Presence of Eutrophication and invasive species like water hyacinth.

Habitat Loss for Birds and Biodiversity:

- With the education in wetland vegetation and rising human disturbances, bird populations have started declining.
- Disruption in nesting and migration cycles poses a long-term biodiversity risk.

Commercialisation of Lakefront:

Events, boating, and food stalls increase littering and pollution.

Commercial activities often prioritise aesthetics over ecological integrity.

Way Forward

- Declare Powai Lake a Protected Wetland
- The state government must notify the lake under Wetlands Rules, 2017, to impose clear ecological boundaries and enforce sustainable activities.

Citizen Partnership Framework

- BMC should adopt participatory models like Wetland Management Committees with NGOs, residents, scientists, and civic authorities.
- Waive or reduce fees for non-commercial citizen-led awareness events.

Integrated Lake Restoration Plan

- Conduct a scientific assessment of lake pollution, followed by bioremediation, de-silting, and stormwater management.
- Promote native wetland vegetation and restrict dumping

Urban Biodiversity Registry and Monitoring

- Establish a bird and biodiversity monitoring system, possibly involving IIT Bombay and NITIE students and researchers.

Sustainable Lake Tourism and Regulation

- Any boating or tourism should be regulated under a strict eco-tourism framework.
- Banning plastic, establishing waste segregation points, and enforcing fines for littering.

Public Awareness and School Engagement

- Promote regular school and college visits for nature walks and biodiversity workshops at the lake. Integrate lake conservation in the curriculum and urban planning discourses.





Conclusion

The episode at Powai Lake underscores the urgent need to reform urban environmental governance. When civic authorities disincentivise public participation in conservation through bureaucratic hurdles, it reflects a flawed governance model. At a time when India is striving for sustainable urbanisation, protecting urban ecosystems like Powai Lake is not just a local issue but a national ecological imperative. Moving forward, reframing environmental policies to welcome, not penalise, citizen action is key to saving our lakes and cities.

Discuss the ecological significance of urban wetlands like Powai Lake and examine the challenges faced in their conservation. Suggest policy and community-based measures for their sustainable management. **(250 words)**

Q. Why was the proposed "Save Powai Lake" human chain cancelled recently?

- A. Due to the heavy rainfall forecast in Mumbai
- B. Because police deny permission
- C. Due to a demand for an event fee by BMC
- D. Because of a lack of public interest

Answer: C. Due to a demand for an event fee by BMC

Explanation: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) demanded a nominal event fee of ₹11,000 to hold the event, leading to its cancellation by residents and nature lovers who found the fee unreasonable for a public cause.



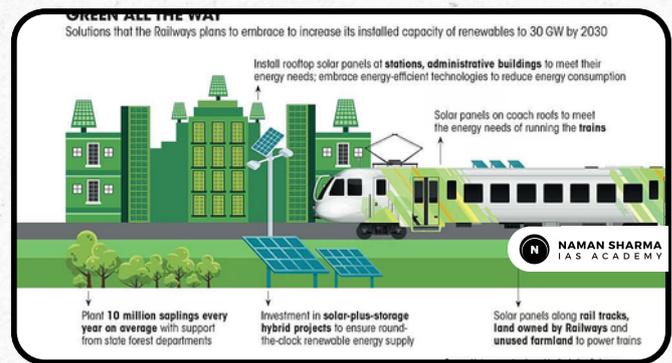
Indian Railways is on track to achieve net-zero emissions by 2025:

Why in the News?

On World Environment Day (June 5), Indian Railways emerged in the national spotlight not just as the backbone of India's transport infrastructure but also as a symbol of climate action and sustainable development. With a remarkable increase in freight capacity, aggressive electrification, renewable energy integration, and even trials of hydrogen-powered trains, Indian Railways is setting global benchmarks in decarbonising transportation. This transformation directly supports India's Panchamrit commitments and the goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070, with Indian Railways targeting net-zero emissions as early as 2030, and possibly achieving it by 2025.

Background

Indian Railways is not just the largest rail network in Asia but also one of the most extensive and busiest in the world. It serves over 700 crore passengers annually and transports 1,600+ million tonnes of freight, making it the second-largest freight carrier globally. The post-2014 period has seen Indian Railways adopt sustainability as a core priority. This aligns with India's climate commitments under the Paris Agreement, the Panchamrit strategy announced at COP26 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and broader goals under Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment).



Key Panchamrit Goals relevant to Indian Railways include:

- Reducing the emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030
- Achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070
- Increasing non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW
- Meeting 50% of energy requirements from renewables

Indian Railways plays a crucial role in this national transformation by reducing diesel dependency, shifting freight from road to rail, electrifying its vast network, and integrating green technologies.

Feature

Shifting Freight from Road to Rail: A Game-Changer

- The Indian Railways' freight capacity increased from 1,055 million tonnes (2013-14) to 1,617 million tonnes (2024-25). This shift has significant environmental and economic

Benefits:

- **Carbon Emission Reduction:** Avoided 143 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions equivalent to planting 121 crore trees.

Economic Gains:

- ₹3.2 lakh crore saved in logistics
- 2,857 crore litres of diesel saved, amounting to ₹2 lakh crore in value.
- **Efficiency Advantage:** Rail emits 90% less CO₂ than road transport (trucks).





- **Air Quality Improvement:** Reduced vehicular emissions contribute to cleaner urban air, especially in metro cities.
- **Accelerated Electrification:** Decarbonising the Tracks

Indian Railways is undertaking the world's largest railway electrification programme.

- **Pre-2014:** 21,000 km electrified in 60 years
- **Post-2014 (till 2025):** 47,000 km electrified
- **Current Status:** 99% of broad-gauge routes are now electrified.

This rapid electrification not only slashes fossil fuel dependence but also enhances energy security, given India's oil import burden.

Integration of Renewable Energy

Indian Railways has committed to becoming a net-zero carbon emitter by 2030 by using renewable energy in its operations:

- Solar panels on station rooftops, workshops, and train sheds
- Solar-powered lighting in rural railway stations
- Collaborations with states and the private sector to source green electricity

Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs): Green Highways

- 2,741 km of DFCs are operational, aimed exclusively at cargo movement.
- These corridors are fully electrified, high-capacity, and high-speed.

Benefits:

- Decongest passenger rail lines
- Reduce diesel use and highway traffic congestion

- Improve logistics efficiency and cut emissions
- **Hydrogen-Powered Trains: Technological Leap**
- India is trialling its first hydrogen-powered train between Jind and Sonipat in Haryana:
 - Carries up to 2,600 passengers
 - The most powerful and longest hydrogen train globally
 - Represents innovation in green mobility, following global examples like Germany and Japan

Global Recognition and Economic-Environmental Synergy

- India ranked 38th in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (2023), a jump of 16 places since 2014.
- Indian Railways showcases how economic growth and environmental sustainability can coexist through innovation, efficiency, and policy reform.

Fast-Tracking Net Zero by 2025

Originally set for 2030, Indian Railways is now on track to achieve net-zero emissions by 2025, due to:

- Electrification of nearly all major routes
- Renewable energy investments
- Modal freight shift from road to rail
- Carbon accounting and offset mechanisms

Challenges

Despite remarkable progress, Indian Railways faces several implementation and systemic challenges:

High Capital Requirements

- Transitioning to net-zero involves massive investments in electrification, hydrogen fuel infrastructure, and renewable energy.





- Budgetary constraints and reliance on private sector investment may delay progress.

Legacy Infrastructure and Technological Gaps

- Some older rolling stock and tracks are not compatible with high-efficiency electric engines or hydrogen-based tech.
- Need for technological upgrades and retrofitting across the network.

Renewable Energy Integration Challenges

- Despite progress, solar and wind energy integration is hindered by:
 - Intermittency issues
 - Lack of storage infrastructure
 - Grid integration delays in remote areas

Operational Bottlenecks

- Congestion on mixed-use rail lines (passenger + freight)
- Land acquisition delays for DFC expansion
- Need for better data analytics and automated control systems to improve scheduling and logistics

Hydrogen Technology Still Nascent

- High costs of hydrogen fuel production
- Need for safe and efficient storage systems
- Global supply chains and skilled manpower are still developing

Policy Coherence and Interdepartmental Coordination

- Multiple ministries involved (Railways, Power, Renewable Energy, Finance)

Way Forward

To sustain and scale this green transition, a multi-pronged strategy is essential:

Green Rail Policy Implementation

- Finalise and implement a Green Railways Policy with defined benchmarks and accountability.
- **Include clear targets for:**
 - Renewable energy procurement
 - Water conservation at stations
 - Carbon credits and offsets

Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Acceleration

Involve private players in:

- Hydrogen train development
- Battery and solar tech manufacturing
- Railway electrification in low-density areas
- Offer tax incentives and green bonds to attract investments.

Freight Corridors Expansion

- Complete both Eastern and Western DFCs
- Expand the FC model to other industrial zones and ports
- Integrate with Bharatmala and Sagarmala projects for seamless logistics

Digital and Smart Rail Infrastructure

- Deploy AI and IoT-based systems for predictive maintenance, energy efficiency, and real-time data on emissions.
- Smart stations initiative: energy-efficient designs, rainwater harvesting, smart lighting, and waste recycling

Boost Hydrogen R&D and Manufacturing Ecosystem

- Set up Hydrogen Innovation Zones for research and pilot projects.





- Collaborate with IITs, DRDO, and international tech partners
- Promote green hydrogen via national policies and subsidies

Community Engagement and Behavioural Campaigns

- Run awareness drives under Mission LiFE to encourage rail use over road
- Encourage “Adopt a Station” programmes with local NGOs and schools

Monitoring, Verification and Reporting Systems (MRV)

- Establish robust MRV systems for emissions data
- Integrate with global carbon tracking protocols to improve transparency and international funding eligibility.

Conclusion: Green Tracks to a Greener Bharat

Indian Railways is no longer just a transporter of goods and people; it is a catalyst for climate action, an engine of economic growth, and a platform for innovation. The scale and speed of its transformation from diesel to electricity, from fossil fuels to solar, from rail to road are unparalleled in the developing world.

With its ambitious plans to become net-zero by 2025, Indian Railways aligns closely with India’s Panchamrit commitments, demonstrating how green growth is not just a possibility but a reality in motion. Every electrified kilometre, every solar panel, and every freight shift off the highway brings India closer to a sustainable and inclusive future.

MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the role of Indian Railways in contributing to India’s climate goals, particularly in the context of its net-zero target. What are the key challenges in this transition, and how can they be addressed? **(250 words)**

Q. What recent green initiative is Indian Railways implementing on the Jind–Sonipat route?

- A. Electrified metro corridor
- B. Solar-powered bullet train
- C. Hydrogen-powered train
- D. LNG-based freight train

Answer: C. Hydrogen-powered train

Explanation:

Indian Railways is trialling a hydrogen-powered train on the Jind–Sonipat route, which will be the most powerful and longest hydrogen train in the world.





Intensified Naxal Crackdown and Major Welfare Push

Why in the News?

The first year of the Modi government's third term has seen an intensified dual-track focus - a final security offensive against Naxalism and expansion of key welfare schemes like Ayushman Bharat, PMAY-G, and rural infrastructure.

In particular, Union Home Minister Amit Shah declared that India is aiming to eliminate the Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) threat by March 31, 2026. Simultaneously, flagship welfare programmes have been scaled up to reach vulnerable populations more comprehensively.

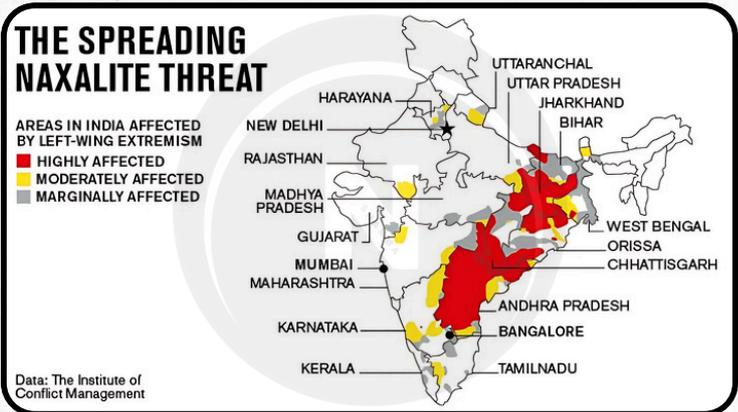
Background

The LWE Challenge: A Longstanding Internal Threat

Left-Wing Extremism, or the Naxal insurgency, began in 1967 in Naxalbari, West Bengal. Over time, it grew into a violent campaign across the "Red Corridor" - spanning parts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.

The CPI (Maoist), the primary armed faction, seeks to overthrow the Indian state through guerrilla warfare and parallel governance in forested tribal regions.

At its peak, 223 districts were affected by LWE violence in the early 2000s. However, sustained efforts have reduced this number to about 70 districts, with only 25 classified as highly affected by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in 2024.



Feature 1: Final Push Against Naxalism

Strategic Gains in Maoist Bastions

The government's security apparatus has made significant territorial advances in **traditional Maoist strongholds such as:**

- Bijapur-Sukma-Dantewada tri-junction in Chhattisgarh
- Southern forests of Jharkhand's Kolhan region
- Dense hills of Odisha's Malkangiri district

The strategy combines forward operating bases (FOBs), road construction, and drone surveillance to deny Maoists mobility and resources.

Notable Tactical Success: Operation Black Forest

Launched on April 21, 2025, this joint operation by the CRPF and the Chhattisgarh Police targeted the Kurragutta hills on the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border.

It led to:

- 54 Naxal arrests
- 84 surrendered across Chhattisgarh, Telangana, and Maharashtra
- Dismantling of a key Maoist command centre

The operation is seen as the most decisive blow since Operation Green Hunt (2010s), but with more precise, intelligence-led tactics.

Major Milestone: Killing of CPI Maoist General Secretary.



In May 2025, Basavaraju, the General Secretary of CPI (Maoist) and India's most wanted extremist leader, was killed in an encounter.

This marked the first elimination of a Maoist chief in 30 years and signalled weakening leadership cohesion among insurgents.

Scale of Maoist Casualties in 2025

- 209 Maoists were killed in Chhattisgarh alone between January–May 2025.
- In contrast, 219 were killed in all of 2024, and only 53 in 2023.

This rapid attrition shows the insurgents' declining capacity to regroup or retaliate.

Key Enablers of Progress

- **Political Will:** Clear central directive for a 2026 deadline
- **Local Intelligence:** Community-integrated forces like District Reserve Guards (DRGs) in Chhattisgarh
- **Improved State–Centre Coordination:** Regular strategy reviews by the MHA
- **Technology:** Use of drones, AI-based mapping, and mobile towers to enhance battlefield awareness

Feature 2: Continued Challenges in LWE Areas

Despite high-profile gains, critical issues remain:

- **Ambushes Persist:** Maoists ambushed security convoys in Kolhan (Jharkhand) and Abujhmad (Chhattisgarh) in early 2025, killing 13 security personnel.
- **Recruitment of Tribal Youths:** Economic deprivation and land alienation still draw marginalised Adivasis to join insurgent ranks.
- **Terrain Advantage:** Maoists still use dense forests and hill ranges as natural hideouts.
- This underlines that while military operations are necessary, they are not sufficient without parallel governance and development outreach.

This underlines that while military operations are necessary, they are not sufficient without parallel governance and development outreach.

Feature 3: Expansion of Welfare Under Modi 3.0

- Parallel to the security push, the government has launched ambitious welfare initiatives to cement state legitimacy and bridge development gaps.
- Ayushman Bharat Expansion for the Elderly
- In September 2025, the Union Cabinet approved the expansion of PM-JAY (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) to cover all citizens aged 70 and above, regardless of income or caste.

Significance:

- **Universal Geriatric Coverage:** Previously, the scheme covered only 40% of the poorest families. Now, India's 10 crore+ elderly population becomes eligible.
- **Addressing an Ageing Nation:** According to the India Ageing Report 2023, the elderly will make up 19.5% of the population by 2050. Only 20% currently have any health insurance.
- **Equity Boost:** Income-neutral coverage removes barriers to healthcare access for the vulnerable elderly.

PMAY-G Extension Till 2029

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Gramin (PMAY-G) has been extended with a target of 2 crore more houses by 2029.

Progress Highlights:

- Rs 34,000 crore released to states in FY 2025–26.



- **Climate-Resilient PMAY Housing:** Design houses with disaster-proofing features like elevated plinths and solar power
- **Inclusive DPI Use in Agriculture:** Local-language app interfaces and training for farmers on digital tools

Institutional Strengthening

- Strengthen DRDA (District Rural Development Agencies) to coordinate multi-scheme implementation.
- **E-Governance Dashboards:** District-level monitoring systems for PMGSY, PMAY, and Ayushman Bharat
- **Periodic Social Audits:** Involve local Panchayats and NGOs in third-party assessment of scheme outcomes

Conclusion

India's internal security and development goals are now intertwined more closely than ever. While the military offensive against Naxalism is reaching a decisive phase, its success will depend on how effectively the state can win the peace by ensuring justice, inclusion, and development in neglected tribal heartlands. At the same time, universalising welfare schemes, especially for the ageing, rural, and agrarian populations, reflects a commitment to inclusive governance.

Q. Critically examine the Government of India's dual strategy of security crackdown and welfare expansion in addressing Left-Wing Extremism (LWE). How far can these measures ensure long-term peace and inclusive development in LWE-affected areas?

Q. Which of the following statements about recent measures taken by the Government of India to tackle Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) and promote welfare is/are correct?

1. Operation Black Forest was launched in Jharkhand and successfully dismantled Maoist hideouts in the Saranda forest.
2. Under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY, all citizens above 70 years of age are now eligible for coverage regardless of income.
3. The Digital Agriculture Mission includes AI-based crop estimation and digital public infrastructure for agri-data.
4. PMAY-G has been extended till 2029 to build an additional 1 crore houses in rural areas.

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 2, 3 and 4 only
- D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: C. 2, 3 and 4 only

Explanation:

- **Statement 1 Incorrect:** Operation Black Forest was launched on the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border, not Jharkhand. It targeted Maoist hideouts in the Kurragutta hills, not Saranda forest (which is in Jharkhand).
- **Statement 2 Correct:** As of September 2025, all citizens aged 70 and above, regardless of income, are covered under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY.
- **Statement 3 Correct:** The Digital Agriculture Mission 2025 includes AI-based Digital General Crop Estimation Surveys (DGCEs) and the development of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
- **Statement 4 Correct:** The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) has been extended till 2029 to build 2 crore more rural homes.





Kalvarayan Hills

Why in the News?

For the first time ever, a girl from the tribal community residing in the Kalvarayan Hills has secured admission to one of India's prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT). This milestone achievement is not only a testament to the girl's dedication but also symbolises the slow yet promising transformation in tribal education and empowerment in this remote region. It highlights the efforts being made to include tribal populations in mainstream education and development and signals hope for more such breakthroughs in the future.

Background: Understanding the Kalvarayan Hills

The Kalvarayan Hills form a significant hill range located in the Eastern Ghats of Tamil Nadu, India. They are part of a cluster of hill ranges including Pachaimalai, Javadi, and Shevaroy hills, which act as natural dividers between the river basins of the Kaveri to the south and Palar to the north. These hills stretch over approximately 1095 square kilometres and lie mainly in the northeastern part of the Salem district, extending into adjoining districts.



The hill range is divided into two distinct sections:

- **Chinna Kalrayans (Little Kalrayans):**
The northern segment, with an average elevation of about 2700 feet.

- **Periya Kalrayans (Big Kalrayans):**
The southern section, which rises higher at an average height of 4000 feet.
- The region is characterised by diverse vegetation ranging from grassy jungles and deciduous forests to the unique shola forests, which are patches of stunted evergreen forests found in the hills.
- Several natural and cultural landmarks dot the hills, including two picturesque waterfalls, Megam Falls and Periyar Falls. The region also houses a botanical park rich in biodiversity and numerous temples that hold religious significance for the local communities.
- The Gomukhi Dam, an important water reservoir, is situated at the foothills, serving irrigation and water needs for surrounding areas.

Tribal Inhabitants and Culture

- The Kalvarayan Hills are home to indigenous tribal communities, notably the Malayan tribes. These tribal groups have historically lived in relative isolation, maintaining distinct customs, traditions, and languages. Their livelihoods primarily revolve around agriculture, the collection of forest produce, and traditional crafts. The tribes have depended on the forest and the hills for sustenance, and their lives are closely linked to the natural environment.
- Due to the hills' remote nature, access to modern education, healthcare, and infrastructure has been limited, making social and economic development challenging for these communities.





Features of the Kalvarayan Hills Region

- **Geography:** The hills act as a vital watershed, separating two major river basins in Tamil Nadu. The terrain is rugged, with hills rising between 2000 and 4000 feet, making it a unique ecological zone.
- **Flora and Fauna:** The mixture of forests, sholas, and grasslands supports a wide range of flora and fauna, some of which are endemic to the region.
- **Water Resources:** The presence of waterfalls and the Gomukhi Dam aids agriculture and water security in the region.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The tribal population maintains vibrant cultural traditions, festivals, and rituals, which add to the rich heritage of Tamil Nadu's hill communities.

Challenges Faced by the Kalvarayan Hills

- Despite its natural beauty and cultural richness, the Kalvarayan Hills face several developmental and ecological challenges:
- **Educational Access:** Remote geography and poor infrastructure have limited educational facilities. Tribal children often have to travel long distances to attend schools, which leads to high dropout rates.
- **Healthcare Deficiency:** Medical facilities are scarce, and the tribal population is vulnerable to health issues due to a lack of access to timely and quality healthcare.
- **Economic Constraints:** The economy of the tribal communities largely depends on subsistence agriculture and forest produce, making them economically vulnerable and susceptible to poverty.

- **Environmental Degradation:** Increasing human activity, deforestation, and unplanned development threaten the fragile ecosystems of the hills.
- **Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Poor road connectivity isolates the region, hindering access to markets, government schemes, and emergency services.

The Significance of the Recent Achievement

- The admission of a tribal girl from Kalvarayan Hills into IIT marks a historic breakthrough for the region's education and empowerment efforts. It reflects:
- **Educational Progress:** The slow but steady progress in improving school enrollment and educational quality in tribal areas.
- **Women's Empowerment:** A symbolic victory against gender and social barriers, inspiring more girls from marginalised communities to pursue higher education.
- **Government and NGO Initiatives:** The positive impact of various welfare schemes, scholarships, and support programs targeted at tribal upliftment.
- **Way Forward:** Sustainable Development and Empowerment in Kalvarayan Hills
- To build on this positive momentum and address ongoing challenges, a comprehensive development strategy is needed.

Improving Education Infrastructure:

- Establish more schools within the hills and strengthen existing ones.





- Provide transport facilities for students travelling from remote hamlets.
- Introduce scholarships and mentorship programs focusing on tribal youth, especially girls.
- Promote digital education and remote learning tools to overcome geographic barriers.

Enhancing Healthcare Access:

- Deploy mobile health clinics and telemedicine services.
- Train local health workers from tribal communities.
- Strengthen primary healthcare centres with adequate staffing and supplies.

Economic Empowerment:

- Promote sustainable agriculture and provide access to modern farming techniques.
- Encourage forest-based livelihoods and handicrafts with market linkages.
- Facilitate skill development and vocational training tailored to tribal youth.

Environmental Conservation:

- Implement community-led forest management and biodiversity conservation programs.
- Control deforestation and promote reforestation initiatives.
- Ensure infrastructure projects are environmentally sustainable.

Infrastructure and Connectivity:

- Improve road connectivity and transportation networks.
- Expand electrification and internet connectivity to bridge the digital divide.
- Facilitate better access to government schemes and social services through e-governance.

- **Cultural Preservation:** Encourage documentation and promotion of tribal languages, arts, and traditions. Integrate tribal culture in local tourism initiatives to generate income and awareness.

Conclusion

- The Kalvarayan Hills represent a unique confluence of ecological richness, cultural heritage, and socio-economic challenges. The recent milestone of a tribal girl from this region securing admission to IIT is a beacon of hope, underscoring the potential within these communities when given the right opportunities.
- Sustainable development in the Kalvarayan Hills requires a balanced approach that integrates education, healthcare, infrastructure, and environmental conservation. Empowering tribal populations through inclusive growth and participation will ensure that this region thrives as a vibrant and prosperous part of Tamil Nadu's diverse landscape.

Discuss the geographical significance of the Kalvarayan Hills in Tamil Nadu, highlighting their role in the regional river basins and ecology. **(205 words)**

The Kalvarayan Hills are divided into two sections, Chinna Kalrayans and Periya Kalrayans. Which of the following statements is correct about their relative elevations?

- a) Chinna Kalrayans are higher than Periya Kalrayans
- b) Periya Kalrayans are higher than Chinna Kalrayans
- c) Both have the same average height





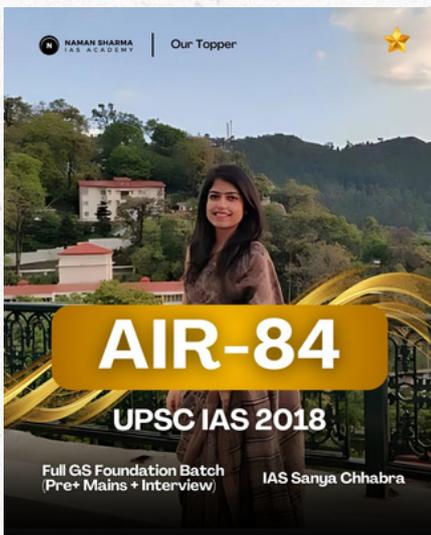
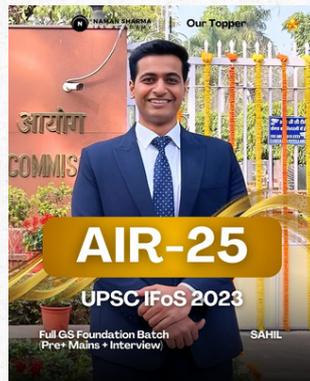
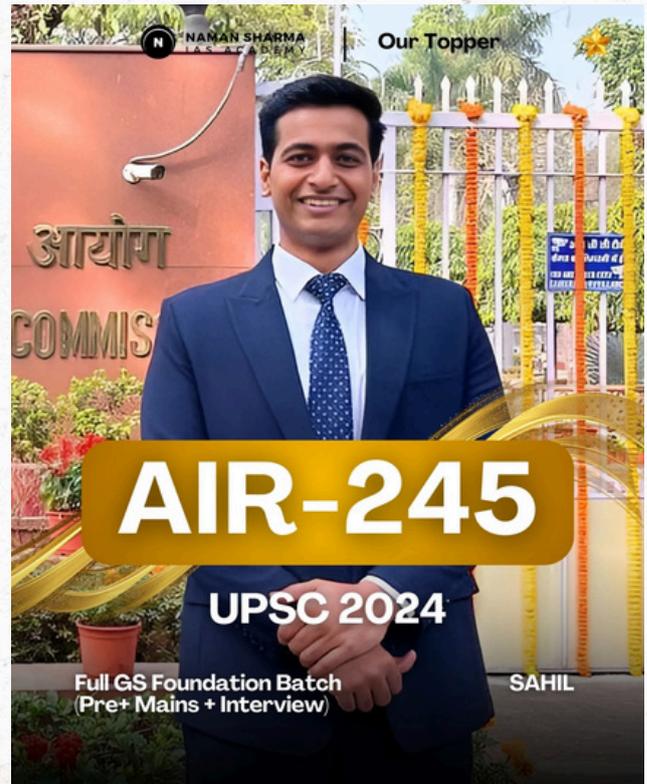
d) Periya Kalrayans are located north, and Chinna Kalrayans south

Answer: b) Periya Kalrayans are higher than Chinna Kalrayans

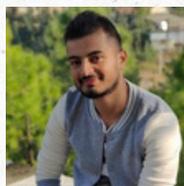
Explanation: The Periya ("big") Kalrayans average about 4000 feet in height, while the Chinna ("little") Kalrayans average around 2700 feet.



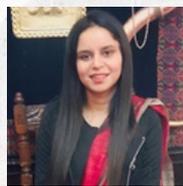
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