

Bhitakarnika National park

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In news- German government agency, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), will conserve mangrove and biodiversity of Odisha's Bhitarkanika National Park under Indo-German Biodiversity Programme Green recovery measures.

Key updates-

- The primary objective of the project is to **support implementation of livelihood-oriented conservation and restoration activities** as well as train community members in alternative sustainable livelihoods.
- The project is supported by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).
- Ecosystem-based sustainable livelihood measures such as **mangrove restoration, sustainable fisheries, handicraft-based activities and science-led horticulture**, will be implemented at Bhitarkanika.

About Bhitakarnika National Park-

- It was designated on 16 September 1998 and obtained the status of a **Ramsar site** on 19 August 2002.
- The area has also been designated as the **second Ramsar site of the Odisha State after the Chilika Lake**.
- It is surrounded by Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary, which is spread over 672 km².
- The national park and wildlife sanctuary is inundated by the **rivers Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, Pathsala**.
- It hosts many mangrove species, and is the **second largest mangrove ecosystem in India**.
- The vegetation and the species of the sanctuary is composed of those which are mainly found in the tropical and subtropical intertidal regions.

- Bhitarkanika has one of the **largest populations of endangered saltwater crocodiles in India** and is globally unique in that 10% of the adults exceed 6 m length.
- It is also home to Indian Python, King cobras, black ibis, darters and many other species of flora and fauna.
- The sanctuary has 215 species of birds in which the most important are the eight varieties of kingfisher and the **migratory birds from Europe and Central Asia.**

The **Gahirmatha Beach** which forms the boundary of the sanctuary in the east is the **largest colony of the Olive Ridley Sea Turtles.**