

Chenkurinji

July 7, 2022

In news—Environmentalists are stressing on the need for protecting Chenkurinji from Climate Change.

What is Chenkurinji?

- Chenkurinji (*Gluta travancorica*) is a species **endemic to the Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve**.
- **Belonging to the Anacardiaceae family**, the **tree was once abundant in the hills on the southern parts of Aryankavu Pass** but its presence has been fast receding from the area over the years.
- The **Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary derives its name from this species**.
- It's reported to **have medicinal properties and is used to lower blood pressure** and treat arthritis.
- The **heartwood is quite sturdy** with deep red colour, and several trees were felled for wood during earlier days.
- It is **very susceptible to climate change and the present condition of the species is quite bad** with low regeneration performance.
- Though the flowering of *Gluta travancorica* usually happens in January, of late, the species has reported a tendency to extend the process due to climate change.
- It's an adaptation strategy to increase the chances of germination and maintain a minimum viable population.
- Though the **tree is also seen inside the shola forests near Ponmudi**, effective pollination hardly takes place in the habitat.
- Since the conservation measures in the past weren't totally successful, the Kerala Forest department is launching '**Save Chenkurinji**', a **campaign** to be implemented in various areas coming under the Achencoil Forest Division.

- As part of the campaign, the department looks to plant thousands of saplings in the ghat sectors of Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts.

Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve (ABR)-

- **It was established in 2001 and straddles the border of Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram Districts in Kerala** and Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari Districts in Tamil Nadu, South India at the southern end of the Western Ghats.
- **The ABR has got its name into the UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (BR).**
- Located in the Western Ghats in the south of the country, the Reserve has peaks reaching 1,868 m above sea level.
- Consisting mostly of tropical forest, the site is home to 2,254 species of higher plants including about 400 that are endemic.
- **Unique genetic reservoir of cultivated plants**, in particular cardamom, jamune, nutmeg, pepper and plantain.
- **Three wildlife sanctuaries, Shendurney, Peppara and Neyyar, are located in the site**, as well as the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger reserve.
- A number of tribal settlements comprising a total population of 3,000 inhabit the biosphere reserve.
- **Agasthyamalai is also home to the Kanikaran, one of the oldest surviving ancient tribes** in the world.
- Biosphere reserves are areas of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems promoting solutions to reconcile the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.