

India's first OECM site- Aravalli Biodiversity Park

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In news- On the occasion of World Wetlands Day (February 2) the Aravalli Biodiversity Park was declared India's first "other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECM) site.

What is the OECM tag?

- **OECM is a geographically defined area other than a Protected Area**, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity, with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values.
- The **OECM tag is given by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** to areas that are not protected but support rich biodiversity.
- It **does not bring any legal, financial or management implications**, but **designates the area as a biodiversity hotspot** on the international map.
- The OECM areas were defined at the Convention on Biological Diversity that was held in 2018.
- The proposal to declare Aravalli Biodiversity Park an OECM site was sent by the National Biodiversity Authority to the IUCN in December 2020.

About the Aravalli Biodiversity Park-

- It is spread across 390 acres near **Gurgaon, Haryana** and contains ecologically restored and semi-arid land vegetation.
- It has around 300 native plants, 101,000 trees, 43,000 shrubs, and several species of birds.
- The park was transformed into a city forest from a 40-

year-old mining site through the efforts of citizens, ecologists and scientists along with the help of the urban local body of Gurugram.

- The park had several mining pits and large, barren valley-like spaces.
- These valleys were restored with native plants that helped in seasonal water accumulation, making them special micro-habitats within the larger Aravalli landscape.
- The work started in the year 2010, when a citizens group called IAmGurgaon, wanted to save the Aravallis and create a public space.
- In April last year, the MCG signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Hero MotoCorp Limited for the ecological restoration and conservation of the Aravalli Biodiversity Park till 2031, and formally handed over its management in July.
- The **Aravallis, one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world**, are considered the green lungs of Delhi-NCR, a crucial water recharge zone for the region.