

Invasive alien plant species (IAS)

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In news– The report titled, ‘Project proposal for management of prioritised invasive alien plants in the forests of Kerala,’ has been submitted to the state government of Kerala recently.

Key highlights of the report-

- The report proposes to take urgent measures to remove two main alien species – **Senna spectabilis and Lantana camara**, which invaded 4,122 hectare and 13,361 hectare, respectively, in 36 forest divisions of the state.
- It has been noted that seven such species have infested the state’s forests largely.
- Lantana camara has invaded Parambikulam Tiger Reserve and Silent Valley national park, and was brought there for scientific purposes.
- It first came to Kolkata botanical garden, then to Bengaluru botanical garden.
- **Mimosa pudica** was imported to increase nitrogen content in tea estates in the state.
- **Eupatorium odoratum** was brought from the US as a contaminant along with wheat during extreme poverty days earlier.
- **Eigen migrentha**, a creeper that came here when rubber stumps were imported from Indonesia.

What are Invasive alien species (IAS)?

- **Invasive alien species (IAS) are species whose introduction and/or spread outside their natural past or present distribution threatens native biological diversity.**

- They **occur in all taxonomic groups, including animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms, and can affect all types of ecosystems.**
- According to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, IAS are one of the top causes of biodiversity loss and the second most common cause of species extinctions.
- Extreme **climatic events, such as hurricanes, floods and droughts can transport IAS to new areas and decrease the resistance of habitats to invasions.**
- They can reduce the resilience of natural habitats, agricultural systems and urban areas to climate change.
- They disrupt ecosystem services, particularly the pollination and natural pest control services.
- It will cause habitat degradation and accelerate fragmentation which subsequently force the wild animals to step out of forest into human habitations and farmlands in search of nutritious food.

