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BIMSTEC Charter

BIMSTEC Charter comes into force after Nepal's ratification.

- It is a testament to the shared commitment of the BIMSTEC Members to *promote regional cooperation* in various sectors.
- **Signed in** – ***2022, at the 5th BIMSTEC summit*** held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka was the chair).
- **Came into force in** – ***2024***, after Nepal's ratification, as it required every member country to ratify to come into force.
- **Significance** – Gives the organisation a *legal personality* and establishes an institutional framework.
- All decisions will be taken by *consensus* among current members.
- Conducting the leaders' summit every 2 years and indicates the procedure for the rotational chairmanship of the organisation.
- Establishes a mechanism for *admitting new members & observers*.
- Enables structured *diplomatic dialogue with other groupings* and countries.

BIMSTEC Charter came into force in the backdrop of stalled status of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which last time met in Kathmandu during November 2014.

- **Significance for India** – It is in line with India's willingness to shift its focus from SAARC to BIMSTEC as the latter is in greater harmony with India's 'Act East' policy.
- It reaffirms India's commitment to a prosperous, peaceful and sustainable neighbourhood.

BIMSTEC

• **BIMSTEC** – Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, a regional organization group of *littoral countries of the Bay of Bengal* with own flag and emblem.
• **Established in** – *1997*, by the *Bangkok Declaration*.
• The year 2022 marked the 25th anniversary of BISTEC formation.
• **Secretariat at** – *Dhaka, Bangladesh*.
• **Aim** – To foster economic & social development among members.
• **7 members** – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.



• Initially known as BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand- Economic cooperation) before the joining of Myanmar (1997), Bhutan (2004) and Nepal (2004).
• Thus, it includes *5 members from SAARC and 2 from ASE*AN.

References

1. The Hindu| BIMSTEC Charter came into force in 2024
2. The Print| Significance of BIMSTEC Charter

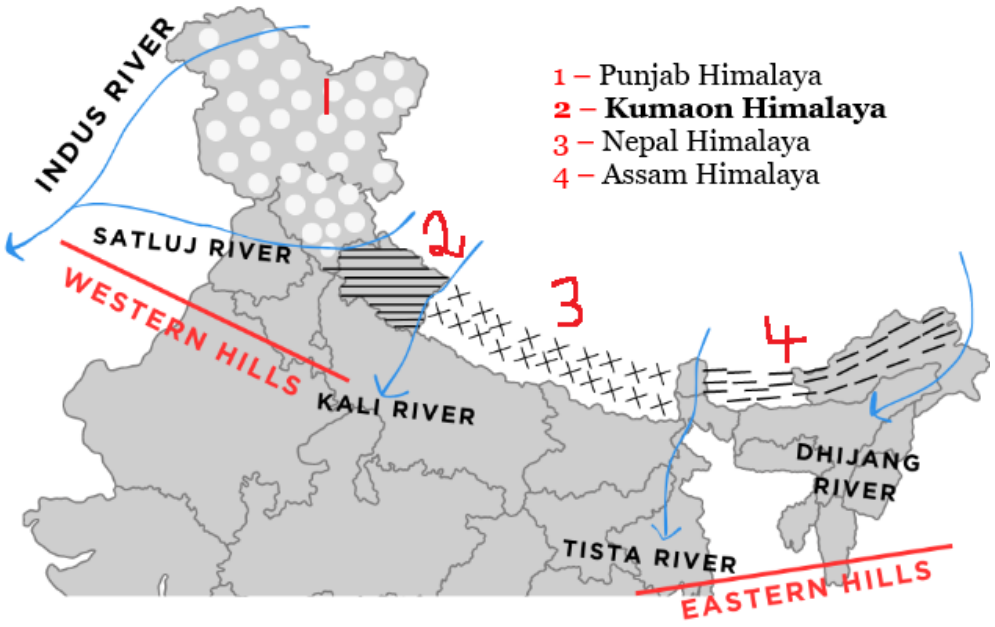
Kumaon Himalayas

SC halts 90-acre project in Kumaon Himalayas on a plea challenging 'single window' clearances.

- It is *a mountain range*, a part of *Western Himalayas*.

> *The 3 major geographical entities of Himalayas are the Himadri (greater Himalaya), Himachal (lesser Himalaya) and the Sivaliks (outer Himalaya).*

- **Himalayan features**
  - *Greater Himalayas* in the North
  - *Siwalik Range* in the South
- **Located at** – *Uttarakhand*, which has 2 major divisions Kumaon hills and Garhwal area.
- **Geographical boundaries** – It extends from the ***River Sutlej in west to the River Kali in the East***.
- It has Tibet on the north, Nepal on the east, Uttar Pradesh on the south and Garhwal are on the West.
- Moving westwards, one comes across the Panchchuli Massif, the Gori Valley, and the Pindari and Sunderdungha valleys.



- **Peaks** – It ascends to *7817m at Nanda Devi* and 7756m at Kamet, close to China.
- **3 hill districts** – Nainital, Almorah and Pithoragarh

***Lake District of India**, Nainital is India's very own Lake District.**Jim Corbett National Park** in Nainital is the oldest national park in India, established in 1936 for the protection of the Royal Bengal Tiger.*

- **Melting pot of indigenous people** – Tharus, Bhutiyas, Jaunsaris, Buksas, and Rajiswhose.
  - **Tharus** – Matrilineal.
  - **Jaunsaris** – A Polyandric society, one of last in the world.
  - **Bhotiyas** – Tibeto-Mongoloid features & are expert weavers.
- **Concerns** – Ecologically fragile and seismic-prone lower Himalayan ranges

Uttarakhand is home to 2 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the Valley of Flowers and Nanda Devi National Park.

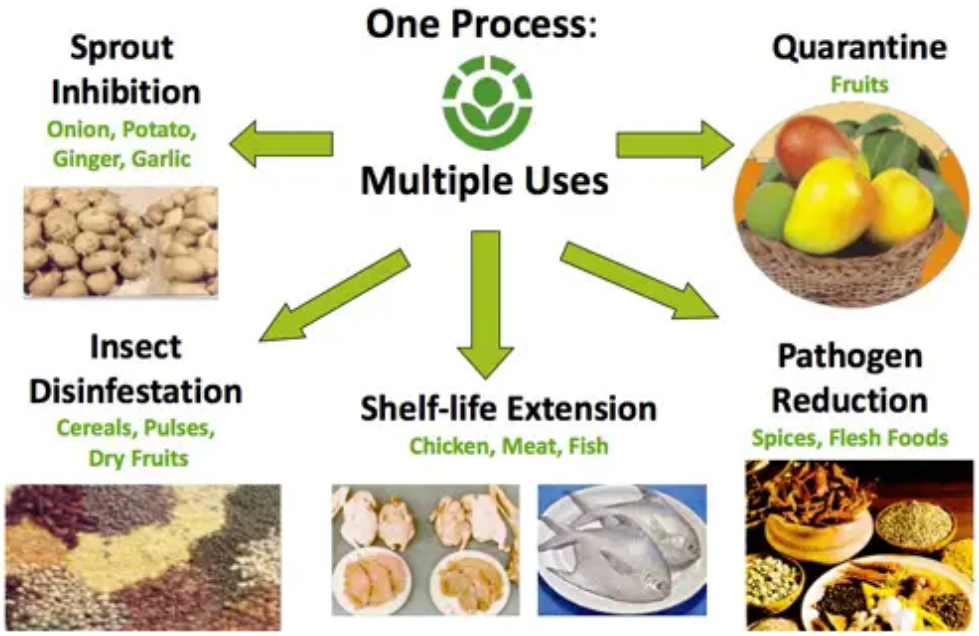
References

1. The Hindu| SC halts Construction project in Kumaon Himalaya
2. Kumaon| Kumaon division of Uttarakhand

Food Irradiation

Indian government plans to expand irradiation process to boost shelf life of onion buffer stock.

- **Definition** – It is the physical process in which *food and agricultural commodities*, in pre-packed form or in bulk, are exposed to a *controlled amount of ionizing radiations*.
  - **Sources** – Gamma rays, X-rays and electron beam
- **Principle** – Radiation by its direct effect on macromolecules and indirect effects through *radiolysis of water* inactivates essential biomolecules of insects, parasites & microorganism.
- **Prevention of Foodborne Illness** – It eliminate organisms like Salmonella and Escherichia coli (E. coli).
- **Preservation** – Destroy or inactivate organisms that cause spoilage and decomposition and *extend the shelf life of foods*.
- **Control of Insects** – Destroy insects and also decreases the need for other pest-control practices that may harm the fruit.
- **Delay of Sprouting and Ripening** – Inhibit sprouting (e.g., potatoes) and delay ripening of fruit to *increase longevity*.
- **Sterilization** – Sterilized foods can then be stored for years without refrigeration and used for immune compromised persons.



- **Pros** – It does ***not make foods radioactive***, compromise nutritional quality, or noticeably change the taste, texture, or appearance of food.

Quick Facts

- **Irradiation of Onion –** Department of Consumer Affairs has asked *2 agencies (NCCF and NAFED)* to identify 50 centres where onions procured for the buffer stock can be irradiated and stored.
- The procurements are done *under the Price Stabilisation Fund.*
- **NCCF –** The National Consumers' Cooperative Federation, aims to promote consumer cooperative movement in the country, to facilitate the voluntary formation and democratic functioning of cooperatives, based on self-reliance and mutual aid for overall economic betterment and financial autonomy.
- **NAFED –** The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India, was *established in 1958*, registered under the Multi State Co-operative Societies Act.
- It aims to promote Co-operative marketing of agricultural produce to benefit the farmers.
- **Price Stabilisation Fund** – Established *in 2014-15* under the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW).
- It aims to regulate the cost volatility of essential agricultural commodities, such as onion, potatoes and pulses.

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1. The Indian Express| Irradiating Onions to increase its Shelf Life
2. MOFPI| Radiation Processing for Food Preservation
3. FDA| Food Irradiation

Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)

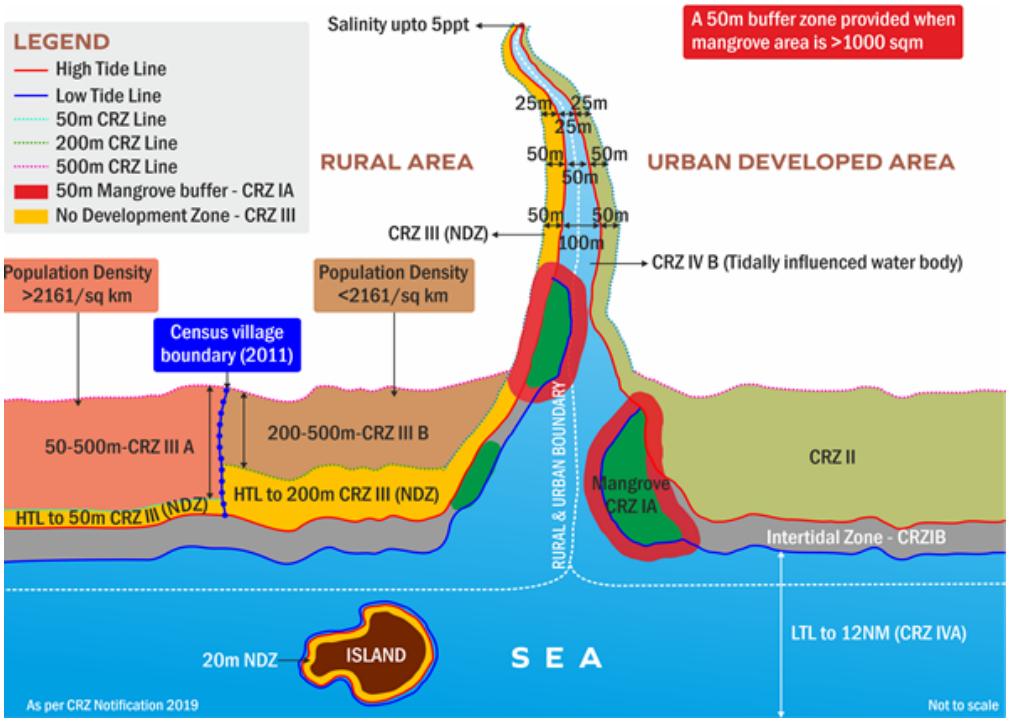
The National Green Tribunal (NGT) said that the Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority (TNSCZMA) nod is needed to set up facilities on Chennai city's beaches.

- **CRZ** – A *zone near the coastline* that includes the coastal area *up to 500m from the High Tide Line* & a stage of 100m along the banks of streams, estuaries, backwaters vulnerable to tidal variations.
- **Notified by** – Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change in *1991, later in 2011 and in 2019*.
- **Statutory backing** – ***Environment Protection Act 1986***.
- **Objectives** – To *conserve and protect* the unique environment of coastal stretches and marine areas and to ensure *livelihood security* to the fisher communities.
- To promote *sustainable development* based on scientific principles.

High Tide Line (HTL) *is the line on the land up to which the highest water line reaches during the Spring Tides.* ***Low Tide Line (LTL)*** *is the line on the land up*

to which the lowest water line reaches during the Spring Tides.

- **4 Zones** – CRZ I, II, III and CRZ IV.



- **CRZ-IA** – Ecologically Sensitive Areas
- **CRZ-IB** – Intertidal Zone
- **CRZ-II** – Developed Land Areas (Municipal Limits / Urban Areas)
- **CRZ-IIIA** – *Undeveloped rural areas*, with population density *more than 2161* per square kilometre.
  - **No Development Zone (NDZ)** – An area *up to 50m* from the HTL on the landward side.
- **CRZ-IIIB** - Undeveloped rural areas where the population density of *less than 2161* per square kilometre
  - **No Development Zone (NDZ)** – An area *up to 200m* from the HTL on the landward side.
- **CRZ-IVA** – It is the water area and the sea bed area between the *LTL up to 12 nautical miles* on the seaward side.
- **CRZ-IVB** – It include the water area and the bed area between LTL at the bank of the tidal influenced water body to the LTL on the opposite side of the bank.
- **Clearance authority**
  - **States** – For urban (CRZ-II) and rural (CRZ-III) areas.
  - **MOEFCC** – For CRZ-I & areas falling between the LTL and 12 nautical miles seaward.
- **Significance** – It strikes a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation.

References

1. The Hindu| Coastal body's nod needed to set up facilities on city's beaches

2. CZMP| Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)

Inverted Duty Structure

Government may look at addressing inverted duty structures in washing machines, air purifiers.

- **Inverted Duty Structure** – It refers to *taxation on inputs* at *higher rates than finished products*.
- In other words, the GST rate paid on purchases is more than the GST rate payable on sales.

Products		GST on	
Finished Goods (Output)	Raw Materials (Input)	Finished Goods	Raw Materials
Fabric Bag	Non-Woven Fabric	5%	12%

- **Impact** – It *affects the domestic industry*, as manufacturers have to pay a higher price for raw materials in terms of duty.
- *Expensive inputs make products costly* and cannot compete in the export market and in the domestic market, such products are *prone to cheaper imports.*
- **Other issues** – Taxpayers who face an inverted duty structure will always have *Input Tax Credit (ITC)* in their GST electronic credit ledger even after paying off the output tax liability.

> ***Input Tax Credit*** *means the GST paid by a taxable person on any purchase of goods and/or services that are used or will be used for business.*

- This creates *working capital issues* for the taxpayers, as crucial resources remain blocked in the form of ITC.
- **Refund** - A registered person may claim a *refund of unutilised ITC* that can be claimed at the end of any tax period.
- **Eligibility** – When the credit has accumulated on account of the rate of tax on inputs being higher than the rate of tax on output supplies.

References

1. Economic Times| Issues of Inverted Duty Structure
2. ECGC| Inverted Duty Structure



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