

## UN Champions of the Earth Award

### Why in news?

PM Modi was presented with UN Champions of the earth award for his unprecedented pledge to eliminate all single-use plastic in India by 2022.

### What is the Champions of the Earth?

- Champions of the Earth, launched in 2005, is the UN's highest environmental honor.
- It celebrates outstanding figures from the public and private sectors and from civil society.
- Their actions should have had a transformative positive impact on the environment.
- Champions of the Earth laureates has inspired critical action on behalf of the global environment through their political leadership, grassroots action, scientific innovation, or entrepreneurial vision.
- Champions of the Earth recognizes laureates in the following categories:
  1. Lifetime Achievement
  2. Policy Leadership
  3. Action and Inspiration
  4. Entrepreneurial Vision
  5. Science and Innovation

### Who are this year laureates?

- Joan Carling, Environment and indigenous rights defender, won the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Under the Policy Leadership category, French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian PM were awarded.
- Cochin International Airport , the world's first solar power airport, was awarded under the entrepreneurial vision.
- Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival Program won the award under the Inspiration And Action category.
- Under the Science and Innovation category, Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat won the award.

### What is the significance of receiving UNEP Award?

- The Highest Environmental Award to Indian PM and Cochin Airport shows the commitment of the country towards climate action.
- Prime Minister's support to the International Solar Alliance, a global partnership to scale up solar energy, shows the commitment to clean and renewable energy.
- The award is the recognition of the steps taken by the Country in the global stage.

### What did PM say in the acceptance of the award?

- Human beings and nature have a very special relationship as Mother Nature nurture and nourish us.
- Climate and calamity are directly related to culture; if climate is not the focus of culture, calamity cannot be prevented.
- Prime Minister ended his speech by proclaiming that the biggest achievement so far has been the attitudinal and behavioral change amongst the people.

### What corrective actions can be taken to reduce the ecological imbalance?

- The imbalances between our greed and necessities have led to grave ecological imbalances.
- The following 3 aspects can make a positive change, if we as a society act together.
- **Internal consciousness** is the first and foremost to bring a impactful ecological balance.
- The guiding light for internal consciousness can be derived from our ancient texts and national leaders.
- The Atharvaveda contains the Prithvi Sukta, which contains unparalleled knowledge about nature and the environment
- Similarly, ancients write about the Panch Tatvas ( Earth, Air, Water, Fire, Sky) and their basis for our life systems provides the necessary enlightenment.
- Mahatma Gandhi wrote extensively on the environment and even practised a lifestyle where compassion towards the environment was essential.
- He propounded the Doctrine of Trusteeship, which places the onus on us, the present generation, to ensure that our coming generations inherit a clean planet.
- He called for sustainable consumption so that the world does not face a resource crunch.
- Leading lifestyles that are harmonious and sustainable are a part of our ethos.
- The second aspect is **Public Awareness**.
- The need of the hour is talking, writing, debating, discussing and deliberating as much as possible on questions relating to the environment.
- At the same time, it is vital to encourage research and innovation on subjects relating to the environment.
- The third aspect is **Proactiveness**.
- Once a society are aware of our strong links with environmental conservation and discuss it regularly, people will become proactive.
- By following these aspects, the ecological balance can be attained.

**Source: UNEP, PM's Article 'Towards Harmony with Mother Earth', The Hindu**