

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 nurtures and nourishes 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 is aware of our strong links with environmental conservation and discusses 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