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**EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

# NBA Internship Programme — Reviving India's Biodiversity Governance Architecture

 **DOWN TO EARTH**

26 March 2026

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## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator •



# NBA Internship Programme — Reviving India's Biodiversity Governance Architecture



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GS3

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## INTERVIEW ANGLE

*"India is one of the 17 megadiverse countries but its biodiversity governance has significant implementation gaps. How can the three-tier structure under the Biological Diversity Act be strengthened?"*

## WHY IN NEWS

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) launched an internship programme for young researchers and students to work on biodiversity documentation, Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), and conservation planning at the national and state levels.

## The Editorial Argument

Down to Earth's editorial argues that the NBA internship is a welcome but inadequate step. India's biodiversity governance suffers from chronic institutional weakness: Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the local level — the most critical tier — remain largely non-functional. The editorial calls for a comprehensive overhaul of the three-tier structure with dedicated funding, technical capacity, and community engagement.

## India's Biodiversity Governance — Three-Tier Structure

The Biological Diversity Act, 2002 established a three-tier governance framework:

LEVEL	BODY	FUNCTION
National	National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), Chennai	Regulate ABS, advise government, approve foreign access to biological resources
State	State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)	Regulate access by Indian nationals; advise state governments
Local	Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)	Document local biodiversity (People's Biodiversity Registers); monitor conservation

## The BMC Problem

India should have **2.7 lakh+ BMCs** (one per local body — gram panchayat, municipality, corporation). Reality:

METRIC	DATA
BMCs required	~2.7 lakh
BMCs constituted (on paper)	~2.5 lakh
BMCs that have prepared People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)	~1.2 lakh
BMCs that are actually functional (meet regularly, monitor biodiversity)	Estimated <10%
ABS agreements executed via BMCs	<500 nationwide

The editorial argues that BMCs exist on paper but lack:

- **Technical expertise:** Members are elected panchayat representatives with no biodiversity training
- **Funding:** No dedicated budget line; dependent on state grants that rarely materialise
- **Legal awareness:** Most BMCs do not know they can charge access fees for commercial use of biological resources
- **Data tools:** PBRs are often incomplete, paper-based, and not digitised

## The Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023

Parliament amended the 2002 Act in 2023 with significant changes:

CHANGE	IMPLICATION
“Biological resources” access by AYUSH practitioners exempted from NBA approval	Reduces regulatory burden but also reduces ABS revenue for communities
“Bio-survey and bio-utilisation” replaced with “access”	Simplifies language but critics say it dilutes the scope of regulation
Penalties decriminalised (criminal → civil)	Reduces deterrence against biopiracy
Farmers, traditional practitioners, local communities further exempted	Protects traditional users but creates enforcement grey areas

## International Framework

India's biodiversity law implements obligations under:

TREATY	DETAIL
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Signed at Rio Earth Summit, 1992; India ratified 1994
Nagoya Protocol	Adopted 2010; entered into force 2014; ABS framework
Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework	COP-15, December 2022; 23 targets including 30x30
30x30 target	Protect 30% of land and sea by 2030
India's current protected area	~5.3% of land (national parks + wildlife sanctuaries)

## India's Megadiversity Status

India is one of **17 megadiverse countries** (identified by Conservation International) hosting ~8% of global biodiversity:

METRIC	DATA
Recorded species	~1,02,718 fauna; ~55,048 flora
Biodiversity hotspots (4 of 36 global)	Western Ghats, Eastern Himalayas, Indo-Burma, Sundaland
Endemic species	~33% of plants, ~40% of amphibians
Protected areas	1,000+ (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves)
Tiger reserves	56 (as of 2024)
UNESCO Biosphere Reserves	18

### UPSC RELEVANCE

NBA headquarters, Biological Diversity Act 2002, CBD (1992), Nagoya Protocol, 30x30 target, megadiverse countries, India's biodiversity hotspots

*Biodiversity conservation governance; three-tier institutional structure; ABS mechanism; implementation challenges of environmental legislation*

**★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA**
**NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY AUTHORITY (NBA):**

Established: 2003 under Biological Diversity Act, 2002

Headquarters: Chennai

Three-tier: NBA (national) → SBBs (state) → BMCs (local)

Functions: Regulate ABS, approve foreign access to biological resources, advise government

**BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ACT:**

Original: 2002; Amendment: 2023

Implements: CBD (1992) and Nagoya Protocol (2010)

2023 Amendment: AYUSH exemption, decriminalised penalties, simplified access terminology

BMCs: ~2.5 lakh constituted; <10% functional

**INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK:**

CBD: Signed Rio Earth Summit 1992; 196 parties

Nagoya Protocol: ABS framework; effective 2014

Kunming-Montreal GBF: COP-15, December 2022; 23 targets

30x30: Protect 30% land and 30% sea by 2030

**OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:**

India's biodiversity hotspots: Western Ghats, Eastern Himalayas, Indo-Burma, Sundaland

Megadiverse countries: 17 (India, Brazil, China, Australia, Mexico, Indonesia, etc.)

India's protected area: ~5.3% of land area

Tiger reserves: 56; UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: 18

PBR: People's Biodiversity Register — local documentation of biodiversity by BMCs

Sources: [Down to Earth](#) , [NBA](#) , [MoEFCC](#)



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## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujjari →](#)<https://ujjari.com/editorials/2026/03/biodiversity-nba-internship-conservation-governance/>

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