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India Leads Global Nagoya Protocol Compliance — 56% of All IRCCs Worldwide

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WHY IN NEWS

India has emerged as the **global leader** in issuing **Internationally Recognised Certificates of Compliance (IRCCs)** under the **Nagoya Protocol**, accounting for over **56% of all certificates worldwide** — 3,561 out of 6,311 globally. Only 34 of 142 registered countries have issued any IRCCs, making India's dominance even more striking. The **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** has mobilised **Rs 216.31 crore** since 2017, with Rs 139.69 crore disbursed to local communities.



WHAT IS THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL?

The **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)** is a supplementary agreement to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**. It was adopted on **October 29, 2010** in Nagoya, Japan and entered into force on **October 12, 2014**.

PARAMETER	DETAILS
Full name	Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation
Parent convention	Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992)
Adopted	October 29, 2010 (Nagoya, Japan)
In force	October 12, 2014
Parties	142 countries
India ratified	October 9, 2012

Three Pillars of the Nagoya Protocol

- 1 **Access** — users of genetic resources must obtain **Prior Informed Consent (PIC)** from the provider country
- 2 **Benefit-Sharing** — benefits (monetary and non-monetary) must be shared on **Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT)**
- 3 **Compliance** — countries must ensure users within their jurisdiction comply with ABS laws of provider countries

WHAT ARE IRCCS?

An **Internationally Recognised Certificate of Compliance (IRCC)** is a permit issued by a country's national authority that confirms:

- **PIC** (Prior Informed Consent) was obtained from the provider
- **MAT** (Mutually Agreed Terms) were established for benefit-sharing
- The access to genetic resources was **legal and documented**



IRCCs are published on the **ABS Clearing House** — a global database maintained by the CBD Secretariat. They serve as proof of legal access, preventing **biopiracy**.

INDIA'S IRCC PERFORMANCE

COUNTRY	IRCCS ISSUED	% OF GLOBAL TOTAL
India	3,561	56%+
France	964	15%
Spain	320	5%
Argentina	257	4%
Panama	156	2.5%
Kenya	144	2.3%
Rest of world	909	~15%

Why India Leads

- 1 Strong domestic legislation** — the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and Biological Diversity Rules, 2004 were in place before the Nagoya Protocol itself
- 2 NBA and SBBs** — the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA, Chennai) oversees access; 29 State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) and ~2.8 lakh Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the panchayat level provide a grassroots network
- 3 Proactive enforcement** — NBA has actively tracked Indian genetic resources used in patents worldwide and demanded ABS compliance
- 4 Digital infrastructure** — NBA operates an online ABS portal for IRCC issuance

Benefit-Sharing in Action

- NBA mobilised **Rs 216.31 crore** (2017-2025)
- **Rs 139.69 crore** disbursed to **local communities** (tribals, forest dwellers, farmers)
- Benefits include monetary payments, technology transfer, capacity building, and co-authorship in research



BIOPIRACY — WHY THIS MATTERS

Biopiracy is the unauthorised use of traditional knowledge or genetic resources from developing countries by corporations or researchers in developed countries without benefit-sharing. Infamous cases involving India:

- **Turmeric patent** (1995) — US patent for turmeric’s wound-healing properties; revoked after India’s CSIR challenge
- **Neem patent** (1994) — European patent on neem extract; revoked in 2005 after India-EU challenge
- **Basmati rice** (1997) — US company RiceTec tried to patent Basmati; partially revoked

India’s IRCC leadership means its genetic resources are now accessed through a **legal, documented, benefit-sharing framework** — making biopiracy legally actionable.

INDIA’S BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

INSTITUTION	ROLE
National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), Chennai	Regulates access by foreign nationals/companies
State Biodiversity Boards (29 SBBs)	Regulates access by Indian companies/researchers
Biodiversity Management Committees (~2.8 lakh)	Grassroots (panchayat) level documentation
People’s Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)	Community-level documentation of bio-resources

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3 — Environment & Biodiversity

- Nagoya Protocol: ABS framework, PIC, MAT, IRCC
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002 — NBA, SBBs, BMCs
- Biopiracy: turmeric, neem, basmati cases
- CBD and its protocols (Cartagena, Nagoya)

Prelims Fast Facts:

- India’s IRCCs: **3,561** (56% of global total of 6,311)
- Nagoya Protocol adopted: **2010**; in force: **2014**
- India’s domestic law: **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**



- NBA headquarters: **Chennai**
- BMCs operate at: **panchayat level** (~2.8 lakh)
- NBA revenue mobilised: **Rs 216.31 crore** (2017-2025)

FACTS CORNER

- India is one of **17 megadiverse countries** — hosting ~7-8% of the world's recorded species across only 2.4% of global land area
- The **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** was amended in **2023** to simplify compliance for Indian companies and codified AYUSH practitioners' access to biological resources
- **People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs)** document traditional knowledge at the village level — India has completed PBRs for over **2.6 lakh panchayats**, creating the world's largest grassroots biodiversity documentation effort
- The CBD has three protocols: **Cartagena Protocol** (biosafety, 2003), **Nagoya Protocol** (ABS, 2014), and the **Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol** (liability for living modified organisms)
- India's **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** contains 3.4 lakh formulations from Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, and Yoga — used to challenge biopiracy patents at patent offices worldwide

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