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NBA Designates CMLRE and ARI as National Biodiversity Repositories – India's Repository Network Reaches 20

9 April 2026 · **GS3**

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9 April 2026 · 4 min read · 1 tag

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WHY IN NEWS:

The **National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)** notified two new institutions as national repositories under **Section 39 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, bringing India's total count to **20 repositories**. The new designations are the CMLRE in Kochi and the Agharkar Research Institute in Pune.



WHAT ARE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY REPOSITORIES?

National Biodiversity Repositories are **designated institutions** that systematically preserve biological materials (specimens, cultures, genetic material, documentation) for long-term conservation, scientific research, and regulatory compliance.

Under the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, the NBA can designate institutions as **national repositories** if they meet standards for:

- Scientific documentation and **taxonomy**
- Long-term preservation of biological material
- Traceability of collection provenance (where specimens were collected)
- Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) compliance

The repositories serve as:

- **Reference collections** — scientific standards for species identification
- **ABS documentation** — provenance records required under the Nagoya Protocol
- **Biopiracy prevention** — India can assert prior art if biological resources are used commercially without consent

THE TWO NEW REPOSITORIES

1. CMLRE — Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology, Kochi, Kerala

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- **Referral Centre:** Bhavasagara Referral Centre
- **Holdings:** 3,500+ taxonomically identified voucher specimens of marine organisms
- **Significance:** India has a 7,516 km coastline and an EEZ of 2.02 million sq km — marine biodiversity documentation is a priority
- **Context:** CMLRE also conducts deep-sea research relevant to polymetallic nodule surveys and marine ecology

2. ARI — Agharkar Research Institute, Pune, Maharashtra

- **Autonomous institution** under Department of Science and Technology (DST)
- **Collection:** MACS Collection of Microorganisms (MACS-Pune) — including bacterial, fungal, and yeast cultures



- **Significance:** Microbial repositories are critical for pharmaceutical research, bioprospecting, and industrial biotechnology — areas where biopiracy risk is highest

LEGAL FRAMEWORK: BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ACT 2002 AND NAGOYA PROTOCOL

Biological Diversity Act, 2002

India's primary law on biodiversity conservation and ABS (Access and Benefit Sharing).

PROVISION	DETAILS
Section 39	Empowers Central Government to designate national repositories
Section 3	Regulates access by foreign entities to India's biological resources
Section 6	Requires prior approval of NBA for IPR applications using Indian biological resources
Section 18	Establishes NBA — composition, functions
Section 22	State Biodiversity Boards (SBB) — one per state
Section 41	Biodiversity Management Committees (BMC) — at local body level

Nagoya Protocol

The **Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (2010)** is a supplementary agreement to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** that provides a transparency framework for ABS.

Key elements:

- **Prior Informed Consent (PIC)** — must be obtained from provider country before accessing biological resources
- **Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT)** — conditions for benefit sharing must be agreed in advance
- **IRCC (Internationally Recognised Certificate of Compliance)** — issued when access occurs legally
- India ratified the Nagoya Protocol in **2012**

National repositories support Nagoya Protocol compliance by maintaining **provenance-traced collections** that establish prior documentation of India's biological resources.



INDIA'S REPOSITORY NETWORK: CONTEXT

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Plant collections	National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR), New Delhi
Animal specimens	Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Kolkata
Marine specimens	CMLRE, Kochi (newly designated)
Microorganisms	MACS-ARI, Pune (newly designated); MTCC (Chandigarh)
Fungal/bacterial	IMTECH, Chandigarh

With 20 repositories, India now has a more comprehensive system — though gaps remain in documenting **northeast India's plant diversity** and **Andaman-Nicobar deep-sea biodiversity**.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3 — Environment and Ecology

- Biological Diversity Act 2002 — structure, NBA, SBB, BMC
- Nagoya Protocol — ABS framework, PIC, MAT, IRCC
- Biopiracy — cases (turmeric, neem, basmati), India's defensive publications
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) — 3 objectives: conservation, sustainable use, ABS

Mains Angle

“India's national biodiversity repository network is a critical tool for preventing biopiracy and ensuring equitable benefit sharing. Examine the legal framework and implementation gaps.” (GS3)



FACTS CORNER

ITEM	FACT
NBA	National Biodiversity Authority; established under BD Act 2002; HQ: Chennai
Section 39, BD Act	Empowers designation of national repositories
Total repositories now	20 (up from 18)
CMLRE	Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology; Kochi, Kerala; MoES
CMLRE holdings	3,500+ taxonomically identified marine voucher specimens
ARI	Agharkar Research Institute; Pune, Maharashtra; under DST
ARI collection	MACS Collection of Microorganisms
Nagoya Protocol	2010; supplementary to CBD (1992); ABS framework
India ratification of Nagoya Protocol	2012
CBD adopted	1992 (Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro)
India's EEZ	2.02 million sq km
India's coastline	7,516 km
Biopiracy definition	Appropriation of biological resources and traditional knowledge without consent or fair compensation
NBPGR	National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources; New Delhi; key repository for plant genetic material

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