

4. Draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill, 2022

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Mines has recently notified Draft Geo-heritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill, 2022.

Highlights

- The Bill is aimed at providing for the declaration, preservation, protection and maintenance of geo-heritage sites and geo-relics of national importance, for geological studies, education, research and awareness purposes.
- The GSI has declared 32 geo-heritage sites, including the Siwalik Fossil Park, Himachal Pradesh; Stromatolite Fossil Park, Jharmarkotra Rock Phosphate deposit, Udaipur district, Akal Fossil Wood Park, Jaisalmer, but several are in stages of disrepair.
- Geoheritage sites are “sites containing geo-relics and phenomena, stratigraphic type sections, geological structures and geomorphic landforms including caves, natural rock-sculptures of national and international interest; and includes such portion of land adjoining the site,” that may be required for their conservation or to access to such sites.
- It would authorize the Central Government to declare a geoheritage site to be of national importance.
- This would be under the provisions of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (RFCTLARR Act).
- Provision is made for compensation to the owner or occupier of land who incurs loss or damage from the land due to the exercise of any power under this Act.
- The market value of any property will be ascertained in accordance with the principles set out in the RFCTLARR Act
- Penalties for destruction, removal, defacement or contravention of any direction issued by the Director General, GSI in the geo-heritage site are mentioned.
- There is a penalty of imprisonment which may extend to six months or fine which may extend to Rs.5 lakh, or both. In the case of a continuing contravention, an additional fine of upto Rs.50,000 for every day of continuing contravention may be imposed.