Preserving Geological Heritage

What is the issue?

- Billions of years old geological features are being vandalised in many areas in the country in the name of developmental activities.
- Efforts need to be taken to safeguard our geological structures.

What is the significance of geological structures?

- India’s tumultuous geological past is recorded in its rocks and landscapes.
- They should be considered as our non-cultural heritage.
- The eological impacts of the distruction of geological sites are also a major concern in this era of rapidly changing climate patterns.

How vulnerable are these structures?

- Land sections containing fossils & geo-faults are lost forever due to construction of highways and real estate development.
- India accounts for more than 30% of stone production in the world.
- This industry has been unscientifically mined and managed.
- It is generally outside the pale of public scrutiny, and remains unregulated.
Along with weak environmental laws governing it, India’s topography and geological heritage stand to be lost forever.

The Geological Survey of India is the agency entrusted with the protection of geological features.

More than 26 sites have been selected for targeted preservation.

But not much has changed on the ground.

What should be done?

A comprehensive inventory of geological structures in the country needs to be created by GSI.

A sustainable conservation approach for our natural geological heritage should be formulated as it has been done for biodiversity.

Geological features that should be declared as national assets include bodies of unusual rock or mineral types, landforms holding records of natural events of the past & significant fossil localities.

Geo-conservation should be made a major factor in land use planning.

Stringent legal framework needs to be evolved to support such conservation strategies.

Educational outreach programmes about these treasures need to be organised for officials, politicians and the public.

How to educate people?
The collective memory reinforced through memorials & museums will make communities aware.

**Japanese initiative** - The Kobe earthquake memorial park in Japan preserves a section of the fault line (around 150m) which ruptured during the 1995 disaster through the town of Hokudan.

We could emulate this Japanese model to preserve the memory of major geological events.

On this line, the now-defunct Kolar gold mines could be developed into a geological museum with an educational outreach unit for students.

**Source: The Hindu**

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