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# New Plateau Found in the Western Ghats

**Why in news:**
Recently, a rare low-altitude basalt plateau was found in Maharashtra's Western Ghats. This discovery can aid in the research of how climate change affects the survival of species and raise awareness of the need to conserve rock outcrops and their enormous biodiversity importance on a worldwide scale.

**Key Discoveries Relate to the Plateau:**
**Low-Altitude Basalt Plateau:** The previous three types of plateaus in the area were laterites at high and low altitudes and basalt at high altitudes. This is the fourth type of plateau to be discovered in the area.
**Diverse Biodiversity:** 76 kinds of plants and shrubs from 24 distinct families were identified during the study of the plateau.
This is significant because the plateau hosts a few rare species and, together with the other three rock outcrops, shares a common ecosystem with them.

This offers a special model system to research the interactions of the species in various environmental settings.

## ABOUT THE WESTERN GHATS

The Western Ghats, which extend through the states of Kerala, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, is a chain of mountains that run parallel to India's western coast.

One of India's four hotspots for biodiversity on a global scale is the Western Ghats.

The Indo-Burma area, the Himalayas, and Sundaland make up the remaining three (including the Nicobar Islands).

It is acknowledged by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

## MAJOR THREATS

### Developmental Pressures

The region is seriously threatened by urbanization, agricultural expansion, and livestock grazing.

The Western Ghats region is thought to be home to some 50 million people, placing development pressures on the area that are orders of magnitude greater than those on many protected areas across the world.

**Issues Related to Biodiversity:**

The Ghats continue to be impacted by forest loss, habitat fragmentation, habitat degradation by exotic plant species, encroachment, and conversion.

The Western Ghats are becoming more fragmented due to development pressure, making it harder to find wildlife corridors and adequate habitats outside of Protected Areas.

**Climate Change:** The climate catastrophe has accelerated in recent years:

Floods have devastated Kerala's ghat regions three times in the last four years (2018–21), killing hundreds of people each time and severely damaging infrastructure and livelihoods.

The Konkan ghat areas were devastated by flash floods and landslides in 2021.

With the Arabian Sea rising, cyclones are also intensifying, making the west coast particularly vulnerable**.**

**Rapid industrialization:**

Due to the absence of the Western Ghats ESA strategy, more polluting businesses, quarries and mines, roads, and townships are likely to be proposed.

This suggests that the region's delicate landscape will sustain further harm in the future.

**Significance:**

The Indian monsoon weather patterns are influenced by the Ghats, which moderate the area's warm tropical temperature.

Rainy monsoon winds that come in from the southwest are blocked by them.

Tropical evergreen woods and 325 species that are endangered worldwide can be found in the Western Ghats.

The Western Ghats are characterized by plateaus, which are notable due to the abundance of unique species.

**Piyush Singh**