Teak Defoliator Moth

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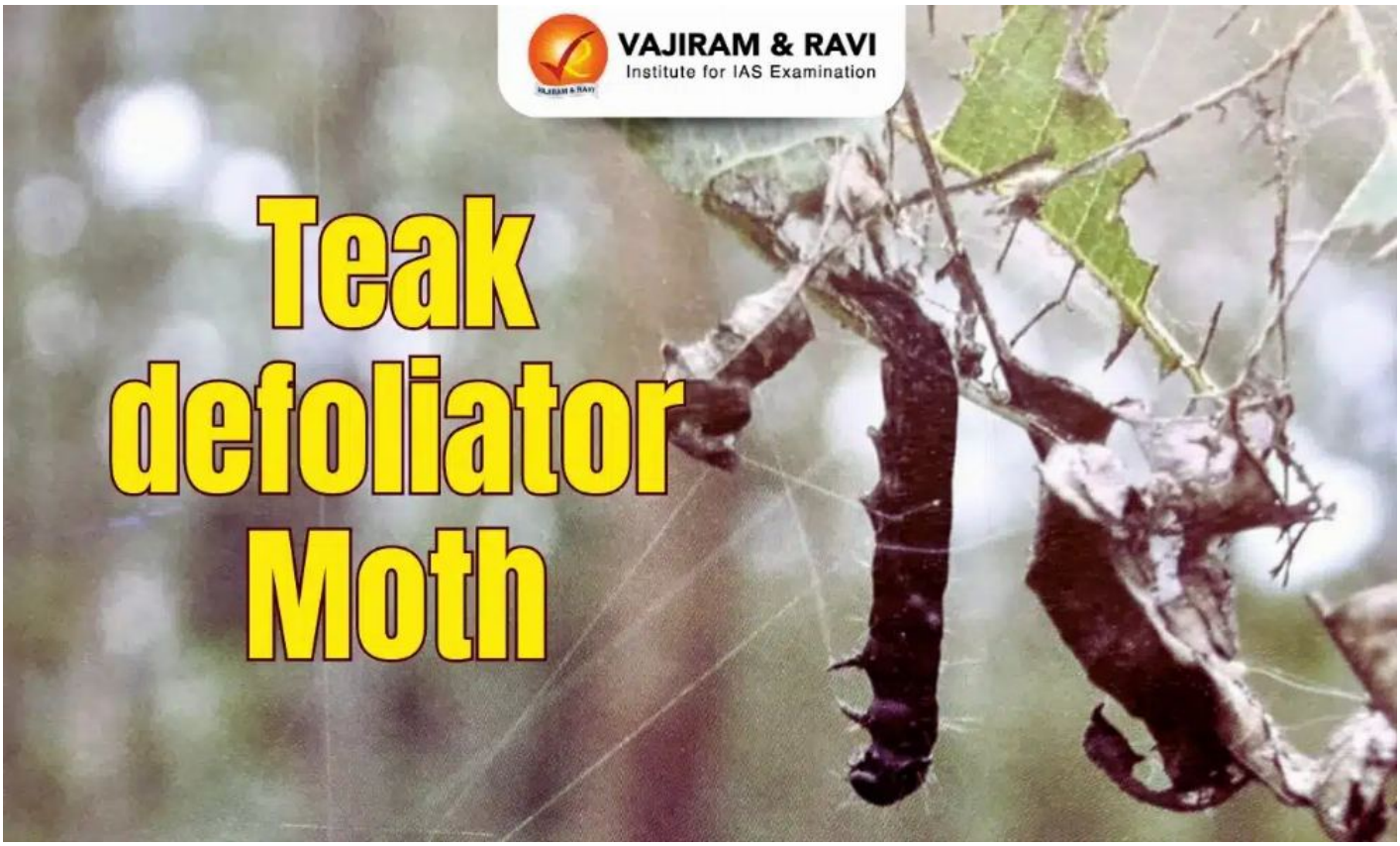

Teak Defoliator Moth Latest News

Recently, the Kerala Forest Research Institute has identified and mass-produced Hyblaea puera Nucleopolyhedrosis Virus (HpNPV) which offers eco-friendly alternative to chemical pesticides and prevents massive defoliation in teak caused by teak defoliator moth (Hyblaea puera).

About Teak Defoliator Moth

- It is a **moth and cryptic species** and a well-known pest which affects teak trees.
- It also attacks an **alternative host plant, Avicennia marina,** a **prominent mangrove tree species** abundant along the west coast of India, causing severe and extensive defoliation of Mangroves.
- The teak defoliator Hyblaea puera was first recognized as a pest of teak in 1898 in the **Konni Forest Division in Kerala State of India.**
- **Distribution:** It is native to **South Asia and South-east Asia and mainly** occurs in forests across southern Asia from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, through Thailand and the rest of south-east Asia to New Guinea, and north Queensland in Australia.

- The outbreaks of this pest are a regular annual phenomenon in teak plantations.
- **Impact:** It causes significant **economic losses on timber production** from teak plantations during their seasonal outbreaks.

How does it Affect Teak Tree?

- Larvae cause damage and attack commences with onset of monsoon rain.
- When the larvae attack, the tree spends its energy regenerating leaves instead of growing.
- **Nature of damage:** These moths defoliate trees and eat entire leaves and leave midrib.

What is Hyblaea Puera Nucleopolyhedrosis Virus?

- It is a **potential biocontrol agent** of the teak defoliator Hyblaea puera.
- It is considered to be the most promising biocontrol agent of this pest according to laboratory and field studies.
- It causes **lethal infection in the pest larvae** and prevents widespread defoliation of teak trees.
- It multiplies at least a trillion times inside a single larva. When the body breaks open, it releases huge quantities of inoculum.
- Even if the infection is sub-lethal, the virus stays in the insect, gets passed on to the next generation, and proves lethal then.

Source: TH
