



Rhinos to be Re-introduced in Uttarakhand

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Why in News

Recently, the **Uttarakhand State Wildlife Board** has cleared a proposal by the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** to introduce rhinoceroses in the **Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR)**.

Around **10 rhinos** will be brought in CTR in the **first phase** and 10 more would be added subsequently. A proposal will be sent to the Center for transporting rhinos from either Assam or West Bengal or both.

Key Points

Reasons for Translocation

- This has been done to **boost tourism** and **revive the habitats of species that survive on low-height grass**.
 - Rhinos reduce the size of elephant grass by eating it which would encourage species thriving on lower-height grass like- Hog Deer, Cheetal, Sambar and Swamp Deer.
- **Geographical terrain and environmental conditions** in CTR are suitable for rhinos. Valley habitats bounded on either side by the lower Himalayas (north), Shivalik Hills (south) and the Ramganga Reservoir (east) are the ideal sites. They would act as natural barriers to rhino movement and will minimise **man-animal conflict**.
- The rhino's range, **once continuous** across the **flood plains of the Indus, Ganges and the Brahmaputra**, now limited to small fragmented pockets in India and Nepal as a result of anthropogenic pressures and poaching, as per the WWI experts.
 - Re-introduction into habitats in the historic range would create safety-net populations for the species and also restore their ecological role in these faunally-degraded habitats.
 - Rhinos are poached because their **horns are considered an aphrodisiac**.

- Every translocated animal would be fitted with a **GPS radio-collar** for monitoring their **ranging patterns, foraging habits, demography and habitat use.**

The data will be shared with the Forest Department which would be responsible for the safety of these re-introduced rhinos.

Wildlife Institute of India

- It is an autonomous institution under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.**
- It was established in **1982.**
- It is based in **Dehradun, Uttarakhand.**
- It offers training programs, academic courses, and advisory in wildlife research and management.

Corbett Tiger Reserve

- It is located in **Nainital district of Uttarakhand.**
- The **Project Tiger** was launched in 1973 in **Corbett National Park**, which is part of Corbett Tiger Reserve.
- **Ramganga, Sonanadi, Mandal, Palain and Kosi** are the major rivers flowing through the Corbett National Park.
- There are **50 Tiger Reserves** in India as of August, 2019.

Source: IE