



Study to Revive Bison Population | Jharkhand | 21 Jan 2025

Why in News?

Recently, the **Jharkhand** Forest Department launched a **study to revive the declining population of [Bison](#)**, commonly known as Gaur, at [Palamu Tiger Reserve \(PTR\)](#).

Key Points

- **Bison Population Status in Jharkhand:**
 - Bison, an important food source for big cats, has **gone extinct across Jharkhand**, except in the Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR).
 - The **current bison population in PTR is between 50 and 70**, a significant decline from the 1970s, when it stood at around 150.
- **Reasons for Decline:**
 - Major factors include [poaching](#), **infections**, and **habitat disturbances** caused by local cattle.
 - Domestic cattle, numbering over 1.5 lakh, occupy the bison's habitat, consuming their food and spreading infections like [mouth and foot disease](#).
- **Current Conservation Efforts:**
 - The PTR authority has **initiated a study to assess factors affecting bison survival**, including habitat improvement and grass species preferences.
 - A comprehensive revival plan will be created after the study.
 - To curb the spread of diseases, a **vaccination drive is underway to vaccinate 1.5 lakh domestic cattle** from 190 surrounding villages.
 - Grassland improvement and anti-poaching measures are also being strengthened.
- **Core and Buffer Zone Management:**
 - PTR spans 1,129.93 sq km, with 414.08 sq km designated as core (critical [tiger](#) habitat) and 715.85 sq km as a buffer zone.
 - [Betla National Park](#) occupies 226.32 sq km of PTR, with 53 sq km in the buffer zone open to tourists.
 - Efforts are underway to **relocate eight of the 34 villages within PTR limits to protect core habitats**.

The Bison

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▪ **About:**

- The **Indian Bison or Gaur (*Bos gaurus*)** is the **tallest species of wild cattle** found in **India and largest extant bovine**.
- There are about **13,000 to 30,000 gaurs in the world** with approximately **85% of the population present in India**.
 - The [first-ever population estimation exercise](#) of the Indian gaur carried out in [the Nilgiris Forest Division](#) in February 2020 estimated around **2,000 Indian gaurs to be inhabiting the division**.

▪ **Geography:**

- It is native to **South and Southeast Asia**.
- In **India**, they are very much prevalent in the **Western Ghats**.
 - They are primarily found in [Nagarhole National Park](#), [Bandipur National Park](#), [Masinagudi National Park](#) and [Biligirirangana Hills \(BR Hills\)](#).
- It is also found in **Burma and Thailand**.

▪ **Habitat:**

- They prefer **evergreen forests and moist deciduous forests**.
- They are **not found in the Himalayas** with an altitude greater than 6,000 ft.

▪ **Conservation Status:**

- **Vulnerable** in [IUCN Red List](#).
- Included in the **Schedule I** of the [Wild Life Protection Act, 1972](#).

Benami Transactions in Pench Tiger Reserve | Madhya Pradesh | 21 Jan 2025

Why in News?

The **Benami Prohibition Unit (BPU)** of the [Income Tax Department](#) detected three Benami transactions in the [Pench Tiger Reserve](#), Madhya Pradesh.

Key Points

▪ Details of Benami Transactions:

- Two Benami transactions involved land with existing resorts, while the third pertained to land intended for a resort.
- The IT Department's Benami Prohibition Unit (BPU) detected and attached all three properties under [the Benami Transactions \(Prohibition\) Amendment Act 2016](#).
 - Madhya Pradesh **leads the country in Benami property attachments** with over 1,400 properties worth Rs 900-950 crore.

▪ Legal Context in Scheduled Tribal Areas:

- **Section 165** of [the Code of Land Revenue](#) prohibits selling tribal land to non-tribals in Madhya Pradesh's [notified scheduled areas](#).
- **Tribals may lease land to non-tribals** in notified and non-notified rural areas without district collector approval.
- Beneficial owners **circumvented this ban by using tribal proxies** to purchase the land and then leasing it back for resort construction.

▪ Significance of Benami Property Attachments in Tiger Reserves:

- These attachments represent a rare crackdown on Benami transactions within [tiger reserves](#).
- Other resorts in tribal-dominated areas near tiger reserves and [wildlife sanctuaries](#) are under investigation for similar violations.

Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR)

- PTR is the **joint pride of both Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra**.
- The Reserve is located in the **southern reaches of [the Satpura hills](#) in the Seoni and Chhindwara districts in Madhya Pradesh**, and continues in **Nagpur district in Maharashtra** as a separate Sanctuary.
 - It was declared a [National Park](#) by the Government of Maharashtra in 1975 and the identity of a [tiger reserve](#) was granted to it in the year 1992.
 - However, PTR **Madhya Pradesh was granted the same status in 1992-1993**. It is one of the **major Protected Areas of [Satpura-Maikal ranges](#) of the [Central Highlands](#)**.
- It is among the sites notified as [Important Bird Areas \(IBA\)](#) of India.
 - The IBA is a programme of Birdlife International which aims to **identify, monitor and protect a global network of IBAs for conservation** of the world's birds and associated diversity.

The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act 2016

- The Act amended the Original Act (Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Act 1988) and renamed it as **Prohibition of Benami Property Transaction Act, 1988**.
- **The Act defines a benami transaction as a transaction where:**
 - a property is **held by or transferred to a person**, but has **been provided for or paid by another person**.
 - the transaction is made in a **fictitious name**
 - the **owner is not aware of or denies knowledge of the ownership** of the property,
 - the **person** providing the consideration for the property is **not traceable**.

Why in News?

Recently, the **Commissioner of Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC)**, distributed [Dogri-language PM SVANidhi](#) plates to street vendors of Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Points

- **Overview of PM SVANidhi Scheme:**
 - PM SVANidhi is a **micro-credit initiative** launched by [the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs](#) under [the Atma Nirbhar Bharat program](#).
 - The scheme offers working capital loans, encourages regular repayments, and promotes digital transactions to improve the livelihoods of street vendors.
 - The **vendors are urged to fully utilize the scheme to enhance their income and economic stability.**
- **Guidelines for Street Vendors:**
 - Vendors were advised to **avoid placing carts on footpaths or roads to prevent inconvenience to pedestrians and reduce traffic congestion.**
 - They are urged to **use designated vending zones within municipal jurisdiction** for smoother traffic flow and public convenience.

Street Vendor

- Any person engaged in vending of articles, goods, wares, food items or merchandise of daily use or offering services to the public in a street, footpath, pavement etc., from a temporary built up structure or by moving from place to place.
- The goods supplied by them include vegetables, fruits, ready-to-eat street food, tea, pakodas, breads, eggs, textile, apparel, artisan products, books/ stationery etc. and the services include barber shops, cobblers, pan shops, laundry services etc.
- Around 49.48 lakh street vendors have been identified in India.
 - **Uttar Pradesh has the maximum** at 8.49 lakh, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 7.04 lakh.
 - Delhi has only 72,457 street vendors.
 - **No street vendor** has been identified in Sikkim.

Haryana to Dispose and Recycle Old Vehicles | Haryana | 21 Jan 2025

Why in News?

The **Haryana Government** has notified [the Vehicle Scrappage and Recycling Facility Incentive Policy, 2024](#), to ensure the proper **disposal and recycling of old vehicles** and promote environmental sustainability by reducing [pollution](#).

Key Points

- **About the Decision:**
 - It is highlighted that [the National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#) set a 10-year limit for diesel vehicles and 15 years for petrol vehicles in the National Capital Region (NCR).
 - This regulation **led to a continuous increase in the number of condemned vehicles**, prompting the Haryana Government to act.

▪ Environmental and Economic Benefits:

- The policy aims to **protect the environment by reducing pollution and promoting economic growth.**
- Vehicle owners would receive financial benefits, and the public would gain relief from abandoned vehicles cluttering roads, streets, and public spaces.

▪ Implementation as an Industrial Scheme:

- The state government **plans to implement the policy as an industrial scheme** with incentives such as capital subsidies or state GST reimbursement for new industrial units.
- The Department of Industries and Commerce will develop a 10-year land leasing module through [the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation \(HSIIDC\).](#)

▪ Financial Support for Entrepreneurs:

- The government will provide up to **Rs 20 crore in financial assistance**, covering **10% of project costs (excluding land)**, to startups, women entrepreneurs, and candidates from **the Scheduled Caste category** for venture capital funds.
- Complete stamp duty reimbursement is offered in D-category industrial blocks, while B and C blocks receive a 75% reimbursement.

▪ Incentives for Centres of Excellence and Skill Development:

- The government will provide a **50% grant of project costs, up to Rs 5 crore, for establishing Centres of Excellence.**
- An additional Rs 50 lakh will be granted to **10 industries that contribute to youth skill development and employment** within the state.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a specialised body for swift resolution of environmental and natural resource cases.

About

- 🕒 **Establishment:** By National Green Tribunal Act 2010
- 🕒 **Objective:** Quick resolution of environmental & natural resource cases
- 🕒 **Case Resolution:** Within 6 months
- 🕒 **Places of Sitting:** New Delhi (Principal), Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata, and Chennai

Structure

- 🕒 **Composition:** Chairperson, Judicial Members, and Expert Members
- 🕒 **Tenure:** Up to 5 years/until age 65 (no reappointment)
- 🕒 **Appointments:** Chairperson - Central Government (with the CJI's consultation)
 - 🕒 10-20 judicial members & 10-20 expert members - Selection Committee

India is the third country globally (after Australia and New Zealand) and the first developing nation to establish a specialised environmental tribunal like NGT.

Powers & Jurisdiction

- 🕒 **Jurisdiction:** Civil cases on environmental issues and rights
- 🕒 **Suo Motu Powers:** Granted since 2021
- 🕒 **Roles:** Adjudicatory, preventative, and remedial
- 🕒 **Procedures:** Follows Principles of natural justice
 - 🕒 Not bound by the CPC, 1908 or Indian Evidence Act, 1872
- 🕒 **Principles:** Sustainable Development; Precautionary; Polluter pays
- 🕒 **Orders:** Executable as civil court decrees; offers relief and compensation (**decisions are binding**)
- 🕒 **Appeals:** Tribunal can review its decisions.
 - 🕒 If decision fails - Appeal to the SC to be filed within 90 days

NGT deals with Civil Cases under

- 🕒 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- 🕒 Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977
- 🕒 Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- 🕒 Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- 🕒 Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- 🕒 Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- 🕒 Biological Diversity Act, 2002



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NGT Notice to Haryana Pollution Board | Haryana | 21 Jan 2025

Why in News?

The [National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#) issued a notice to [the Haryana State Pollution Control Board \(HSPCB\)](#) in response to an appeal filed by **the Freedom Park Society, Gurugram**, challenging the Rs 1.55 crore penalty imposed as **Environmental Compensation (EC)** for faults in its [Sewage Treatment Plant \(STP\)](#).

Key Points

- **Cause of STP Damage:**
 - It was argued that **stormwater flooding in August 2022** caused damage to the STP, as heavy rainfall affected the entire Gurugram area.
- **Remedial Measures Taken:**
 - Following the [natural disaster](#), the Freedom Park Society immediately repaired the STP and restored its compliance with environmental norms.
 - Private lab test reports confirm that the STP resumed functioning properly after repairs.
- **Contention Over the Penalty:**
 - The penalty for 415 days of violation is arbitrary, irrational, and contrary to the "**Polluter Pay**" principle established by [the Supreme Court](#) in cases such as **Indian Council for Enviro vs. Union of India** and [Vellore Citizens Welfare vs. Union of India](#).

Haryana State Pollution Control Board

- It was formed as a **statutory organisation** by Government of Haryana in the year 1974 to preserve the wholesomeness of water and prevent water pollution after Government of India legislation of [Water \(Prevention and Control of Pollution\) Act, 1974](#).

Panchayat Elections in Chhattisgarh | Chhattisgarh | 21 Jan 2025

Why in News?

According to [the Chhattisgarh State Election Commission](#), the state is going to conduct [elections for urban and panchayat bodies](#), including municipal corporations, in **February 2025**.

Key Points

- **About the Election:**
 - Elections for 173 civic bodies, including 10 municipal corporations, 49 municipal councils, and 114 Nagar Panchayats, will take place in a single phase on 11th February 2025.
 - The **three-tier Panchayat elections** will be held in three phases: 17, 20, and 23 February 2025.
 - With the announcement of the election schedule, the [model code of conduct](#) has come

into effect for the civic and panchayat bodies.

- **Voting Method and Election Type:**

- Civic elections will be conducted using [Electronic Voting Machines \(EVMs\)](#), while panchayat elections will use [ballot papers](#).
- Civic body elections will be held along party lines, while panchayat elections will be conducted on a no-party basis.

State Election Commissions (SECs)

- The State Election Commission has been entrusted with the function of **conducting free, fair and impartial elections to the local bodies in the state**.
- **Article 243K(1):** It states that the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats (**Municipalities under Article 243ZA**) shall be vested in a State Election Commission consisting of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor.
- **Article 243K(2):** It states that the **tenure and appointment will be directed as per the law made by the state legislature**. However, the State Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his/her office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of a High Court.

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