



Inactivity at India's First Dolphin Research Centre

Why in News?

Dolphin conservation in India faces challenges as [the National Dolphin Research Centre \(NDRC\)](#) in Bihar, remains **non-operational**, months after inauguration due to a **lack of advanced equipment and skilled manpower**.

Key Points

- **Inauguration and Current State:**
 - The NDRC, located near [the Ganga](#) in Patna, was inaugurated by Bihar Chief Minister on 4th March 2024.
 - Despite its opening, the centre remains non-functional, marked by neglect and locked glass doors.
- **Impact on Dolphin Conservation:**
 - The delay has hindered essential research on [Gangetic dolphins](#), India's national aquatic animal.
 - **RK Sinha**, the ["Dolphin Man of India,"](#) who proposed the NDRC 15 years ago, expressed disappointment over the lack of progress.
- **Official Assurance:**
 - Bihar Forest and [Chief Wildlife Warden](#) assured that the NDRC would begin operations within the financial year 2024-25.
 - The centre aims to conserve dolphins, study their behaviour and habitat, and train fishermen to safeguard dolphins during fishing.
- **Strategic Location and Importance:**
 - The 4,400-square-metre facility is situated on Patna University campus near the Ganga, allowing direct observation of dolphins in their natural habitat.
- **Conservation Challenges:**
 - Bihar, hosting half of India's 3,000 Gangetic dolphins, faces threats to habitats due to activities like construction and pollution.
 - [The National Green Tribunal](#) recently highlighted the danger posed by bridge debris in Bhagalpur to the dolphin population.
- **Significance of Gangetic Dolphins:**
 - These endangered dolphins, blind and reliant on [echolocation](#), are crucial to the river ecosystem.
 - Echolocation is a technique used by **bats, dolphins and other animals** to determine the **location of objects using reflected sound**.
 - They thrive in deep waters with minimal currents and are protected under [the Wildlife \(Protection\) Act 1972](#), and [International Union for the Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#) guidelines.
 - The Ganges river dolphin, discovered in 1801, historically inhabits the [Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna](#) and [Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems](#) in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.
 - Recent studies in the Ganga River Basin show their presence in the mainstream and tributaries like [Ghagra](#), [Kosi](#), [Gandak](#), [Chambal](#), [Rupnarayan](#), and [Yamuna](#).

GANGES RIVER DOLPHIN

(*Platanista gangetica gangetica*)

National aquatic animal of India

Facts

- Can only live in freshwater; prefer deep water
- Essentially blind; hunts by emitting ultrasonic sound
- Can't breathe in water; must surface every 30-120 seconds for air
- Also called 'susu' because of sound they make while breathing

Habitat & Distribution

- Distributed in Ganges and Brahmaputra River basins of India, Nepal and Bangladesh.
- Distribution range in India covers 7 states namely, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Protection Status

- IUCN Red List:** Endangered
- CITES:** Appendix I
- Wildlife Protection Act 1972:** Schedule I

Threats

- Habitat destruction
- Pollution
- Bycatch
- Climate Change
- Hunting

Conservation Efforts

- Project Dolphin (2021):** On lines of project Tiger
- National Dolphin Research Centre (2021):** India's and Asia's First; in Patna University (Bihar)
- Dedicated Dolphin Sanctuary:**
 - Vikramshila sanctuary (Bihar) – 1991
 - Hastinapur sanctuary (UP) – Proposed



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