



Benami Transactions in Pench Tiger Reserve

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 denies knowledge of the ownership** of the property,
 - the person providing the consideration for the property is **not traceable**.

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