



Oran Lands Classified as Forests

Why in News?

The **Rajasthan government** has initiated the process of **classifying the community-protected 'Oran' lands as forests**. Following this, these sacred groves will be officially notified as “**community reserves**” under the [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#).

Key Points

- **About Oran Lands:**
 - 'Orans' are sacred forest patches in Rajasthan, traditionally protected and managed by rural communities.
 - These groves are dedicated to local deities as part of a **deep-rooted socio-religious tradition**.
 - Rajasthan is home to nearly **25,000 Oran sites**, collectively covering over 6 lakh hectares across the desert landscape.
 - In Rajasthan, orans are also called- **deora, malvan, deorai, rakhat bani, deo ghats, mandir van and baugh**.
 - Orans also hosts a significant number of [Khejri trees \(*Prosopis spicigera*\)](#), [deer](#), [blackbuck](#) and [nilgai](#) which are also sacred to the [Bishnoi community](#) of Rajasthan.
 - These communities living in these oran lands have historically played a **pivotal role in protecting these forests from being cut down**.
 - These lands **support** grazing, provide forest produce, aid natural water filtration, and sustain livelihoods through [livestock](#) economy.
- **Related Supreme Court Judgement:**
 - In a landmark judgment delivered on 18 December 2024, the [Supreme Court](#) directed the State government to conduct a detailed mapping of the Oran lands.
 - SC directed the State to implement the **2005 recommendations of the [Central Empowered Committee \(CEC\)](#)** for classifying 'Orans' as forests.
 - However, the **Rajasthan Forest Policy, 2023** classified 'Orans' as **general community lands**, a status considered inadequate for legal protection, leaving them vulnerable to encroachment and ecological degradation.
 - The SC's **ruling addresses these gaps** by strengthening legal safeguards through formal forest classification.

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

- The Wild Life (Protection) Act, of 1972 **provides a legal framework for the protection of various species** of wild animals and plants, management of their habitats, regulation, and control of trade in wild animals, plants, and products made from them.
- The act also **lists schedules of plants and animals** that are afforded varying degrees of protection and monitoring by the government.

Central Empowered Committee (CEC)

- **About:**

- The **Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** was **originally constituted** by the Supreme Court **in 2002** and later **reconstituted in 2008**.
- It functioned as an **ad hoc watchdog body to monitor environmental conservation** and compliance with court directives and environmental laws.
- **Recent Reform:**
 - As per a **2023 notification by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, the CEC is proposed to be **converted into a permanent statutory body**.
 - This move aims to give the CEC institutional continuity and legal authority to handle key environmental issues on a long-term basis.

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