

Bengal monitor lizards

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In news- The forest department of Odisha recently busted an organised trafficking racket and seized seven Bengal monitor lizards.

About the Bengal monitor lizards-

- The Bengal monitor or **common Indian monitor (Varanus bengalensis)** is a large lizard that is mainly **terrestrial**.
- It is 61-175 cm long.
- It is widely distributed over the Indian Subcontinent, as well as parts of Southeast Asia and West Asia.
- It is found in river valleys in eastern Iran, Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Burma.
- They are **found to be absent from the Andaman Islands**.
- The species is distributed mainly in the lower elevations, and is found both in dry semiarid desert habitats to moist forest.
- The lizard is known as bis-cobra in western India, Goyra in Rajasthan, guishaap or goshaap in West Bengal and Bangladesh, goh in Punjab and Bihar, as ghorpad in Maharashtra and as Thalagoya in Sri Lanka.
- Folk traditions have various stories of monitor lizards **being used by soldiers to climb walls of forts**.
- The monitors are **carnivorous and non-poisonous**.
- It is **protected under Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act (WPA)** but is regularly killed for its meat, blood and oil.
- Its genitals are sold as a charm or an aphrodisiac as well as cure for several ailments.
- The species is listed under the **'Least Concern'** category on the IUCN Red List.