

# Voluntary Disclosure of Exotic Pets

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In news

Recently the Supreme Court upheld an Allahabad High Court order granting immunity from investigation and prosecution if one declared illegal acquisition or possession of exotic wildlife species between June and December under the centre's amnesty scheme.

What does the scheme say?

The Centre has come out with an advisory on a one-time voluntary disclosure **scheme that allows owners of exotic live species that have been acquired illegally, or without documents, to declare their stock to the government between June and December 2020.**

Aim of the scheme

With this scheme, the government aims to address the challenge of zoonotic diseases, develop an inventory of exotic live species for better compliance under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and regulate their import

Exotic wildlife covered under the scheme

- The Centre's advisory has defined exotic live species as animals named under the Appendices I, II and III of the CITES.
- It does not include species from the Schedules of the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972.
- The advisory excludes exotic birds from the amnesty scheme.
- Animals, such as iguanas, lemurs, civets, albino

monkeys, coral snakes, tortoises, are popular as exotic pets in India

### Process of for disclosure under the scheme

Disclosure of exotic animals takes with the following procedure:

- As per the advisory disclosure has to be done online through MoEFCC's Parivesh portal.
- The owner of the animal(s) will have to declare the stock as on January 1, 2020 to the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) of the concerned state or Union Territory. This will be followed by a physical verification of the animals.
- The CWLW will have to issue an online certificate of possession of exotic live species within six months of the date of the voluntary disclosure.
- After the registration, it is mandatory for the owner to allow the CWLW with free access to the exotic species declared on any day for verification.
- Further, the CWLW has to be informed about any new acquisition, death or change in possession of the animals within 30 days.
- The scheme has also specified guidelines for surrender of such animals to a recognised zoo.
- The owner will also have to provide the details of the species acquired, their numbers, and the address of the facility where they are housed.

### Need for the scheme

- According to the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), which enforces anti-smuggling laws, says India has emerged as a big demand centre for exotic birds and animals with an increase in smuggling of endangered species from different parts of the world.
- Most of these exotic wildlife is imported through

Illegal channels and then sold in the domestic market as pets.

- The long international border and air routes are used to source consignments from Bangkok, Malaysia and other top tourist destinations in South East Asia, as well as from Europe from where they are sent to India

### About CITES

- It is an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in wild animals, birds and plants does not endanger them.
- Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
- CITES was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of IUCN (The World Conservation Union).
- The text of the Convention was finally agreed at a meeting of representatives of 80 countries in Washington, D.C., the United States of America, on 3 March 1973, and on 1 July 1975 CITES entered in force.
- Appendices I, II and III of CITES list 5,950 species as protected against over-exploitation through international trade.
- India is also a member of CITES.