

Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021

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In news-The Parliamentary committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change headed by Jairam Ramesh has submitted a report on the proposed Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Bill 2021, recently.

Key highlights of the report-

- The panel has found that some species were excluded from various schedules of wildlife and plants that have been proposed by the Environment Ministry, and has recommended a revised listing of schedules to include these species.
- It also found species that should be in Schedule I, have been placed in Schedule II.
- There are species missing altogether both in Schedules I and II as well as in Schedule III.
- The committee has recommended major changes in all the three schedules, and also the restructuring of Schedules I and II in a manner that makes them “easy to read and look up”.

Key features of the bill-

- The Bill amends the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The Bill seeks to increase the species protected under the law, and implement various provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- **Currently, the Act has six schedules for specially protected plants (one), specially protected animals (four), and vermin species (one).** Vermin refers to small animals that carry disease and destroy food.
- The Bill reduces the total number of schedules to four

by:

- Reducing the number of schedules for specially protected animals to two (one for greater protection level).
- It removes the schedule for vermin species, and
- It inserts a new schedule for specimens listed in the Appendices under CITES (scheduled specimens).
- **The Bill provides for the central government to designate a:**
 - **Management Authority**, which grants export or import permits for trade of specimens, and
 - **Scientific Authority**, which gives advice on aspects related to impact on the survival of the specimens being traded.
- Every person engaging in trade of a scheduled specimen must report the details of the transaction to the Management Authority. As per CITES, the Management Authority may use an identification mark for a specimen.
- **The Bill prohibits any person from modifying or removing the identification mark of the specimen.** Additionally, every person possessing live specimens of scheduled animals must obtain a registration certificate from the Management Authority.
- The Bill **empowers the central government to regulate or prohibit the import, trade, possession or proliferation of invasive alien species.** The central government may authorise an officer to seize and dispose off the invasive species.
- **The Act entrusts the Chief Wildlife Warden** to control, manage and maintain all sanctuaries in a state.
- The Chief Wildlife Warden is appointed by the state government.
- **The Bill specifies that actions of the Chief Warden must be in accordance with the management plans for the sanctuary.**
 - These plans will be prepared as per guidelines of

the central government, and as approved by the Chief Warden.

- For sanctuaries falling under special areas, the management plan must be prepared after due consultation with the concerned Gram Sabha.
- Special areas include a Scheduled Area or areas where the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 is applicable.
- **Under the Act, state governments may declare areas adjacent to national parks and sanctuaries as a conservation reserve,** for protecting flora and fauna, and their habitat. **The Bill empowers the central government to also notify a conservation reserve.**
- **The Bill provides for any person to voluntarily surrender any captive animals or animal products to the Chief Wildlife Warden.** No compensation will be paid to the person for surrendering such items. The surrendered items become property of the state government.

Provisions of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972-

- It provides a legal framework for the protection of various species of wild animals and plants, the management of their habitats, and the regulation and control of trade in wild animals, plants and products made from them.
- Its primary aim is to curb the illegal trade in wildlife and the derivative parts.
- The Act also lists schedules of plants and animals that are afforded various degrees of protection and monitoring by the government.
- The Act has been amended several times, with the last amendment having been made in 2013.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)-

- It is an international agreement to regulate worldwide commercial trade in wild animal and plant species.
- It is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
- It restricts trade in items made from such plants and animals, such as food, clothing, medicine, and souvenirs.
- It was **signed on March 3, 1973.**
- Secretariat is in **Geneva Switzerland.**
- It is **legally binding** on state parties to the convention, which are obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.
- Under CITES, plant and animal specimens are classified into three categories (Appendices) based on the threat to their extinction.
- The Convention requires countries to regulate the trade of all listed specimens through permits. It also seeks to regulate the possession of live animal specimens.
- For instance in Appendix I species, it lists species that are in danger of extinction. It prohibits commercial trade of these plants and animals except in extraordinary situations for scientific or educational reasons.

Further

reading:

<https://journalsofindia.com/authorities-under-wildlife-protection-act-1972/>