



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Lok Sabha passes Bill to implement global norms on endangered species

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What's in News?

Lok Sabha passed the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill-2021 that seeks to provide for implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

CITES:

CITES, which stands for the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora**, is a global agreement among governments to regulate or ban international trade in species under threat.

It is also called as **Washington Convention** and it was entered into force on **1st July 1975**.

Its secretariat is situated at **Geneva, Switzerland**.

There are 183 member Parties and trade is regulated in more than 35,000 species.

Representatives of CITES nations meet every two to three years at a Conference of the Parties to review progress and adjust the lists of protected species, which is grouped into three categories with different levels of protection:

o**Appendix I:** Includes the world's most endangered plants and animals, such as tigers and gorillas. International commercial trade in these species, or even parts of them, is completely banned, except in rare cases such as scientific research.

o**Appendix II:** Contains species like hippopotamus and many corals that are not yet threatened with extinction, but which could become threatened if unlimited trade were allowed. Also included are "look-alike" species that closely resemble those already on the list for conservation reasons. Plants and animals in this category can be traded internationally, but there are strict rules.

o**Appendix III:** Species whose trade is only regulated within a specific country can be placed on Appendix III if that country requires cooperation from other nations to help prevent exploitation.

CITES also brings together law enforcement officers from wildlife authorities, national parks, customs, and police agencies to collaborate on efforts to combat wildlife crime targeted at animals such as elephants and rhinos.

Although CITES is **legally binding on the Parties**, it does not replace national legislation.

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**.

Bill Highlights:

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The Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in December, 2021

The Bill amends the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972

The Act **regulates the protection of wild animals, birds and plants**

The Bill seeks to increase the species protected under the law, and implement the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Rationalising schedules:

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: (i) reducing the number of schedules for specially protected animals to two (one for greater protection level), (ii) removes the schedule for vermin species, and (iii) inserts a new schedule for specimens listed in the Appendices under CITES (scheduled specimens).

Obligations under CITES:

The Bill provides for the central government to designate a:

i**Management Authority**, which **grants export or import permits** for trade of specimens, and

ii**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.

Invasive alien species:

The Bills empowers the **central government to regulate or prohibit the import, trade, possession or proliferation of invasive alien species.**

Invasive alien species refers to plant or animal species which are not native to India and whose introduction may adversely impact wild life or its habitat

The **central government** may authorise an **officer to seize and dispose the invasive species.**

Control of sanctuaries:

The Act entrusts the Chief Wild Life Warden to control, manage and maintain all sanctuaries in a state

The Chief Wild Life Warden is appointed by the state government

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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

Scheduled Areas are economically backward areas with a predominantly tribal population, notified under the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution.

Conservation reserves:

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.**

Surrender of captive animals:

The Bill provides for **any person to voluntarily surrender any captive animals or animal products to the Chief Wild Life Warden**

No compensation will be paid to the person for surrendering such items

The surrendered items become **property of the state government.**

Penalties:

The Act prescribes imprisonment terms and fines for violating the provisions of the Act

The Bill increases these fines.