

RHESUS MACAQUE DECLARED VERMIN IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Prelims- Environment- Biodiversity

Mains - GS- III Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

- ▶▶ **Context-** Union Environment Ministry (MoEFCC) has declared Monkeys (Rhesus Macaque) as 'vermin' in Himachal Pradesh.

What is Vermin?

- ▶▶ Any animal which poses a threat to human and their livelihood especially farming, can be declared Vermin under **Schedule V of Wildlife Protection act 1972**.
- ▶▶ States can send a list of wild animals to the Centre requesting it to declare them vermin for selective slaughter. Wildlife Protection Act 1972, empower every **State's Chief Wildlife Warden** for culling. Wild boars, nilgai and rhesus monkeys are protected under Schedule II and III, but can be hunted under specific conditions.

Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:

- ▶▶ The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted for protection of plants and animal species.
- ▶▶ The Act provides for the protection of wild animals, birds and plants; and for matters connected there with or ancillary or incidental thereto.
- ▶▶ Though Rhesus Macaque monkeys are protected species under Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the **law allows for it to be hunted by declaring it 'vermin'** for a specific period if it poses a danger to human life or property.

Permissions for hunting wildlife:

- ▶▶ The Wildlife Act empowers every State's Chief Wildlife Warden to authorise hunters to cull animals in a region where they are a proven nuisance.
- ▶▶ Wildlife laws also consider hunted wildlife as 'government property' and impose restrictions on how these carcasses must be disposed.

Issues:

- ▶▶ Himachal Pradesh forest department's website clearly shows a marked decline in the number of monkeys in the state, yet the Centre declares it as vermin due to overpopulation.

- ▶▶ Previously monkeys were sterilised by the government has cost the tax payer Rs 50 crore.
- ▶▶ Many wildlife conservationists believe that a species coming into conflict with humans is a clear symptom of forest mismanagement and forest department must be held accountable for human-wildlife conflict situation anywhere in the country.

Key Provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act:

- ▶▶ The Act extends to the whole of India, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir which has its own wildlife act.
- ▶▶ It defines five types of protected areas viz.
 - ❖ National Parks
 - ❖ Wildlife Sanctuaries
 - ❖ Community Reserves
 - ❖ Conservation Reserves
 - ❖ Tiger Reserves.
- ▶▶ Act has Six Schedules with varying degrees of protection to different kinds of animals and plants.

Schedules of the Wild Life Protection Act

- ▶▶ Six Schedules in Wildlife Protection Act with varying degrees of protection.
- ▶▶ **Schedule I** and **Part II of Schedule II** provide absolute protection.
- ▶▶ Penalties for **Schedule III** and **Schedule IV** are less and these animals are protected.
- ▶▶ **Schedule V** includes the animals which may be hunted.
- ▶▶ Example: Common crow, Fruit bats, Mice & Rats only
- ▶▶ **Schedule VI** contains the plants, which are prohibited from cultivation and planting.
 1. Beddome's cycad (*Cycas beddomei*)
 2. Blue Vanda (*Vanda soerulec*)
 3. Kuth (*Saussurea lappa*)
 4. Ladies slipper orchids (*Paphiopedilum spp.*)
 5. Pitcher plant (*Nepenthes khasiana*)
 6. Red Vanda (*Ranantthera inschootiana*)