

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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TOPIC: WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Uttarakhand defending wrongdoings on tree felling in Corbett: FSI

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NEW DELHI

The Forest Survey Institute (FSI) has accused the Uttarakhand Forest Department of “defending wrongdoings” by questioning its assessment of illegal tree felling in the Corbett Tiger Reserve for its Pakhro tiger safari project.

The two departments have been at loggerheads since an FSI report said more than 6,000 trees had been cut at Pakhro despite permission being granted for only 163 trees to be felled.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has taken *suo motu* cognizance of the matter following *The Hindu's* article on the FSI report on October 2. However, the Uttarakhand Forest department chief has questioned the methodologies and techniques used by the FSI to reach its conclusions.



A tiger in Corbett National Park.
GETTY IMAGES

ing of trees in the name of establishment of Pakhro Tiger Safari,” said the FSI DG’s letter.

“Our efforts, instead of being appreciated, are being questioned. We have always stuck to principles of science and fairness and have never erred in our estimations. The tone and tenor of your comments is tantamount to casting doubts and aspirations on our intentions, robust methodology and profes-

National Green tribunal

- ✓ Established on 18th October, 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010.
- ✓ Established for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- ✓ New Delhi is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.
- ✓ The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.

✓ The NGT deals with civil cases under the seven laws related to the environment, these include:

1. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974,
2. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977,
3. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980,
4. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,
5. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986,
6. The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991 and
7. The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

✓ Any violation pertaining to these laws or any decision taken by the Government under these laws can be challenged before the NGT.

Corbett NP:

- ✓ It is located in Nainital district of Uttarakhand. The Project Tiger was launched in 1973 in Corbett National Park (first National Park of India), which is part of Corbett Tiger Reserve.
- ✓ The national park was established in 1936 as Hailey National Park to protect the endangered Bengal tiger.
- ✓ It is named after Jim Corbett who played a key role in its establishment.
- ✓ The core area forms the Corbett National Park while the buffer contains reserve forests as well as the Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary.

- ✓ The entire area of the reserve is mountainous and falls in the Shivalik and Outer Himalaya geological provinces.
- ✓ Ramganga, Sonanadi, Mandal, Palain and Kosi are the major rivers flowing through the Reserve.



Forest Survey of India

- ✓ FSI is a national organisation responsible for the assessment and monitoring of the forest resources of India regularly.
- ✓ It functions under the Ministry of Environment and Forests.
- ✓ It is headquartered in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- ✓ It was founded in 1981.
- ✓ FSI is one of the major national survey organisations in India.
- ✓ The organisation's precursor was the 'Pre-investment Survey of Forest Resources' (PISFR), a project started in 1965 with aid from UNDP and FAO.

TOPIC: WILDLIFE PROTECTION

A chance to expand the world's biosphere footprint

November 3 will be the first 'The International Day for Biosphere Reserves', to be celebrated beginning 2022. The World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) was formed in 1971, as a backbone for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and living in harmony with nature. There are now 738 properties in 134 countries, including 12 in India, four in Sri Lanka, and three in the Maldives.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal do not have biospheres as yet, but help is on its way: The 'South and Central Asia MAB Reserve' Networking Meeting (where MAB stands Man and the Biosphere) is planned for 2023, to advance biosphere reserve establishment, and management. UNESCO is ready to assist in carrying out a professional potentiality analysis. In addition, an expert mission has been planned for spring 2023 – to Bhutan, India's north-east and the Sundarbans in Bangladesh.

An ideal platform to network

The WNBR, an amazing network of sites of excellence, is a unique tool for cooperation through sharing knowledge, exchanging experiences, building capacity and promoting best practices. Its members are always ready to support each other. This kind of help extended through the network is of great importance because the ecological carrying capacity of the planet earth has been exceeded. We have to revert to living in harmony with nature – to breathe clean air again, have access to enough good water, eat nutritious and affordable food, and live in dignity.

Our planet has been set up uniquely in the solar system so that ecosystems can function and provide a home for all living creatures. From whatever vantage point we look at nature conservation – an environmental, cultural or even a religious point of view – it is our responsibility to respect nature.

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Expanding biosphere reserves across the world, especially in Asia, will help millions of people realise a better future, one that is in harmony with nature

The best concept for 'Living in Harmony with Nature' that exists in the United Nations system, is the WNBR, making these places more important today than ever before, where humans are thriving and relearning how to live with nature.

Opportunities in South Asia

In South Asia, over 30 biosphere reserves have been established. The first one was the Hurlu Biosphere Reserve, in Sri Lanka, with 25,500 hectares of tropical dry evergreen forest. In India, the first biosphere reserve was designated by UNESCO in 2000, namely, the blue mountains of the Nilgiris stretching over Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. India's network of reserves has gone from strength to strength. Considering the massive long-term threats to human survivability (besides pandemics and armed conflicts), such as biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution and population dynamics, accelerated by the blind belief in technological solutions for all problems, we need many more biosphere reserves globally. South Asia offers countless options.

India is a vast sub-continent, an emerging superpower of unlimited opportunities. It has become an important global player on environmental sustainability issues. India is likely to become the world's most populated country in 2023.

Spain, with a landmass of 506,000 km², and a population of 47.4 million is one of the lead participating WNBR countries globally, with 53 properties. In a comparison with the surface size of Spain to India (ca. 3.3 million km²), and India's human population of ca. 1.4 billion people, it appears a good idea to carry out a potentiality analysis of biosphere reserves in India, with a focus on the seven sisters in north-east India.

South Asia has a very diverse set of ecosystems, with Bhutan, India, and Nepal combined having thousands of glaciers,

surrounded by lakes and alpine ecosystems.

As an article by Eric Falt highlights, biosphere reserves have all developed science-based management plans, where local solutions for sustainable human living and nature conservation are being tested, and best practices applied. Issues of concern include biodiversity, clean energy, climate, environmental education, and water and waste management, supported by scientific research and monitoring.

All biosphere reserves are internationally recognised sites on land, at the coast, or in the oceans. Governments alone decide which areas to nominate.

Before approval by UNESCO, the sites are externally examined. If approved, they will be managed based on a plan, reinforced by credibility checks while remaining under the sovereignty of their national government.

A perspective

Some of the countries in South Asia do not yet have any or enough biosphere reserves. In most, if not all cases, the political will is certainly there, but there is a lack of know-how and financial resources. Of course, more financial support from the richer nations and the private sector would be desirable to advance biosphere reserves in these countries. Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal are on our priority list.

The existence of the new World Network of Mountain Biosphere Reserves provides a welcome opportunity for Bhutan and Nepal to establish their first biosphere reserves and participate in the world network. If these pockets of hope can expand, with at least one biosphere reserve per country in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal until 2025 (with additional biosphere reserves in India's North-East and along the coasts) it will give realisation to millions of people that a better future is truly possible – one where we will truly live in harmony with nature.

TOPIC: VULNERABLE SECTION

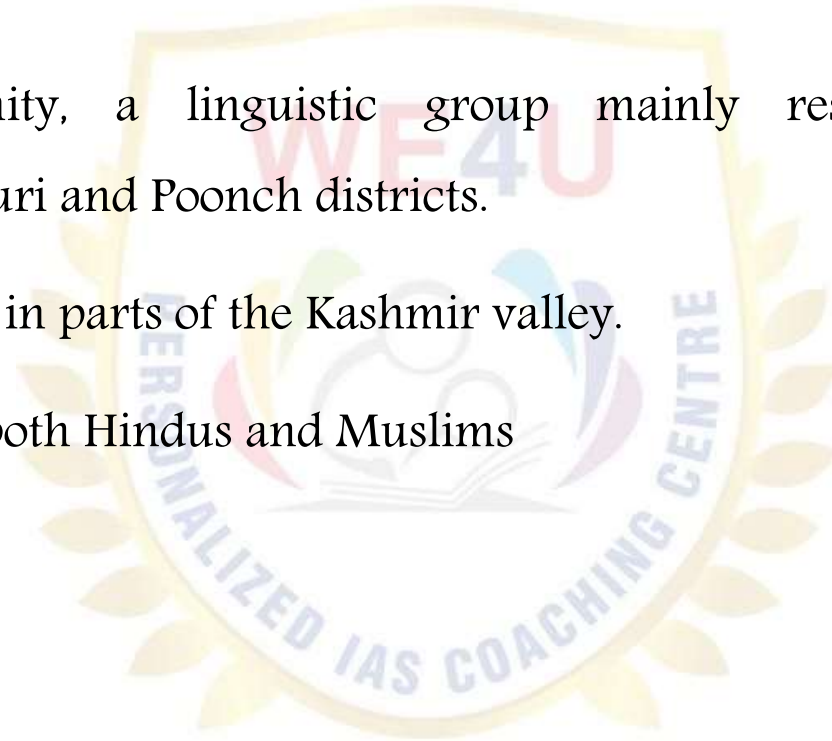
Pahari ethnic community added to Scheduled Tribes list of Jammu and Kashmir

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has now cleared the way for the inclusion of the 'Pahari ethnic group' on the Scheduled Tribes list of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

- ✓ NCST was set by amending Article 338 and by inserting a new article 338A in the Constitution through the 89th Constitution Amendment Act, 2003. Hence, it is a constitutional body.
- ✓ **Objective:** Article 338A inter-alia gives powers to the to NCST oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to STs under the Constitution or under any other law for time being in force or under any other order to the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards.

Pahari Community

- ✓ The Pahari community, a linguistic group mainly residing in the Pir Panjal valley comprising Rajouri and Poonch districts.
- ✓ Paharis are also spread in parts of the Kashmir valley.
- ✓ Paharis also comprise both Hindus and Muslims

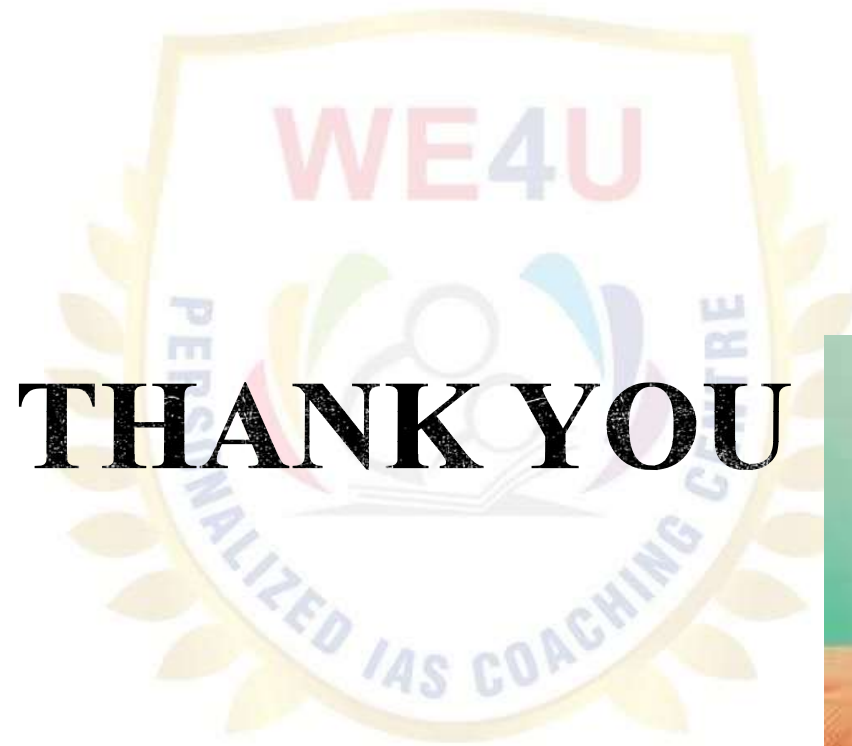


TOPIC:DPSP

Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code committee sifts through four lakh suggestions, plans more outreach

Uniform Civil Code

- ✓ UCC is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- ✓ Article 44 of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a UCC for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- ✓ Article 44 is one of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- ✓ DPSP as defined in Article 37, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.



THANK YOU

