



SC Criticizes Appointment of New Director to Rajaji National Park

Why in News?

The [Supreme Court](#) recently criticized the [Uttarakhand Chief Minister](#) for the appointment of a forest officer (IFS) as the **Director of [Rajaji National Park](#)**.

Key Points

- **Appointment Dispute:** Uttarakhand Chief Minister's decision to appoint [IFS](#) officer as director of **Rajaji National Park** has sparked controversy due to his ongoing investigations by the [CBI](#) and [ED](#) for alleged illegal activities.
- **Bypassing Officials:** Allegations suggest that CM bypassed objections from the **Forest Minister and [Chief Secretary](#)**, who had recommended reconsideration of the appointment due to the officer's involvement in previous legal issues.
- **Supreme Court Observations:** Emphasized that such decisions should not be made unilaterally.
 - The Court highlighted the importance of the [public trust doctrine](#), stressing that the government's role is **to protect natural resources responsibly**, which was compromised in this case.

Rajaji National Park

- **Location:** Haridwar (Uttarakhand), along the foothills of the Shivalik range, spans 820 square kilometres.
- **Background:** Three sanctuaries in the Uttarakhand i.e. **Rajaji, Motichur and Chila** were amalgamated into a large protected area and named **Rajaji National Park** in the year 1983 after the famous freedom fighter **C. Rajgopalachari**; popularly known as "Rajaji".
- **Features:**
 - This area is the North Western Limit of habitat of [Asian elephants](#).
 - Forest types include sal forests, riverine forests, broad-leaved mixed forests, scrubland and grassy.
 - It possesses as many as **23 species of mammals and 315 bird species** such as **elephants, tigers, leopards, deers and ghorals**, etc.
 - It was declared a [Tiger Reserve](#) in 2015.
 - It is home to the **Van Gujjars** in the winters.