



African Union Banned Donkey Skin Trade

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Why in News?

Recently, during the **37th African Union Summit, 2024** in **Ethiopia**, African heads of state unanimously agreed to a historic ban on the trade of **donkey skin**, thereby prohibiting the killing of donkeys across the continent for their hides.

- This is a **significant outcome** following the Dar es Salaam declaration adopted at the **first African Union-Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resource (AU-IBAR) Pan-African Donkey Conference** in December 2022.

What is the Dar es Salaam Declaration?

- **About:**
 - The **Dar es Salaam declaration** was signed in **Tanzania** during the **Pan African Donkey Skin Conference**, organised by the **AU-IBAR**, where government ministers gathered to understand the harmful effects of the donkey skin trade on animals and communities in Africa.
 - It underscores the **rapid decrease** in Africa's donkey population and advocates for increased investment in research, policies, and legislation to safeguard the species.
 - It advocates for an African Union Commission resolution proposing a **15-year halt** on the commercial slaughter of donkeys for their skins, alongside the creation of an **African donkey strategy** addressing **exploitation, production, and productivity**, to **integrate these concerns** into the global development agenda.

Why is Donkey Skin Traded?

- **About:**
 - The donkey skin trade, which is largely **unregulated**, involves cruel practices such as viciously slaughtering donkeys for their skins, which are then exported to China.
 - The trade is **illegal** in some countries and **legal in others** causing cruelty and suffering to donkeys globally.
- **Uses:**
 - The collagen from the donkey skins is used to create a product known as **ejiao (a traditional Chinese medicine)** which is then used in food, drink, and beauty products.
- **Negative Effect:**
 - **On Donkeys:** The treatment of donkeys throughout the skin trade, from **sourcing to slaughter**, has caused intense suffering, with hundreds of thousands slaughtered over the past decade.
 - **On Owners:** The global trade in donkey skin jeopardises efforts towards achieving **at least nine out of the 17 United Nations sustainable development goals**, including **ending poverty**, as donkeys are crucial to millions of people for whom equid ownership serves as the sole means to escape extreme poverty.
 - The donkey skin trade significantly **impacts women and children**, reducing economic and educational opportunities by depriving them of the support of these

animals, which are crucial for completing tasks efficiently. **E.g. fetching water, and using as a draught animal.**

Key Facts about Indian Wild Ass

- Sub-species of Asian Wild Ass (***Equus hemionus***)
- Distinguished by **unique white markings** on the front of the rump and back of the shoulder, along with a stripe down the back outlined in white.
- **Distribution:** The World's last population of Indian Wild Ass is restricted to **Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat.**
- **Habitat:** Desert and grassland ecosystems.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN:** Near threatened
 - **CITES:** Appendix II
 - **Wildlife Protection Act (1972):** Schedule-I

// SHOW OF STRENGTH

Donkey breeds found in India are primarily used to carry heavy loads

Breed	Native region; characteristics	Use
Kachchhi	Kutch region of Gujarat; grey, white, brown or black in colour	For weed removal in farms and as pack animal during pastoralist migration. It can carry 80-100 kg and pull 200-300 kg on carts.
Halari	Saurashtra region of Gujarat; white in colour, docile temperament	As pack animal during pastoralist migration and to pull carts. It can walk around 30-40 km in a day
Sindhi	Barmer and Jaisalmer districts of Rajasthan; brown in colour	As pack animal to transport water, soil, earthenware, construction material, fodder and to pull carts and for ploughing by small and marginal farmers. They can carry 1,000-1,500 kg.
Spiti	Cold desert areas of Himachal Pradesh; dark brown, brown or black in colour	For immediate transport of highly perishable cash crops and fruits, food grains and other items to far flung areas; to fetch wood, logs and other minor forest produce; and to bring dung or manure from pastures to villages or fields.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. According to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which of the following animals cannot be hunted by any person except under some provisions provided by law? (2017)

1. Gharial
2. Indian wild ass
3. Wild buffalo

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- Gharial, Indian wild ass and Wild buffalo are all listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- The Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 prohibits hunting of any animal enlisted in Schedule I of the Act except under some provisions provided by law.
- Further, the section 11 of the Act states that the chief wild life warden may, if he is satisfied that any wild animal specified in Schedule I has become dangerous to human life or is so disabled or diseased as to be beyond recovery, by order in writing and stating the reasons therefore, permit any person to hunt such animal or cause such animal to be hunted.
- The killing or wounding in good faith of any wild animal in defence of oneself or of any other person shall not be an offence.
- **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

Q. Which one of the following groups of animals belongs to the category of endangered species? (2012)

(a) Great Indian Bustard, Musk Deer, Red Panda and Asiatic Wild Ass

(b) Kashmir Stag, Cheetal, Blue Bull and Great Indian Bustard

(c) Snow Leopard, Swamp Deer, Rhesus Monkey and Saras (Crane)

(d) Lion-tailed Macaque, Blue Bull, Hanuman Langur and Cheetal

Ans: (a)

Q. A sandy and saline area is the natural habitat of an Indian animal species. The animal has no predators in that area but its existence is threatened due to the destruction of its habitat. Which one of the following could be that animal? (2011)

(a) Indian wild buffalo

(b) Indian wild ass

(c) Indian wild boar

(d) Indian gazelle

Ans: (b)