Bharal

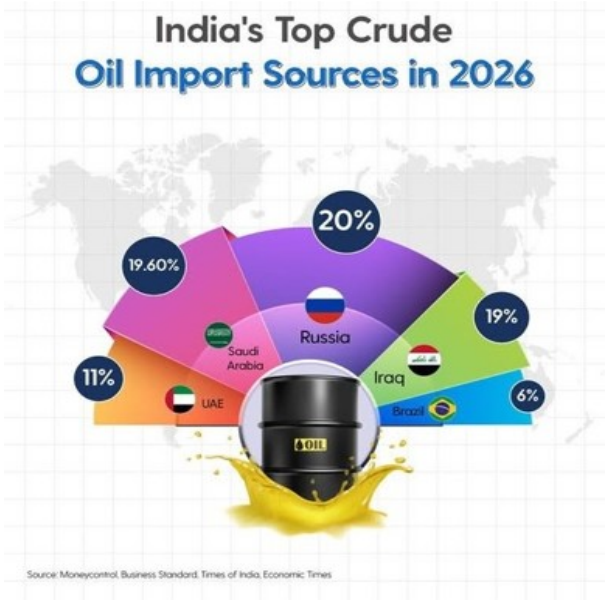
Why in News?

Recently, the researchers analyzed the population of 1,000 snow leopards due to large numbers of bharal in the Sanjiangyuan region of China.

- **Bharal –** It is called as the ***Blue Sheep*** and native to the high Himalayas.
- **Taxonomy:**
  - **Scientific name –** Pseudois Nayaur.
  - **Genus** – Pseudois, where it is the only member.
- **Distribution** – Montane regions in the Himalayas and China (in Gansu, Ningxia, Sichuan, Tibet and Inner Mongolia).
  - *India*, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan.

Bharal accounted over 80% of snow leopards food intake. Its density ranks among the world's highest in Sanjiangyuan area of China's Qinghai province, part of the Tibetan Plateau.

- **Habitat** – Open grassy slopes in high mountains and near cliffs.
- **Morphology** – Short, dense coat is slate grey in colour and bluish sheen, underparts and backs of legs are white, chest and fronts of legs are black.
- Ears are small, nose is dark, horns are found in both sexes and are ridged on the upper surface.



- **Sexual dimorphism:**
  - **Males** – Horns are grown upwards, turn sideways and curve backwards.

    - **Females** – Horns are much shorter and straighter.
- **Behavior** – They are ***active throughout the day,*** alternating between feeding and resting on the grassy mountain slopes.
- They adjust up to the precipitous cliffs, where they once again freeze, melting into the rock face.
- **Threats:**
    - Poaching for meat.
    - Competition with livestock.
- **Conservation Status:**
    - **IUCN Status** – Least Concern (LC).
    - **Wildlife Protection Act 1972** – Schedule 1.

References

1. Down to Earth| High numbers of snow leopards due to large numbers of Bharal
2. Ultimate Ungulate| Bharal

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