Sloth Bear

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Species*

Why in News?

Karnataka Forest Department officials captured a sloth bear that had been roaming in villages around Shivamogga airport, the animal had a GPS radio collar around its neck.

- **Scientific Name** – Melursus ursinus
- It is also known as the *Indian bear*, a *myrmecophagous (feeds on ants or termites) bear species* native to the Indian subcontinent.
- **Distribution** – India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh
- **Habitat** – They inhabit the tropical lowland forests and are sometimes found in tall grasslands that provide dense cover.
- **Appearance** – They have long, thick, shaggy black or dark brown fur with a prominent white or cream-colored chest patch and light-colored snout.
- The few hairs on the nose can close nostrils to block insects, and lack top front teeth (incisors), which act as a "vacuum" to help them suck up insects.
- Its footprints are very similar to humans.



- **Size** – Adults typically grow 5 to 6 feet long and weigh between 55 and 145 kg, with males being significantly larger than females.
- **Behaviour** – Mostly nocturnal or crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk), they do not hibernate.
- They are the only bear species that routinely carry their young on their backs.
- **Diet** – They primarily eat termites and ants (up to 95% of their diet during non-fruiting seasons), also enjoy honey, sugarcane, flowers, eggs, fruits like mangoes and figs, and flowers like Mahua.
- **Conservation Status**
  - **IUCN** – Vulnerable.
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** – Schedule I.
  - **CITES** – Appendix I.
- **Threats** – Habitat encroachment, poaching injure more people annually than other bears, largely due to proximity to dense populations (human conflict), cubs captured for entertainment (dancing bears), though less common today.

References

1. The Hindu | Sloth Bear
2. National Zoo | Sloth Bear



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering