

Three Himalayan Medicinal Plants in the IUCN Red List

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Topic- Environment and Ecology [GS Paper-3]

Context- Three medicinal plant species i.e. *Meizotropis pellita*, *Fritillaria cirrhosa*, *Dactylorhiza hatagirea* found in the Himalayas have been added to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species following a recent assessment.

Key Highlights

- The recent assessment in the Himalayan region shows deforestation, habitat loss, forest fires, illegal trade and climate change pose a serious threat to the species. However the fresh data is expected to aid conservation efforts in the region.

Key Highlights of these Species

Meizotropis pellita

- This species is commonly known as Patwa, is a perennial shrub with a restricted distribution that is endemic to Uttarakhand.
- The study stated that it is listed as 'critically endangered' based on its limited area of occupancy (less than 10 sq. km).
- The species is threatened by deforestation, habitat fragmentation and by forest fires.
- The essential oil extracted from the leaves of the species possesses strong

antioxidants and can be a promising natural substitute for synthetic antioxidants used in pharmaceutical industries.

Fritillaria cirrhosa:

- The species is commonly known as Himalayan fritillary, is a perennial bulbous herb.
- Considering the rate of decline, long generation length, poor germination potential, high trade value, extensive harvesting pressure and illegal trade, the species is listed as 'vulnerable' in the IUCN Red List.
- In China, this species is used for the treatment of bronchial disorders and pneumonia. The plant is also a strong cough suppressant and is used as a source of expectorant drugs in traditional Chinese medicine.

Dactylorhiza hatagirea:

- It is commonly known as Salampanja, which is a perennial tuberous species endemic to the Hindu Kush and Himalayan ranges of Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan.
- The species is threatened by habitat loss, livestock grazing, deforestation, and climate change, the species is listed as 'endangered'.
- The species is extensively used in Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and other alternative systems of medicine to cure dysentery, gastritis, chronic fever, cough and stomach aches.