

INTERVIEW GUIDANCE PROGRAM



Acads

VANTARA PARADOX

1. Issue and Important Facts

- **Issue:** There is a growing paradox in India's conservation landscape—massive biodiversity loss across natural habitats, while ultra-luxurious private facilities like *Vantara* are being celebrated as conservation models.



- **Key Facts:**

- India ranks **176/180** in the 2024 **Global Nature Conservation Index**.
- Loss of **diverse ecosystems** (forests, shrublands, wetlands).
- *Vantara* is a **3,000-acre private wildlife facility** in Jamnagar housing exotic and native species.
- Investigations suggest **39,000 wild animals** may have been brought in, though Vantara's official figure is 2,000.
- India's **common natural wealth** is increasingly being handed over to private entities.

2. Pros

- **Private initiative** like *Vantara* may help:
 - Raise **public awareness** about wildlife.
 - Provide high-quality **care for rescued or endangered animals**.
 - Serve as a **tourism and education** hub for urban populations.
 - Reduce stress on **overburdened government zoos and rescue centers**.

- Possibility of **technological innovation and resources** in conservation through corporate participation.

3. Cons

- **No linkage** between Vantara and restoration of India's **natural habitats or wild populations**.
- Risks of:
 - **Monopoly in conservation narrative.**
 - Ethical and legal concerns around **animal sourcing and trade.**
 - Promoting a **spectacle-based conservation model**, similar to a "Jurassic Park" approach.
- Increasing **privatization of commons** (forests, pastures, riverbeds) and **displacement of local communities**.
- Government's **diminishing role in public conservation** and denial of ecological data, such as NCI findings.
- Undermines the **community-led, ecological, and decentralized approaches** to conservation.

4. Balanced View to Present

While private facilities like Vantara may play a role in **animal welfare and awareness**, they **cannot substitute** for preserving ecosystems and **in-situ conservation**. Conservation success must be judged not by the number of animals in enclosures but by the **health of wild populations and habitats**. A **synergistic approach** is needed—combining **private resources** with **government policy, community participation**, and **scientific input**. Oversight, transparency, and adherence to **global ethical standards** are crucial.

5. Other Suggestions

- Strengthen and enforce **Wildlife Protection Act, Forest Rights Act**, and **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA)**.
- Encourage **community-based conservation models** (e.g., Nyishi tribe–Forest Department collaboration for hornbills).
- Invest in **restoring degraded habitats**, especially **grasslands and wetlands**, often neglected in conservation.
- Create an **independent monitoring body** for private conservation ventures.
- Focus on **data transparency** and accept global assessments (like NCI) as feedback for improvement, not as criticism.