

UNIVERSITY **OF MYSORE**

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To:
Sh. Bhupender Yadav
Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jorbagh Road,
New Delhi – 110003

Via e-mail and post: mefcc@gov.in

April 02, 2025

Subject: Urgent Appeal to Protect Rhesus Macaque Monkeys from Exploitation and Abduction

Dear Shri Yadav Ji,

As primate experts, we are deeply concerned about the removal of rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) from Schedule II of the Wild Life (Protection) Act (WPA), 1972, a decision that undermines scientific evidence-based understandings of primate behavior and poses dangers to public health. Based on the serious concerns we raise in this letter, we strongly urge the Ministry to reinstate legal protections for rhesus macaques under the WPA and grant them the highest level of protection under Schedule I.

Impacts on Welfare and Public Health

With rhesus macaques no longer under WPA protection, they are now vulnerable to capture for the pet trade, street performances, and other exploitative practices. Rhesus macaques are highly social animals, living in complex multi-generational groups with well-defined hierarchies. Their survival depends on strong social bonds, grooming interactions, and cooperative behaviors, all of which are severely disrupted when individuals are isolated, kept as pets, or exploited by madaris for entertainment.

Scientific evidence shows that when primates are chained, caged, or isolated, they experience chronic stress, leading to immunosuppression and an increased risk of zoonotic disease transmission. Scientific studies have documented that stressed primates shed higher loads of pathogens, including tuberculosis, herpes B, and simian foamy virus, increasing health risks for both humans and other animals.

One of the cruelest yet common practices in the pet trade and roadside performances is the removal of canines and incisors to prevent monkeys from biting. This not only causes severe pain, infection, and long-term health issues but also renders the animal defenceless if abandoned. Rhesus macaques rely on their

teeth for grooming, feeding, and social interactions—without them, they struggle to reintegrate into wild groups and often fail to survive.

Ecological Disruptions and Human-Wildlife Conflict

Macaques are adaptive primates, playing a crucial role in seed dispersal and forest regeneration. Their removal from wild populations disrupts ecosystem dynamics, while the introduction of previously captive individuals—often released when owners find them unmanageable—creates serious ecological and behavioral challenges. Captive monkeys, deprived of social learning, fail to integrate into wild troops and exhibit unnatural behaviors, leading to higher mortality rates and increased human-wildlife conflicts. Additionally, they also spread pathogens to the wild populations which are not immune to such pathogens.

Historical Precedents and Conservation Responsibility

India has historically demonstrated global leadership in wildlife protection, notably banning monkey exports in 1978 following widespread exploitation for biomedical research. However, recent trends indicate a resurgence of illegal wildlife trade, with reports suggesting that international biomedical companies are seeking access to India's rhesus macaques. A 2022 memorandum from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) warned of attempted exports of these monkeys to laboratories, highlighting the risk of history repeating itself.

We would appreciate your prompt attention to this urgent matter and look forward to your response on the Ministry's proposed course of action. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mewa Singh

On behalf of the undermentioned concerned primate experts:

Name	Affiliation/Location
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Ms. Dishari Dasgupta	Kolkata, West Bengal
Dr. Jayashree Mazumder	IISc Bangalore
Mr. Santanu Mahato	SACON, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
Ms. Monica Harpalani	Vadodara, Gujarat
Dr. Partha Sarathi	Bangalore, India
Mr. Rohit Negi	Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology

Dr. Sayantan Das	Kolkata, West Bengal
Dr. Joseph J Erinjery	Kannur, Kerala
Dr. Mehreen Khaleel	Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir
Dr. Mohan K	Mysuru, Karnataka
Mr. Muhammed Sabith KM	Wayanad, Kerala
Dr. Bidisha Chakraborty	University of California, Davis
Dr. HS Sushma	Hyderabad, India
Dr. Mihir Trivedi	University of Washington, Seattle
Ms. Lakshmi C	Kannur, Kerala
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Ms. Seema Lokhandwala	Guwahati, Assam
Dr. Debapriyo Chakraborty	Montpellier, France
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Mr. John	Agra, Uttar Pradesh
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Mr. Sumit Purty	Bhubaneshwar, Orrisa
Mr. Samuel Kandulna	Tejpur, Assam
Mr. Annel Antony	Pune, Maharashtra
Mr. Richard Lakra	Simdega, Jharkhand
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