

Front Page

Page 1 anchor

Sibal writes to Environment: please help us save Ice Age survivor

Orissa coast one of last few habitats in the world of ecologically invaluable Horseshoe crab; its derivatives may rewrite medicine

JAY MAZOOMDAAR

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 21 They may soon make science fiction come true. In their blood, they hold the promise of organ regeneration. In their shells, they possess the secret of magic healing. From Massachusetts to Singapore to Tokyo, scientists across the globe, busy decoding the mystery of horseshoe crabs, are at the threshold of rewriting medical science.

But the horseshoe crabs, among the oldest living creatures on earth, are losing a daily battle in their last bastion in India: a tiny pocket around Orissa's Chandipore. High in demand for immense medicinal value, horseshoe crabs are being caught and supplied in bulk to dealers in Bhubaneswar by local fishermen.



Priceless, being sold for a rupee

Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Science and Technology and Ocean Development, whose CSIR-backed labs in Goa and Pune have already filed for as many as nine patents on horseshoe crab derivatives, has been asking the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to declare the crab as a Scheduled IV species—that will allow scientists to tap vast research possibilities—and ensure protection. But till date, there has been no response.

“I wrote to them earlier. I have reminded them again just a few days back. We can't just sit and watch such a treasure being caught and sold freely by fishermen who have little idea of what a life form they are destroying. We must also find out who are these people buying horseshoe crabs in such quantity. But it's the MoEF that has to initiate action,” Sibal told *The Indian Express*.

While MoEF officials refused comment despite repeated attempts, fishermen in Chandipore sounded too eager to meet any demand. “How many do you want? We can even supply truckloads. For bulk delivery, we charge less, about 50 paise per crab if you order enough. Give us Rs 1,000 and just leave your Bhubaneswar address,” promised some fishermen at Behrampore beach.

The only sizeable population of horseshoe crabs is found along the Delaware coast in North America. Only a tiny population of 300 survives in Japan. Once available in lakhs in India, their count has dwindled to a few thousand in and around Chandipore.

“In Japan, they have declared it a national monument. Unless the government wakes up now, we will lose a creature that has survived 16 ice ages,” says

conservationist Mike H Pandey. His landmark film *Timeless Traveller* on horseshoe crabs has won worldwide applause.

URL: http://www.indianexpress.com/full_story.php?content_id=84472

Ads By Google

Hindu Matrimonial

All Verified Profiles. See Pictures Choose Your Life Partner Today!
www.HindiMatrimony.com

PrintSure PDF workflow

Server with unlimited remote PDF preflight upload desktop clients.
devzerog.com/printsure

[Expressindia](#) | [The Indian Express](#) | [The Financial Express](#) | [Screen](#)
[Kashmir Live](#) | [Loksatta](#) | [Lokprabha](#)

[About Us](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Labelled with ICRA](#)

© 2005: Indian Express Newspapers (Bombay) Ltd. All rights reserved throughout the world.