AN INDIAN GEOHERITAGE SITE: SIWALIK FOSSIL PARK (HIMACHAL PRADESH)

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The Siwalik Fossil Park at Saketi is located amidst picturesque exposures of Siwalik Hills in the **Markanda valley in Sirmur district of Himachal Pradesh** at a distance of about 100 km from Dehradun and about 90 km from Chandigarh. The Park has been developed by the Geological Survey of India in collaboration with Himachal Pradesh Government. It has been developed as a significant step towards preservation of prehistoric animal sites, restoration of their natural environment and utilization of the same for the scientific, educational and recreational purposes.

The park spread over an area of about 1.5 sq. km was opened to public on **23rd March, 1974.**The park displays **life-size fibre glass models of six of the prehistoric animals** (*Gavialis browni, Colossochelys atlas, Hexaprotodon sivalensis, Stegodon ganesa, Sivatherium giganteum & Paramachaerodus* sp.) which thrived in the area about 1 to 2.5 million years ago, their fossilised remains being recovered from Saketi and neighbouring region.

The Siwalik Fossil Park at Saketi was declared as **National Geological Monument** in 2001 by Geological Survey of India during its 150th anniversary celebrations.

A large and rare collection of vertebrate fossils recovered from Siwalik hills in Saketi and adjacent area has been displayed in a **museum** within the park campus. The fossil specimens include skulls, teeth, jaws, horn cores, limb bone fragments, vertebrae, etc. of various animal groups mainly mammalian, reptilian and fish. Among mammals, the fossils of proboscids (elephants), equids (horses), hippopotamids, rhinoceroses, bovids (cattle), cervids (deer), suids (pigs), giraffids and carnivores are the common exhibits.

A **Catalogue of Fossils in the Museum at Siwalik Fossil Park, Saketi, Himachal Pradesh** (***G.S.I. Catalogue Series*** **No. 8, 2013; 311 pp.** by **V. P. Mishra, Jaya Singh and R.S. Chandel**) has been published by G.S.I. giving photographs, taxonomic status, locality, horizon collectors' name and GSI field season of all the fossils displayed in the museum. Detailed geological maps and litho-columns of the Siwalik strata in and around Saketi mainly investigated by GSI have also been included in the catalogue.