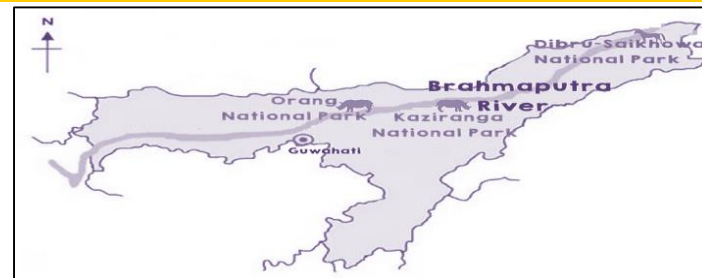


Project Elephant

❖ Context

- Recently, President of India took part in **Gaj Utsav at Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNPTR)** in Assam to mark 30 years of Project Elephant.



❖ Project Elephant:

• About :

- India launched **Project Elephant in 1991-92** as a **centrally-sponsored scheme**.
- Its objective is to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, prevent human-elephant conflict and to ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India.
- States are receiving both **financial and technical assistance** to help them achieve the Project's goals.
- The project has notified **33 elephant reserves, spanning 80,777 sq km**.

❖ Elephant :

• Conservation Status :

- **Wild Life Protection Act, 1972- Schedule I**
- **IUCN Red List- Endangered**

• Distribution :

- India has the largest and most stable population of Asian elephants globally, with over **60% of wild Asian elephants residing in India..**
- **Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) & Kerala (3,054).**
- The **Nilgiri landscape** has the largest single population of endangered Asian elephants worldwide.
- The 2017 elephant census recorded a population of **29,964 elephants in India.**

• Elephant Corridor :

- An elephant corridor is a stretch of forested (or otherwise) land that connects larger habitats with elephant populations and serves as a conduit for animal movement between the habitats.

• Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) Programme :

- The MIKE programme, mandated by a CITES COP resolution, began in South Asia in **2003**.
- MIKE is an international collaboration that tracks elephant mortality rates, trends, and causes.

❖ Kaziranga National Park:

- **Location :** It is situated in the **Golaghat, Karbi Anglong** and Nagaon districts of the state of Assam, India.

- The entire area of Kaziranga - **formed by alluvial deposits from the Brahmaputra** and its tributaries - is centered on the river.
- The **Diphlu River passes through the Kaziranga National Park.**

- **International Status :** The sanctuary, which hosts two-thirds of the world's great one-horned rhinoceroses, **is a World Heritage Site.**

- **Legal Status :** It was declared as a **National Park in 1974** by Govt of India.

- Kaziranga is home to the **highest density of tigers** among protected areas in the world, and was **declared a Tiger Reserve in 2006** (now the **highest tiger density is in Jim Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand**).

• Flora :

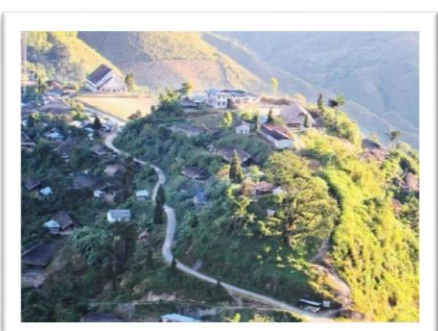
- **Alluvial inundated grasslands, alluvial savanna woodlands, tropical moist mixed deciduous forests,** and tropical semi-evergreen forests can be found here.
- **Kumbhi, Indian gooseberry, cotton tree, and elephant apple** are just a few of the park's well-known trees.

• Fauna :

- **Indian Rhinoceros.**
- It is famous for the charismatic '**BIGFIVE**' **Great Indian One-Horned Rhinoceros, Asiatic Wild Buffalo, Asiatic Elephant, Swamp Deer, and Royal Bengal Tiger** are among them.

News in Between the Lines

Whistling Village



❖ Context

- Recently a member of parliament presented his development report on Kongthong village in Meghalaya, India's only whistling village, to Prime Minister.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Kongthong is located in the East Khasi Hills in Meghalaya and is popular as the 'whistling village' due to its unique tradition of 'Jingrwai Lawbei' under which mothers create a tune for their newborns.
- The villagers, who belong to the Khasi tribe, give their children two names - one conventional name for official use and another musical name that represents a unique tune composed by their mother.
- When a person wants to communicate with someone, they use the musical tune associated with that person's name instead of calling out their conventional name.
- Kongthong people belong to the Seng Khasi Tribe and speak Khasi language.

Face to Face Centres

Mudra Yojana



❖ Context

- The Prime Minister has lauded **Mudra Yojana on the completion of 8 years**. The yojana has played a vital role in funding the unfunded and ensuring a life of dignity as well as prosperity for countless Indians.

❖ About MUDRA Scheme:

- Mudra Yojana is a **loan scheme to offer loan amounts up to Rs. 10 lakh** at competitive interest rates **to individuals, MSMEs and self-employed professionals**.
- This has been achieved through the **Commercial Banks, RRBs, Cooperative Banks, NBFC and MFI**. It enables them to start their new business or for business expansion purposes, **without submitting any collateral or security** with the bank or any financial institution.
- Nodal Ministry- Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance.
- MUDRA is a **wholly-owned subsidiary of SIDBI**.
- **Types of Loan Provided :**
 - Under **Shishu Scheme**: Up to Rs. 50,000.
 - Under **Kishor Scheme**: Rs. 50,001 – Rs. 5,00,000.
 - Under **Tarun Scheme**: Rs. 5,00,001 – Rs. 10,00,000.
- **Significance :**
 - Micro Enterprises include the enterprises specialized in manufacturing, trading, processing & services & are deemed to be the economic **bulwark of the country**.
 - The MUDRA scheme **aims to be an engine of transformation**, which makes the micro-enterprises of this nation a potent instrument of employment & GDP growth.
 - It further adds to the vision of **financial inclusion**.

Bihu



❖ Context

- On April 14, the beginning of the Bihu festival, the Assam government has planned a spectacle around the folk dance: 11,140 artistes from all districts of the state will perform together at Guwahati's Sarusajai Stadium in the presence of Prime Minister of India.

❖ About Bihu:

- Bihu is a **set of three important Assamese festivals** in the Indian state of Assam -
 - **'Rongali' or 'Bohag Bihu' observed in April :**
 - The Rongali Bihu is the **most important of the three**, celebrating the spring festival. It is one of the **biggest festivals of Assam**, falls in the 2nd week of April every year, marking the beginning of the harvest period.
 - This year Bohag Bihu will be **observed from April 14 to April 16**.
 - Besides the **cow worship**, the people also observe a generation-old tradition of **playing with eggs**.
 - The **first day of Rongali Bihu, also known as Goru Bihu**, is dedicated to cattle and usually falls on the last day of the outgoing year.
 - **'Kongali' or 'Kati Bihu' observed in October :** The Kongali Bihu or the Kati Bihu is the sombre, thrifty one reflecting a season of short supplies and is an animistic festival.
 - **'Bhogali' or 'Magh Bihu' is observed in January :** The Bhogali Bihu or the Magh Bihu is a harvest festival with community feasts.

Kerala Green Energy Corridor



❖ Context

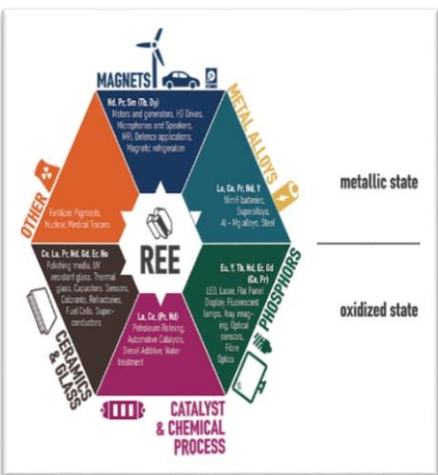
- The **Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB)** has received approval from the Cabinet for the **Green Energy Corridor (GEC)** project, which aims to facilitate grid integration and power evacuation of renewable energy power.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The GEC project is a significant boost for renewable energy in Kerala, as it will facilitate grid integration of renewable energy power, reducing the dependency on conventional sources of energy. The project will also enhance energy security in the State and promote sustainable development.

Face to Face Centres

Rare Earth Elements (REE)



❖ Context

- Recently, Scientists at the National Geophysical Research Institute (**NGRI**), a Council of Scientific and Industrial Research facility in Hyderabad, have reported the presence of lucrative **rare-earth elements (REEs)** in Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh.

❖ Rare Earth Elements (REE)

- The rare earth elements (REE) are a **set of seventeen metallic elements**.
- These include the fifteen lanthanides on the periodic table plus scandium and yttrium.
- The REEs are lanthanum, cerium, praseodymium, neodymium, yttrium, hafnium, tantalum, niobium, zirconium, and scandium.
- They are called “**rare earth**” **because they occur in low concentrations** of minerals and were difficult to extract from their oxide forms.
- **Characteristics :**
 - They have unique magnetic, luminescent, and electrochemical properties and are used in many modern technologies.
 - They are all metals having many similar properties, and that often causes them to be found together in geologic deposits.
- **Nodal Agency in India :**
 - Mining and processing of rare earth in India are concentrated in the hands of IREL (India) Limited, a PSU under the Department of Atomic Energy.
- **Applications :** These elements are key components in many electronic devices and whose industrial applications span sectors like imaging, aerospace, and defence.
- **Trade and Production :**
 - China has **one-third of the world’s known rare earth element reserves**. It controls 90% of the worldwide REE market.
 - **China produce 60% REE**, with the remainder produced by other countries, including the Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the United States).
 - India **has 6% of the world’s rare earth reserves**, but it only produces **1% of global output** and imports most of its needs from China

National Party Status



❖ Context

- The Election Commission recently recognised the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) as a national party, while revoking the status of the All India Trinamool Congress, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI).

❖ How is a National Party Defined?

- The ECI has laid down the technical criterion for a party to be recognised as a national party.
- A party may gain or lose national party status from time to time, depending on the fulfilment of these laid-down conditions.
- As per the EC I’s Political Parties and Election Symbols, 2019 handbook, a political party would be considered a national party if:
 1. it is ‘recognised’ in four or more states; or
 2. if its candidates polled at least 6% of total valid votes in any four or more states in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and has at least four MPs in the last Lok Sabha polls; or
 3. if it has won at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from not less than three states.

❖ To be recognised as a state party, a party needs:

1. at least 6% vote-share in the last Assembly election and have at least 2 MLAs; or
2. have 6% vote-share in the last Lok Sabha elections from that state and at least one MP from that state; or
3. at least 3% of the total number of seats or three seats, whichever is more, in the last Assembly elections; or
4. at least 1 MP for every 25 members or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha;
5. have at least 8% of the total valid votes in the last Assembly election or Lok Sabha election from the state.



MeerKAT Telescope



❖ Context

- Recently, **astronomers** used machine learning to mine data from South Africa's **MeerKAT telescope**.
- Astronomers have discovered a potential **Odd Radio Circle**, which they named **SAURON**.

❖ What are Odd Radio Circles?

- The **Odd Radio Circles (ORCs)** are a recently discovered astronomical phenomenon that is still not fully understood.
- These are large and unusually round **radio emission** features in the sky that do not have any visible counterparts in other **wavelengths of light**.
- The origin of ORCs is currently unknown, but there are several hypotheses that have been proposed.
- One possibility is that they are the result of a rare and extreme astrophysical event, such as the collision of two galaxy clusters or the merger of **black holes**.
- Another possibility is that they are caused by the interaction of cosmic magnetic fields with highly energetic particles.
- Note: **MeerKAT** is a radio telescope array located in **South Africa's Karoo region**, which is one of the most radio-quiet areas in the world.

Japan's Overseas Security Assistance (OSA) Programme



❖ Context

- Japan recently announced the **Overseas Security Assistance (OSA) programme** to provide financial support to poor nations for their defence and security.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The programme aims to deepen security cooperation with countries and create a desirable security environment for Japan.
- The initial beneficiaries of the programme include the Philippines, Malaysia, Bangladesh, or Fiji.
- Japan will provide aid in the form of grants, and it will not be used to purchase deadly weapons that recipients might use in disputes with other nations.
- Japan's decision to broaden the scope of international assistance to military-related projects was made in response to China's expanding military power.
- Japan has been expanding its relationships with developing nations to compete with China.
- Prime Minister of Japan announced a \$75 billion investment across the Indo-Pacific to create economic growth and improve infrastructure in the region.

Jupiter ICy Moons Explorer (JUICE) Mission



❖ Context

- The European Space Agency's **Jupiter ICy moons Explorer (JUICE) mission** is set to launch on April 13, 2023, from the **European Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- JUICE's primary focus is on the Jupiter system, with a particular emphasis on **Ganymede**, which is considered a planetary body and potential habitat.
- JUICE's mission objectives for Ganymede include **the characterization of the ocean layers and detection of potential subsurface water reservoirs**, geological, topographical, and compositional mapping of the surface etc.
- JUICE's investigations on **Europa will focus** on the chemistry essential to life, including organic molecules, and understanding the formation of surface features and the composition of non-water-ice material.
- The mission will take **7-8 years to reach Jupiter**, utilizing Earth and Venus gravity assists.
- Upon arrival, JUICE will flyby **Ganymede, Callisto, and Europa** to optimize its orbit around Jupiter.
- After studying Jupiter and its moons, JUICE will enter a highly elliptical orbit around Ganymede, which will eventually be lowered into a **500 km circular orbit**.
- **Significance:** JUICE's groundbreaking discoveries could provide valuable **insights into the formation and evolution** of our solar system and the potential for habitability beyond Earth.

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