Devil Flower Species (Thismia daemona)

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Why in News?

Botanists have discovered a new species of leafless, non-photosynthetic flowering plant in Thailand, named Thismia daemona, commonly called the "Devil Flower".

- **Family -** It belongs to the genus ***Thismia*** (family Thismiaceae), a group of small, unusual flowering plants commonly known as **"fairy lanterns"**.
- **Nomenclature -** The species was named "*daemona*" due to its dark, blackish flower topped with horn-like appendages rising from a dome-shaped miter, along with bright reddish-orange patches near its base that resemble glowing eyes.
- The plant contains **no chlorophyll**, has no leaves or green parts, and cannot perform photosynthesis.
- It survives via **mycoheterotrophy**, obtaining all its nutrients underground from symbiotic fungal networks.
- **Subterranean Lifestyle -** It spends almost its entire life concealed beneath layers of forest leaf litter, emerging only when flowering.
- **Habitat -** Discovered in **Thong Pha Phum National Park** in western Thailand.
- Found growing at an altitude of nearly 1,000 meters in a seasonal montane evergreen forest, which is surprising since most *Thismia* species inhabit wet, humid lowland rainforests.
- **Biogeographic Significance-** It belongs to *Thismia* section *Geomitra*, extending the known distribution of this section farther north into Thailand (previously recorded only in Peninsular Malaysia, Borneo, and Sumatra).
- **Conservation Status -** Provisionally assessed as **Critically Endangered (CR)**.
- **Threats -** Known from only a single population of fewer than 50 individual plants in a restricted area that experiences high tourist foot traffic.

Reference

Times of India | "Devil flower"