Elephant Corridors in India

Why in news?

The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change recently directed Arunachal Pradesh and Assam to prepare a proposal to notify the Dulung-Subansiri elephant corridor.

Status of elephants
• Elephants are the natural heritage animal of India, elephant calves are able to walk within 1 or 2 hours of birth. • The *Asian elephant* is the largest mammal living on the land of Asia. • **Scientific name** - Elephas maximus • **Gestation period** - 22 months • **IUCN Red List** – Endangered • **Wildlife Protection Act 1972** - Schedule I • **CITES -** Appendix I • **Population** -There are about 50,000-60,000 Asian elephants in the world. • **Elephant reserves**- There are *33 elephant reserves* in India, latest being Terai Elephant Reserve in Uttar Pradesh. • **Elephant corridors**- About 101 elephant corridors have been identified in the country which need to be secured for conservation of elephants. • **West Bengal**- It has the highest number of identified elephant corridors in India, accounting for over 17% of all the reported elephant corridors in the country. • **World elephant day**- It is an international annual event, celebrated on ***12th of August*** every year. • **Status of elephants**- More than 60% of the world's elephant population is in India., Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).

How elephant corridor is designated in India?

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**- It empowers the state governments to declare areas that link protected regions as "conservation reserves" under *Section 36A*.
- **Community reserves**- It can also be designated as "community reserves" according to Section 36C of the wildlife protection act, 1972.
- **Role of ministry-** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change collaborates with state forest departments to identity and validate elephant corridors.
- **State level designation**- State governments play a crucial role in demarcating and designating these corridors as " State Elephant Corridors".
- **Legal protection**- These designations subject the corridors to legal protection under relevant laws, such as the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- **National Elephant Corridor Project**- It aims to ensure and manage these vital pathways for elephant movement, this project identifies and conserves corridors to

ensure the long term survival of Asian elephants within India's political boundaries.

Why India needs elephant corridor?

Elephant corridor is that it is a strip of land that facilitates the movement of elephants between two or more viable habitat patches.

- **Legal protection**- The corridors will legally protected, potentially designating it as a wildlife sanctuary or conservation reserve.
- **Reduce habit isolation-**It allow elephants to continue their nomadic mode of survival, despite shrinking forest cover, by facilitating travel between distinct forest habitats.
- **Keystone species-** Supreme Court in elephant corridor case said that its State's duty to protect a "keystone species" like elephants, which are immensely important to the environment.

Supreme Court upheld the Tamil Nadu government's authority to notify an 'elephant corridor' and protect the migratory path of the animals through the Nilgiri biosphere reserve.

- **Forest conservation-** Animal paths are blocked as forests have been turned into farms and unchecked tourism, these elephant corridors would check the negative impacts on wildlife habitats and migration routes.
- **Man-animal conflict**- Animals are forced to seek alternative routes resulting in increased elephant-human conflict, these particularly affect animals that have large homes like elephants, a dedicated elephant corridor would reduce the fatalities.

Kerala is the first state to declares man-animal conflict as a state-specific disaster.

- **Forest regeneration**- They would help regenerate forests on which other species, including tigers depend.
- **Preserve migratory corridors**- The negative impacts of forest fragmentation on ecosystems highlight the necessity of preserving and restoring migratory corridors to mitigate these effects.
- **Hydropeaking risks**- Worldwide Institute of India report highlighted the dangers of hydropeaking in lower Subansiri hydroelectric project which could lead to flash floods and pose threat to elephants, particularly calves.

Quick facts

Project elephant

• **Launch year**- In 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
• **Objectives**
  - To protect elephants, their habitat and corridors
  - To address issues of man-animal conflict
  - Welfare of captive elephants
• **Ministry** - Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change provides financial and technical support to major elephant range states in the country.
• **MIKE**- Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephant is launched in 10 elephant reserves since 2003.
• Project Elephant completed 30 years in 2022.

Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants

• **Established by**- CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).
• **First implementation**- It was started in South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) in the year 2004.
• **Objective**- It is an international collaboration that tracks trends in information related to the illegal killing of elephants to monitor effectiveness of field conservation efforts.

References

1. Indian Express- Ready proposal of Elephant corridor
2. MoEFCC- Elephant corridor of India

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering