Masripithecus moghraensi

Prelims: *Current events of National and International Importance*

Why in News?

A newly discovered 17- to 18-million-year-old fossil ape in Egypt is challenging long-held ideas about where the ancestors of humans and modern apes first evolved.

The Discovery- *Masripithecus moghraensis*

- **What was found-** Researchers uncovered fossilized jaw bones of a previously unknown primate species at Wadi Moghra in northern Egypt.
- **Name meaning-** Named ***Masripithecus moghraensis*** (combining *Masr*, the Arabic name for Egypt, with Greek and local site references).
- **Age-** Dated to the **Early Miocene epoch** (roughly 17 to 18 million years ago).
- **Diet and features-** Analysis of the lower jaw, large canines, and rounded molars shows it had a versatile, fruit- and hard-food-based diet.

Why It Rewrites the Story?

- **Shifting from East Africa to the North-** For decades, scientists believed the common ancestor of all living apes originated primarily in **East Africa** (such as Kenya and Ethiopia), where most early Miocene ape fossils were found.
- **North Africa as a Cradle-** *Masripithecus* is the first definitive fossil ape ever found in **North Africa** from this period.
- **Closer to Living Apes-** Phylogenetic and biogeographic analyses place *Masripithecus* closer to living apes than many older East African counterparts.
- This suggests that **North Africa and the Middle East**—rather than just East Africa—may have been the true crucible where modern ape lineages first diversified.
- **Eurasian Connections-** This northern geography also provides a clearer stepping stone or dispersal corridor explaining how early apes later moved into **Eurasia** as tectonic plates shifted.



Reference

[The Economic Time| 17- to 18-million-year-old fossil ape]