Protest by Idu Mishmis

Why in news?

National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) proposal to convert Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary into Tiger Reserve has attracted protests from Idu Mishmis.

Who are Idu Mishmis?

- **Mishmi group** - The Idu Mishmi is a sub-tribe of the larger Mishmi group.
- The Mishmi group consists of Digaru, Miju and Idu sub tribes.
- **Location** - Mishmi Hills in Arunachal Pradesh and neighboring Tibet.
- They are of Mongoloid race and have a distinctive dialect falling under the Tibeto-Burma group of languages.
- **Occupation** - Weaving and craftsmanship skills
- **Population** - 12,000 people as per 2011 Census.
- **Language** - Idu Mishmi language is considered endangered by UNESCO.
- **Worship** - Idu-Mishmis believe in animism.
- They worship *Maselo-Zinu and Nani Intaya* as creators of mankind and universe as a whole.
- *Mithun*, is a semi-domesticated cattle of the Gaur family which they consider extremely valuable and rear for ritualistic sacrifices.
- **Cultural relations** - They brew local rice beer called 'Ebu'.
- Reh and Ke-Meh-Ha are two important festivals of Idus.
- According to Idu mythology, tigers are considered to be their "elder brothers" as they were born to the same mother.
- **Iyu-ena** - It is a strict belief system of myths and taboos that restrict them from hunting many animals, including a complete prohibition on killing tigers.
- **The Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society (IMCLS)** - Apex body of the tribe.
- The body fights for the rights of the tribe.

What about Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary?

- The Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the ***Dibang Valley district, Arunachal Pradesh*** which is divided into upper and lower Dibang Valley.
- It is named after the ***Dibang River which originates in China*** and cascades through this valley.
- The sanctuary was notified in 1998.
- The vegetation of Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary is of temperate and alpine type.
- Important fauna includes Red Panda, Musk Deer, Serow Leopard, Tiger, Orange Bellied Himalayan Squirrel, Himalayan black bear, barking deer, snow leopard, and

the famous ***Mishmi Takin.***

Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh **-** Adi, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mishmi, Khampti Nocte, Wancho, Tangshangng, Singpho, Monpa, Sherdu-Kpen and Aka

What is the NTCA proposal about?

- The NTCA has proposed for a reconstitution of the existing Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary as the Dibang Tiger Reserve.
- As Dibang Valley became a site by wildlife biologists to map the tiger habitat and count tigers, the recommendations from these visits have led to this proposal.

Community Conserved Area (CCA)

- Idu Mishmis have declared part of its forest land as CCA.
- It is a model governed entirely by local populations, where villagers are demarcate a part of their ancestral land as a bio cultural conserved area.
- There will be no hunting, felling trees and implement other conservation measures.

What are the concerns?

- **Access** - An upgrade to a tiger reserve would feature stricter security measures like a 'Special Tiger Protection Force', which would be guarding the area at all times.
- The tribe fears that the move will cut off access to their lands.
- **Arbitrary actions -** Members of the community claim that Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary was created without people's consent or knowledge.
- The due procedure as mentioned in the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the Land Acquisition Act, 1894 was not followed.
- **Demarcation** - In 2015, the community had approached the Gauhati High Court seeking legal re-demarcation of the wildlife sanctuary.
- **Misleading facts** - The community also alleges that the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) study about the presence of tigers in the upper reaches of the Mishmi hills is misleading.

Quick facts

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body under the ***Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.***
- NTCA has been constituted under section 38 L (1) of ***Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.***
- The authority consists of
    - **Chairperson** - ***Minister of Environment and Forests and Climate***

Change (MoEFCC)
    - **Vice-Chairperson** - Minister of State in the MoEFCC
    - 3 members of Parliament
    - Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests
- It is entrusted with strengthening tiger conservation measures in the country

Wildlife Institute of India (WII)

- An Autonomous Institution of the ***Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change***
- Established in 1982
- **Location** - *Dehradun*
- Offers training program, academic courses and advisory in wildlife research and management

References

1. The Indian Express | Idu Mishmi
2. NTCA | About NTCA
3. WII | About WII

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