Similipal National Park

Prelims (GS I) – *Current events of national and international importance| Environmental ecology, Bio-diversity and Climate Change.*

Mains (GS I) – *Conservation*

Why in news?

Recently, the Odisha government officially notified Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) as a National Park.

- **Similipal National Park** – Is the 107th national park in India and 2nd national park in Odisha.

  Similipal is also a wildlife sanctuary, tiger reserve, UNESCO biosphere reserve and elephant reserve.

- **Location** – Similipal in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district.
- **Vegetation** – Tropical Moist Deciduous Forests, Semi-Evergreen Forests, Dry Deciduous Forests, Grasslands.
- **Fauna of Similipal National Park:**
  - Royal Bengal tigers (Panthera Tigris) - 40
  - Asian Elephant (Elephas maximus) - 25% of Odisha's elephant population
  - Leopard (Panthera pardus)
  - Sambar (Rusa unicolor)
  - Mugger Crocodile (Crocodylus palustris)
  - 360 species of birds

  The tigers of Similipal possess higher-than-normal levels of melanin, giving them coats that are blacker with yellow stripes and are described as pseudo-melanistic tiger.

Flora of Similipal National Park	Sal (Shorea robusta)
	Orchids (104 species)
	Mahua (Madhuca indica)
	Bamboo (Dendrocalamus strictus)

The pseudo-melanistic tiger is a colour variant of the Bengal tiger and its strange coat is a result of a mutation in a particular gene.

Greater Similipal Landscape Programme

- It is a conservation *initiative by the Odisha Forest Department* to conserve Similipal national park and its surrounding ecological corridors.
- **Key Components of the programme:**
- ***AI-powered camera towers*** systems for real-time wildlife monitoring and poaching prevention.
- *V-SAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal) communication* networks to ensure surveillance in remote, connectivity-challenged zones.
- Diversifying Tiger population by introduction of two female tigers from Tadoba Andheri Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra) and to increase tiger population to 100 by 2036.
- **Community Engagement** – Integrated with the Ama Similipal Yojana, which focuses on:
    - Livelihood enhancement and skill training for local tribal communities (e.g., Kolha, Santhala, Khadia).
    - Promotion of *eco-tourism and cultural tourism* to generate income while raising conservation awareness.

Reference

The Indian Express| Similipal designated Odisha's second national park

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