Strobilanthes riteshii

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Conservation*

Why in News?

Recently, researchers from the Botanical Survey of India formally recorded a new flowering plant species from Arunachal Pradesh.

- **Family –** Acanthaceae.
- **Genus –** Strobilanthes.
  - India hosts a rich diversity of Strobilanthes, with the Himalayan and Northeast region contributing nearly half of the total.
  - They are known for their striking flowers and mass-flowering cycles.
- **Nomenclature –** Named it after *Dr Ritesh Kumar Choudhary,* an Indian plant taxonomist at the Agharkar Research Institute.
- In honour of his contributions to plant taxonomy and molecular systematics.
- **Discovery –** ***Chayangtajo in East Kameng district*** of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Habitat –** Grows along roadsides on open hill slopes, often near ***small waterfalls and streams*** within evergreen forest patches.
- **Distribution –** Endemic to the Eastern Himalayan region of Arunachal Pradesh, with only about 25 mature individuals recorded so far.
- **Key Characteristics –**
  - **Appearance –** It is a rare flowering shrub/herb with a close resemblance to ***Strobilanthes gigantea*****.**
  - **Flowers –** The flowers are purple to violet, bell-shaped and possess flaring petals.
  - **Flowering Season –** Observed between August and October, while fruiting occurs from September to December.
- **Conservation Status –**
  - **IUCN Red List –** Data Deficient (DD)
- **Threats –** Habitat pressure from road-widening, shifting (jhum)

cultivation, and stream pollution.
- Limited data on wider distribution increases conservation risk.
- **Ecological Significance –** Shows the Eastern Himalaya as a key ***biogeographical corridor linking India, China and Tibet***.
- Highlights the unique, highly endemic Himalayan flora.
- Emphasises the need for continued exploration and conservation of fragile ecosystems.



References

1. India Today NE | Strobilanthes riteshii
2. NE Now | Strobilanthes riteshii

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