

Gharials

January 13, 2022

In news- The Assam government has issued notification to make Orang National Park more than thrice its existing size and has planned to reintroduce Gharials into the expanded area.

About Gharials-

- Gharials, also called gavials, are a type of Asian crocodilian distinguished by their long, thin snouts.
- Gharial derives its name from **ghara**, a hindi word for pot because of a bulbous knob (narial excrescence) present at the end of their snout.
- **The snout of the gharial is uniquely the thinnest and most elongated among all the crocodilians.**
- The ghara also renders gharial the only visibly sexually dimorphic crocodilian.
- **It can grow to 7m in length and has a thick skin covered with smooth epidermal scales** that do not overlap.
- They reside exclusively in river habitats with deep, clear, fast-flowing waters and steep, sandy banks.
- Adult gharials prefer still, deep pools, formed at sharp river-bends and river confluences and use sandy banks for basking and breeding.
- They regulate their body temperature by basking in the sun to warm up or resting in shade or water to cool down.
- **Once found from Pakistan to Myanmar, presently, today the wild populations of gharials can only be found in Bangladesh, India and Nepal.**
- In India, they are found in Girwa (Uttar Pradesh), Son (Madhya Pradesh), Ramganga (Uttarakhand), Gandak (Bihar), Chambal (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) and Mahanadi (Orissa) and along the Narayani River of Nepal.
- **Their habitat is threatened because of human encroachment and fishing activities.**

- Gharials do not stalk and lunge at prey like other crocodilians and their snouts contain sensory cells that can detect vibrations in the water.
- Unlike other crocodiles, the gharials feed on warm-blooded species and even the largest gharial adults feed exclusively on fish, which they catch between the pointed interlocking teeth of their long jaws.
- They are genetically weaker than salt water crocodiles and muggers.
- They are **listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and also described as ***Critically endangered*** on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- **National Chambal Sanctuary is a tri-state protected area** (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh) **for the protection of the Gharial** and also the Endangered Ganges river dolphin.

Orang National Park-

- Earlier known as Rajiv Gandhi National Park, it is located in the state of Assam (the state government had dropped the 'Rajiv Gandhi' prefix in September 2021).
- It is on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River, and is strategic to the Kaziranga Orang Riverine Landscape.
- It was designated as a game reserve in 1915.
- In 1999, it was designated as a National Park.
- The park's total area is approximately 81 kilometres.
- The Orang tribe, who abandoned this country, lived here.
- It was recognised as a tiger reserve in 2016 and is often called 'Mini Kaziranga' owing to the similarities in topography, and a rich population of the one-horned rhino.
- It is known for the one-horned rhino, tigers, elephants, wild boars, pygmy hogs, and a variety of fish, among a host of other flora and fauna species.
- The park is bordered by the Pachnoi River, Belsiri River, and Dhansiri River, which all flow into the

Brahmaputra River.

- It is one of the seven national parks in Assam, the others are Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Dibru-Saikhowa, Raimona and Dehing Patkai.