

Indigenous Idu Mishmis

April 6, 2023

In news– The announcement that the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh would soon be notified as a tiger reserve has caused disquiet among the area's Idu Mishmi people.

Whoa are Idu Mishmis?

- The Idu Mishmi is **a sub-tribe of the larger Mishmi group** (the **other two Mishmi groups are Digaru and Miju**) in **Arunachal Pradesh** and neighbouring Tibet.
- **Known for their weaving and craftsmanship skills**, the Idu Mishmis primarily live in Mishmi Hills, bordering Tibet.
- Their ancestral homelands are spread over the districts of Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley as well as parts of Upper Siang and Lohit.
- The tribe is estimated to comprise around 12,000 people (as per census 2011), and **their language (also called Idu Mishmi) is considered endangered by UNESCO**.
- **Traditionally animists, the tribe has strong ties with the region's rich flora and fauna.**
- Animals such as the **hoolock gibbons and tigers** have deep **cultural relations with the Idu Mishmi**.
- **Tigers are especially important to the Idu Mishmis**, according to Idu mythology, they were born to the same mother, and thus, **tigers are their "elder brothers"**.
- While hunting has traditionally been a way of life, the Idu Mishmis also follow a strict belief system of **myths and taboos 'iyu-ena'** that restrict them from hunting many animals, including a complete prohibition on **killing tigers**.

Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary-

- It is one of the eight wildlife sanctuaries of Arunachal Pradesh.

- It is located in the Upper Dibang Valley district covering an area of 4,149 km².
- Its a biodiversity hotspot **home to rare Mishmi takin, musk deer, goral Black bear, Red Panda, Monal, Tragopan, Kalij,** Pheasants as well as clouded leopards, snow leopards and tigers.
- **A new species of a flying squirrel has been recently discovered** from the edge of this sanctuary.
- It has been named the Mishmi Hills giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista mishmiensis*). Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary is located fully or partly within Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve
- It was notified in 1998, plans to declare it as a tiger reserve have been afoot for a while now.
- In April 2021, at the 20th NTCA meeting held at the state's Pakke Tiger Reserve, under the chairmanship of Union Minister for environment, members accorded final approval to declare the wildlife sanctuary as a tiger reserve.