

Mahendragiri reserve

biosphere

March 31, 2021

In news: Recently, the state government Odisha has proposed a second biosphere reserve in the southern part of the state at Mahendragiri

About Mahendragiri biosphere reserve

- **Area and Location:** Mahendragiri Biosphere Reserve is around 470,955 hectares and is spread over Gajapati and Ganjam districts in the Eastern Ghats.
- Similipal Biosphere Reserve is Odisha's first such reserve and was notified May 20, 1996.
- This ecosystem acts as a transitional zone between the flora and fauna of southern India and the Himalayas, making the region an ecological estuary of genetic diversities.
- This is according to a feasibility report prepared by the Biosphere Reserve Committee for the proposed project.
- Once the protected archeological remains of Mahendragiri were listed in the tentative list of Unesco World Heritage Sites
- **Community:** Mahendragiri is inhabited by the Soura people, a particularly vulnerable tribal group as well as the Kandha tribe.
- The hills have diverse vegetation, according to the report of the proposed Mahendragiri Biosphere Reserve.
- **Flora:** The rich flora in Mahendragiri represents 40 percent of the reported flora of Odisha, with around 1,358 species of plants.
- **Fauna:** The faunal diversity of the hills consists of 388 species of animals, including 27 species of mammals, 165 species of birds, 23 species of snakes, 15 species of

amphibians, three species of turtles and 19 lizards.

Soura people

- They are a Munda ethnic group from eastern India. They live in southern Odisha and north coastal Andhra Pradesh. The Soras mainly live in Gajapati, Rayagada and Bargarh districts of Odisha.
- Other names: They are known by various names such as Savara, Sabara, Sora, and Soura.
- **Language:** The Soras speak Sora, a Munda language
- They practice shifting cultivation, with a few gradually taking up settled agriculture.

Biosphere Reserves

Biosphere Reserve (BR) is an international designation by UNESCO for representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes extending over large area of terrestrial or coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination thereof. BRs are designated to deal with one of the most important questions of reconciling the conservation of biodiversity, the quest for economic and social development and maintenance of associated cultural values. BRs are thus special environments for both people and nature and are living examples of how human beings and nature can co-exist while respecting each others' needs.

Criteria for designation of BR

- A site that must contain an effectively protected and minimally disturbed core area of value of nature conservation.
- The core area should be typical of a bio-geographical unit and large enough to sustain viable populations representing all trophic levels in the ecosystem.
- The management authority to ensure the involvement/cooperation of local communities to bring variety of knowledge and experiences to link biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development

while managing and containing the conflicts.

- Areas potential for preservation of traditional tribal or rural modes of living for harmonious use of environment.