



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 27-05-2024**

### **GS-2**

1. Star campaigners

### **GS-3**

2. Fall in tea production
3. Nancy Grace Roman Telescope
4. National Green Tribunal (NGT)
5. Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary

## **Star campaigners**

### **Syllabus : GS - 2; Elections in India**

#### **Context :**

- *During the on going Lok Sabha elections, many political parties announced the list of 'Star campaigner'.*

#### **Definition of Star campaigners**

- *There is **no specific definition** of a star campaigner in the law and electoral laws do not stipulate who can or cannot be made a star campaigner.*
- *Star campaigners are typically top leaders of a political party but can also include celebrities, as long as they are members of the appointing political party.*
- **Recognized** political parties (national or state) can appoint a **maximum of 40** star campaigners.
- Registered **unrecognised** political parties can appoint up to 20 star campaigners.

#### **Legal provisions for Star Campaigners**

- *Section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) deals with expenditure incurred by 'leaders of a political party', commonly known as 'star campaigners'.*

#### **Role of Election Commission**

- *The star campaigners are picked based on their popularity. The list has to be sent to the Election Commission of India and Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of the States within seven days from the date of election notification.*
- **Multi-phase Election Provision :** *In the case of multi-phase elections, political parties can submit separate lists of star campaigners for different phases, but many major parties provide a single list for a state that applies to all phases.*

#### **Advantages of Star campaigners**

- **Exclusion from Candidate's Election Expenditure :**
  - *Expenditure incurred by 'leaders of a political party' on travel for campaigning is not considered part of the election expenditure of a candidate from the same party.*
- **Impact on Candidate's Expenditure Limit:**
  - *Election expenditure limit for candidates is Rs. 95 lakh per Lok Sabha constituency in larger States and Rs.75 lakh in smaller States.*
  - *Star campaigners help parties attract votes for their candidates without adding to the candidate's expenditure limit.*

➤ **Conditions for Exclusion:**

- *Applies only if star campaigners limit themselves to general campaigning for the party.*
- *If a star campaigner seeks votes for specific candidates or shares the stage with them, expenses for those events are added to the candidate's election expenditure.*
- *Boarding/lodging expenses incurred by star campaigners while campaigning for candidates are included in the respective candidate's expenditure account.*
- *If candidates travel with the star campaigner, 50% of the travel expenditure of the star campaigner is also attributed to those candidates.*

**Issues associated with Star campaigners**

➤ **EC Advisory on Campaigning :**

- *The Election Commission (EC) has advised political parties to maintain decorum and focus on issue-based debates during campaigning.*

➤ **Violation by Star Campaigners :**

- *Star campaigners from various parties have been found guilty of using inappropriate language, appealing to caste/communal feelings, and making unsubstantiated allegations against leaders of other parties. **Example :** In January 2020, Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Verma of the BJP were removed from the list of star campaigners for inflammatory remarks during the Delhi Assembly election campaign.*

➤ **Issues with Expenditure Assessment :**

- *The assessment of expenditure for rallies/meetings by star campaigners often falls significantly below actual expenses.*
- *This discrepancy may be due to the use of outdated rate cards by the EC, which do not reflect current market rates for various items.*
- *Consequently, there's a lower apportionment of expenditure to contesting candidates, raising concerns about fairness and transparency in campaign finance.*

**Way forward**

➤ **Amendment of RP Act:**

- *Consider amending the Representation of the People Act (RP Act) to empower the Election Commission (EC) to revoke the 'star campaigner' status of a leader in case of serious violations of the Model Code of Conduct.*
- *This amendment would deprive party candidates of expenditure relief for their campaigns, serving as a deterrent against misconduct.*

➤ **Enhanced Authority for EC:**

- *Utilize the powers granted to the EC under Article 324 of the Constitution, which gives it the highest authority with superintendence and control of elections.*

- *Allow the EC to take decisive action to maintain the integrity of the electoral process and uphold standards of conduct.*
- **Ensuring Campaign Decorum:**
  - *Empower the EC to revoke 'star campaigner' status for leaders engaging in inappropriate behavior, promoting responsible campaigning.*
  - *Encourage a sense of accountability among leaders and parties, fostering campaigns that adhere to decorum and restraint.*
- **Robust Expense Assessment:**
  - *Improve the assessment and apportionment of expenses incurred during rallies/meetings where star campaigners campaign for specific candidates.*
  - *Ensure that expenses accurately reflect market rates, promoting fairness and transparency in campaign finance.*
- **Overall Impact:**
  - *These measures aim to strengthen the electoral process, uphold democratic principles, and foster fair and ethical campaigning.*

## **Fall in tea production**

### **Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture, Import-Export**

#### **Context**

- *Production across the tea estates of Assam and West Bengal may **drop by 50%** in the next few months if the **region does not receive sufficient and well-distributed rainfall**, an association of tea growers and manufacturers has said.*
- *The projection of this fall in output has been based on data released by the Tea Board of India, indicating a drop in production of about 40% in Assam and 23% in West Bengal up to March 2024.*

#### **Tea Production in India**

- *India is the **second-largest producer** of tea globally.*
- *Indian tea is one of the finest in the world owing to strong geographical indications, heavy investment in tea processing units, continuous innovation, augmented product mix, and strategic market expansion.*
- *As of 2022, a total of 6.19 lakh hectares of area was cultivated in India for tea production.*
- *India is also among the world's top tea-consuming countries, with 80% of the tea produced in the country consumed by the domestic population.*

- *In 2022-23, India's tea production stood at 1,374.97 million kgs, compared to 1,344.40 million kg in 2021-22.*
- *The Assam Valley and Cachar are the two tea-producing regions in Assam.*
- *In West Bengal, Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling are the three major tea producer regions.*
- *The southern part of India produces about 17% of the country's total production with the major producing states being **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.***

### Tea plantations

- *Tea plantations involve the cultivation of the **Camellia sinensis plant**, which is an evergreen that grows best in **tropical and subtropical climates.***
- *Tea plants require well-drained soil with a pH of 4.5–5.5 and high organic matter content.*
- *They also grow well at elevations of 1,000–2,500 m and temperatures of 20–27°C.*
- *It takes about three years for a new tea plant to be ready for harvesting, and about 4–12 years for a plant to bear seed*

## Nancy Grace Roman Telescope

### Syllabus: GS-3; Science and Tech

#### Context

- *NASA's Nancy Grace Roman telescope to hunt for primordial black holes from **Big Bang era***

#### About

- *The Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope (shortened as Roman or the Roman Space Telescope, and formerly the Wide-Field Infrared Survey Telescope or **WFIRST**) is a NASA **infrared space telescope** in development and scheduled to launch to a **Sun-Earth L2 orbit** by May 2027.*



## Components

- *The Roman Space Telescope is based on an existing 2.4 m (7.9 ft) wide field of view primary mirror and will carry two scientific instruments.*
- *The **Wide-Field Instrument (WFI)** is a 300.8-megapixel multi-band visible and near-infrared camera, providing a sharpness of images comparable to that achieved by the Hubble Space Telescope over a 0.28 square degree field of view, 100 times larger than imaging cameras on the Hubble.*

- *The **Coronagraphic Instrument (CGI)** is a high-contrast, small field of view camera and spectrometer covering visible and near-infrared wavelengths using novel starlight-suppression technology.*

### Objectives

- *include a search for **extra-solar planets** using gravitational microlensing,*
- *along with probing the **chronology of the universe** and growth of cosmic structure,*
- *with the end goal of **measuring the effects of dark energy**,*
- *the consistency of general relativity, and the curvature of spacetime.*

## National Green Tribunal (NGT)

### Syllabus : GS – 3; Environment & Ecology

#### Context :

- *The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has asked Assam's Chief Secretary to provide details of officers who let polling stations, schools, and other construction activities in a wildlife sanctuary and a reserve forest in gross violation of the forest act.*

#### National Green Tribunal

- *The Tribunal shall be guided by **principles of natural justice** so it is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.*
- *Moreover, the **dedicated environmental jurisdiction** of the Tribunal will facilitate timely **environmental justice** and assist in reducing the burden of litigation of high courts.*
- *The National Green Tribunal has been established under the **National Green Tribunal Act 2010**.*
- ***New Delhi is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal** and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.*

#### Composition of NGT

- *The Tribunal comprises the **Chairperson, the Judicial Members, and Expert Members**.*
- *They shall hold office for a **term of 5 years** and are not eligible for reappointment.*
- *The **Chairperson is appointed by the Central Government** in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI).*



- *A Selection Committee shall be formed by the central government to appoint the Judicial Members and Expert Members.*
- *There are to be at least 10 and a maximum of 20 full-time Judicial members and Expert Members in the tribunal.*

### **Powers & Jurisdiction of NGT**

- *Established for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to **environmental protection and conservation of forests** and other natural resources.*
- *It has **appellate jurisdiction** to hear appeals as a Court.*
  - *Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974*
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  - *Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980*
  - *Air (Prevention and control of Pollution) Act, 1981*
  - *Environment (Protection) Act, 1986*
  - *Biological Diversity Act, 2002*
- *According to SC, the NGT's role is **not just adjudicatory in nature**; it must also carry out equally important preventative, ameliorative, or remedial roles.*
- *The Supreme Court ruled that the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had the authority to address **environmental matters** countrywide as a “**unique**” forum with **suo motu** (on its own initiative) authority.*
- *The National Green Tribunal has **jurisdiction over all civil cases** where a substantial question relating to the environment (including enforcement of any legal right related to the environment), is involved.*
- *The Tribunal can hear disputes over the topics that fall under its **jurisdiction and settle such disputes** and pass orders thereon.*
- *The application for adjudication of dispute shall be made **within a period of six months** from the date on which the cause of action for such dispute first arose, otherwise the application shall not be entertained.*
- *A further period **not exceeding sixty days** (beyond 6 months) can be provided by the tribunal to file an application if it is satisfied that the applicant was prevented by sufficient cause from filing in the said period.*

### **Decision of NGT**

- *The decision of the Tribunal shall be **binding in nature**, provided that, any person aggrieved by any decision or order of the Tribunal, **can file an appeal to the Supreme Court** within **ninety days** of the commencement of the verdict.*

## **Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary**

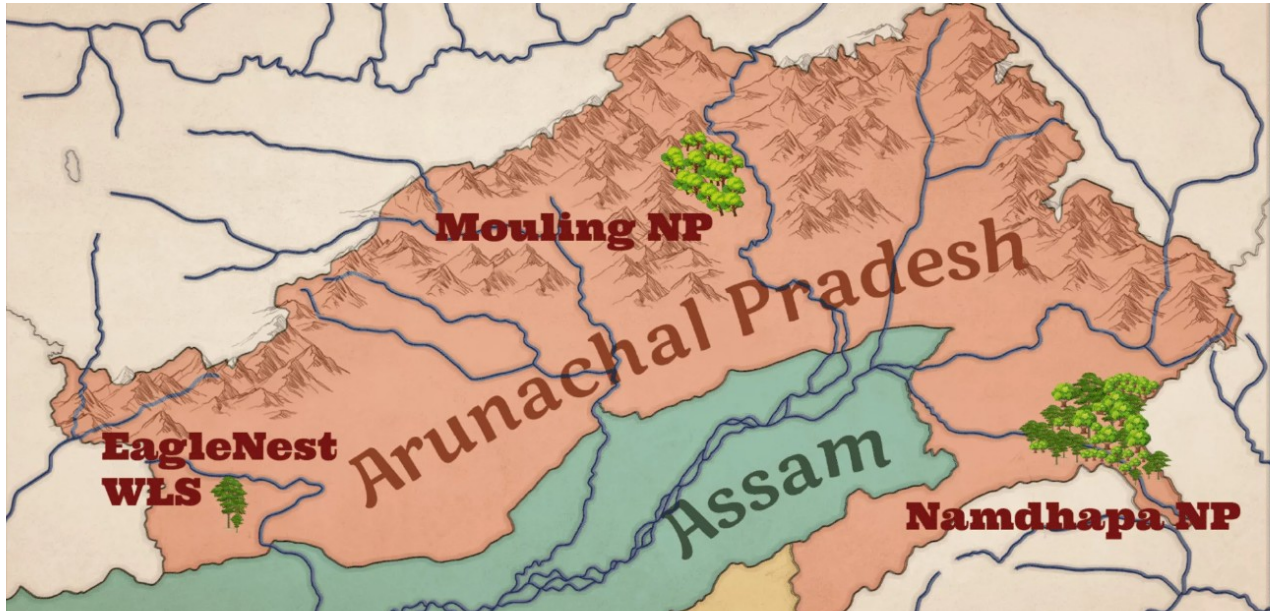


## Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity

### Context

- An endangered species, Red panda was recently captured on camera in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (EWS) located in the Singchung subdivision of the West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh.

### About



- Eaglenest or Eagle's Nest Wildlife Sanctuary is a protected area of India in the Himalayan foothills of West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh.
- It conjoins Sessa Orchid Sanctuary to the northeast and Pakhui Tiger Reserve across the Kameng river to the east.
- It is a part of the Kameng Elephant Reserve.
- Eaglenest is notable as a prime birding site due to the extraordinary variety, numbers and accessibility of species.
- Eaglenest derives its name from Red Eagle Division of the Indian army which was posted in the area in the 1950s.

### Red panda



- *The red panda (**Ailurus fulgens**), also known as the lesser panda, is a small mammal native to the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China.*
- *The red panda inhabits coniferous forests as well as **temperate broadleaf and mixed forests**, favouring **steep slopes** with dense bamboo cover close to water sources.*
- *The species has been listed as **Endangered** on the IUCN Red List.*
- *It is threatened by poaching as well as destruction and fragmentation of habitat due to deforestation.*