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## **2. DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid)**

### **Why in News?**

- Recently, the MoEF&CC has announced the completion of the DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) Profiling of 270 elephants, aiming at ensuring better protection.

### **Highlights**

- The DNA profiling was started in August 2022 for Gaj Soochna Mobile Application for forest officials.
- DNA profiling is the process where a specific DNA pattern, called a profile, is obtained from a sample of bodily tissue.
- The DNA profiling will act as the ‘Adhaar card of captive elephants’.
- The captive elephants had earlier been chipped electronically, but the method was not a success.
- With the mobile app, forest officers can identify each elephant and track it and therefore its transfer, which often happens in the case of captive elephants, can be recorded.
- After the elephant profiling, more focus can be put on elephant care – with unique information about elephants.
- Unlike Project Tiger, the Project Elephant looks at the welfare and health of captive elephants as well.
- It was launched in 1992 as a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme with an aim to protect elephants and improve their habitat and corridors, reduce Human-elephant conflict and ensure their welfare.
- As many as 33 elephant reserves, spanning 80,777 sq km, have been notified.
- It provides financial and technical support to wildlife management efforts by states for their free-ranging populations of wild Asian Elephants.
- The project aims to ensure the long-term survival of the populations of elephants in their natural habitats by protecting the elephants, their habitats and migration corridors.
- Other goals of Project Elephant are supporting the research of the ecology and management of elephants, creating awareness of conservation among local people, and providing improved veterinary care for captive elephants.
- India is home to 20% of the global captive Asian elephant population, but a census of captive elephants is not done regularly.

- India has the largest and the most stable population of Asian elephants, where more than 60% of wild Asian elephants are in India.
- Nilgiri landscape has the largest single population of the endangered Asian elephant anywhere in the world.
- The population of 29,964 elephants as recorded in the last elephant census conducted in 2017 speaks volumes of the passion for wildlife conservation ingrained in Indian culture.
- As per Elephant Census (2017), Karnataka has the highest number of elephants (6,049), followed by Assam (5,719) and Kerala (3,054).

