



Geo-Tourism in Northeast

Why in News

Recently, the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has **identified certain geological sites across the Northeast** for promotion of geo-tourism.

- **12 locations** in the Northeast **have been included in the 32 approved geo-tourism or geo-heritage sites** in the country.

Key Points

▪ Geo-heritage Sites:

- Geo-heritage refers to the **geological features** which are **inherently or culturally significant** offering insight to earth's evolution or history to earth science or that can be utilized for education.
- **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** is the **parent body** which is making efforts towards identification and **protection of geo-heritage sites/national geological monuments** in the country.
- **Some of these sites are:** Marine Gondwana fossil park in Chhattisgarh; Siwalik vertebrate fossil park in Himachal Pradesh; Stromatolite park in Rajasthan; Pillow lava in Karnataka, Eparchaeon unconformity and Tirumala hills in Andhra Pradesh, **Lonar Lake** in Maharashtra, etc.

▪ Geo Tourism:

- Geotourism is defined as "tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place - its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents."
- It will **foster community involvement, improve the local economy and create respect for local culture and tradition.**
- India is a country with diverse physical attributes, rich cultural heritage and eventful ancient history and its subcontinent exhibits imprints of varied geological processes through ages and is a storehouse of interesting geological features.

▪ Geo-heritage sites in Northeast:

◦ Majuli (Assam):

- A river "island", among the world's largest, in **Brahmaputra river**.
- The island is also the **hub of spiritualism in Assam** because of a number of 'satras' or **Vaishnav monasteries** established by the **15th-16th century saint-reformer Srimanta Sankaradeva** and his disciples.

◦ Sangetsar Tso (Arunachal Pradesh):

- It is popularly **known as Madhuri Lake.**
- It is close to the border with Tibet and was formed due to the damming of a river during a major earthquake in 1950.

◦ Loktak Lake (Manipur):

- It is the **largest freshwater lake in the Northeast**.
- The attractions of this lake are the **'phumdis' or floating biomass** and the 'phumsangs' or huts of fishermen on them.
- The **Keibul Lamjao National Park**, the **only floating wildlife habitat** on earth, is on the southwestern part of the lake and is the **last natural habitat of the sangai or brow-antlered dancing deer**.
- **Others:**
 - Mawmluh Cave, Mawblei or God's Rock, Therriaghat (**Meghalaya**); Umananda (**Assam**), Chabimura, Unakoti (**Tripura**); Sangetsar Tso (**Arunachal Pradesh**); Reiek Tlang (**Mizoram**); Naga Hill Ophiolite (**Nagaland**); Stromatolite Park (**Sikkim**).
- **Related Global Concept:**
 - [UNESCO Global Geoparks](#):
 - These are **single, unified geographical areas** where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.
 - While there are **169 UNESCO Global geoparks** spread across 44 countries, **India is yet to have one of its own**.

Geological Survey of India

- It was set up **in 1851 primarily to find coal deposits for the Railways**. Presently, GSI is an **attached office to the Ministry of Mines**.
- The **main functions** of the GSI relate to creation and updation of national geo-scientific information and mineral resource assessment.
- It is **headquartered in Kolkata**.

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