

## Concerns over Increase in Tiger Population

### Why in news?

The all-India figures published by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) indicate that the number of big cats has grown in the State.

### Why are tigers so significant?

*Global Tiger Day is celebrated on July 29th. It was founded in 2010, when 13 tiger range countries came together to create Tx2 - the global goal to double the number of wild tigers by the year 2022.*

- **Ecological balance**- Tigers serve as top predators in their ecosystems, playing a pivotal role in maintaining ecological balance by regulating prey species' populations.
- **Ecological integrity**- They prevent over-grazing by limiting herbivore numbers.
- **Keystone species**- Tigers have a profound impact on their environments, making their preservation crucial for overall ecosystem health and diversity.
- **Conservation icon**- It is a flagship species, tiger conservation is a litmus test that ensures the well-being of our forested ecosystems and the biodiversity they represent
- **Umbrella species**- Tigers are solitary and have large home range providing space for variety of other species to flourish

### Conservation Status of Tiger

- IUCN – **Endangered**
- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 - **Schedule I**
- CITES - **Appendix I**



### What is the status of tiger population in India?

*The tiger census is held once in every 4 years by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in association with state forest departments and the Wildlife Institute of India.*

- The 2022 all-India tiger estimation revealed a notable increase in tiger occupancy from 2,967 in 2018, and 3,167 in 2022.
- India harbours almost 75% of the global tiger population and has honour of the

***largest tiger range country*** in the world.

- More than 3/4th of the tiger population is found within protected areas.
- **States**- The largest tiger population is in Madhya Pradesh (785), followed by Karnataka (563) & Uttarakhand (560), and Maharashtra (444).
- **Tiger reserve**- There are 53 tiger reserve in the country with the highest population of tiger in

| Tiger reserve           | Location    |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Corbett tiger reserve   | Uttarakhand |
| Bandipur tiger reserve  | Karnataka   |
| Nagarhole tiger reserve | Karnataka   |

- **Increase in numbers** - Central India and the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains witnessed a notable increases in tiger population, particularly in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Maharashtra.
- **Decline** - There is a dip in tiger numbers in Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, parts of Northeast India and the Western Ghats.
- Approximately 35% of the tiger reserves urgently require enhanced protection measures, habitat restoration, ungulate augmentation, and subsequent tiger reintroduction.

## Initiatives to Conserve Tiger Population

### Global level

- **St Petersburg tiger summit**- It was conducted in 2010, the tiger range countries resolved to double the tiger population in the wild with popular slogan "T\*2".
- **Global Tiger Forum**- It was founded by World Bank which is the only inter-governmental platform of tiger range countries since 1993 consolidating Tiger Action Plans of the range countries.

### National level

- **MSTripES** (Monitoring System for Tigers: Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) - It creates database from the field using Global Positioning System (GPS), General Packet Radio Services (GPRS), and remote sensing.
- **National Tiger Conservation Authority** -It is a statutory body constituted under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- It conducts country level assessment of tiger population, co-predators, prey and habitat.
- **International Big Cats Alliance**- It was launched by India in 2023 at Mysore, Karnataka, to commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger.
- It aims to conserve 7 big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma
- **T\*2 Award**- It was given to Pench tiger reserve spread across Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh and to Satpura Tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh for doubling the tiger population.
- **Project Tiger** - It was first launched at the Jim Corbett National Park on April 1 1973.
- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme that focuses on the conservation of big cats and ensures the preservation of their natural habitat as tigers are at the top of the food chain.

## What are the issues with the growth in tiger population?

- **Skewed growth-** Nearly 78% of tigers in tiger reserves are concentrated in Bandipur and Nagarhole, both these areas enjoy protection since 1950s.
- **Man animal conflict-** Bandipur has 136 villages in a radius of 1 km and further increase in tiger population would escalate the man animal conflict.
- **Lack of high prey base-** This increases the range of the resident tigers and their propensity to stray into human habitats.
- **Artificial manipulation-** Increase in tiger population beyond carrying capacity of the habitat could adversely impact the population of other co-predators such as leopards and dholes.
- **Lack of political will-** The Malai Mahadeshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary is ideal to absorb the surplus tiger population, but it is yet to be declared as a tiger reserve.
- **Connectivity issue-** A 2021 study revealed that genomic variation of Indian tigers continues to be affected by connectivity issues.

## What lies ahead?

- **Strict implementation of eco sensitive rules-** This would provide viable wildlife habitat and create additional space for tigers.
- **Increase the forest propensity-** This will reduce the range of the resident tigers and their propensity to stray into human habitats.
- **Reduce anthropogenic pressure-** There is a need for awareness to the local population regarding fear of displacement will reduce the pressure on existing habitats

## References

1. [PIB-All India tiger estimation](#)
2. [The Hindu-Big concern over big cats](#)
3. [Indian Express-Views on tiger census](#)