

Date: 10/04/2023

50 Years of Project Tiger

GS – 3: Environment - Conservation

India has completed 75 years of independence; and at the same time, 75 percent of the world's tiger population is in India.

Project Tiger:

- Tiger is one of the flagship and umbrella species.
- It is an initiative by Government of India to conserve tiger and it was launched in 1 April 1973 in Jim Corbett National Park and nine reserves of different States Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal over an area of approximately 14,000 sq. km.
- It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, providing funding support to tiger range States for in-situ conservation of tigers in designated tiger reserves, and has put the endangered tiger on an assured path of recovery by saving it from extinction, as revealed by the recent findings of the All India tiger estimation using refined methodology.

Objective of Project Tiger:

- Reduce factors that lead to the depletion of tiger habitats and to mitigate them by suitable management. The damages done to the habitat shall be rectified to facilitate the recovery of the ecosystem to the maximum possible extent.
- Ensure a viable tiger population for economic, scientific, cultural, aesthetic and ecological values.

Implementing Authority:

- It was being implemented by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)
- Chairperson of NTCA is union minister of MOEFCC

Objectives of NTCA:

- The statutory authority that implements Project Tiger so that compliance of its directives become legal.
- Fostering accountability of Center- State in management of Tiger Reserves, by providing a basis for MoU with States within our federal structure.
- Providing for an oversight by Parliament.
- Addressing livelihood interests of local people in areas surrounding Tiger Reserve.

Administrative Structure of NTCA:

- **The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has been constituted under section 38 L (1) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
- The authority consists of
 - the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment and Forests as Chairperson),
 - the Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Vice-Chairperson),
 - three members of Parliament, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests and other members.

Works of NTCA:

- NTCA's Tiger monitoring is in Guinness Records – Largest camera-trap wildlife survey.
- Camera traps were placed in 26,838 locations across 141 different sites and surveyed an effective area of 121,337 square kilometres (46,848 square miles). From these photographs, 2,461 individual tigers (excluding cubs) were identified using stripe-pattern-recognition software (Jhala et al., 2020).
- The 2018 "Status of Tigers in India" assessment also conducted extensive foot surveys that covered 522,996 km (324,975 mi) of trails and sampled 317,958 habitat plots for vegetation and prey dung.
- A positive outcome of the survey was that it concluded that India's tiger population had increased by roughly one-third: from 2,226 in 2014 to 2,927 in 2018.
- **MSTripES (Monitoring System for Tigers: Intensive Protection and Ecological Status):**
 - The MSTripES program uses **Global Positioning System (GPS), General Packet Radio Services (GPRS), and remote sensing**, to collect information from the field, create a database using modern Information Technology (IT) based tools, analyses the information using GIS and statistical tools to provide inferences that allow tiger reserve managers to better manage their wildlife resources.
- **Reintroduction of Tigers in India:**
 - Reintroducing tigers in Indian context means establishing a tiger population in area which was part of its historical range but from where it has gone locally extinct.
 - The principal aim of reintroduction exercise is to establish a viable, free-ranging population in the wild, of tiger that has become locally extinct in the wild.
 - The reintroduction is carried out in the former natural range of the tiger with minimal long-term management.
 - NTCA has prepared a protocol on tiger re-introduction which deals with aims and objectives of reintroduction, constitution of team, pre-project activities, conducting feasibility study, selection and evaluation of site, suitability of release stock of tigers, socio-economic requirements, preparation for release and post release activities.
- NTCA provides technical and financial support to tiger range states.

- India has entered bilateral instruments and Memorandum of Understanding with Tiger Range Countries.
 - Capacity building workshops have been carried out with **Thailand, Malasiya, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Cambodia** in the field of tiger conservation planning.
 - Field visits of **Russian, Malaysian, Cambodian and Chinese** officials have been conducted in tiger reserves of India for demonstrating tiger conservation practices first hand.
 - Tiger re-introduction experiences have been shared with **Cambodia and Russia**.
 - Hosted **3rd Asia Ministerial Conference (3 AMC)** was organized in **New Delhi** from 12th to 14th April, 2016.
 - Hosted the **1st and 2nd Stock Taking conferences on tiger conservation in 2012 and 2019** respectively to view progress of Tiger Range countries vis-a-vis the **Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP)**.
- **Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF)** – The Finance Minister of India had announced policy initiatives on 29th February, 2008, for constituting STPF. The proposal for the said force has been approved for 13 tiger reserves.
- **STPF** has been made operational in the States of Karnataka (Bandipur), Maharashtra (Pench, Tadoba-Andhari, Nawegaon-Nagzira, Melghat), Rajasthan (Ranthambhore), Odisha (Similipal) and Assam (Kaziranga), out of 13 initially selected tiger reserves, with 60% central assistance under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (CSS-PT).

World Tiger day: 29th July

IUCN: Endangered

CITES: APPENDIX I - lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants. They are threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial.

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule I - As per Act “no person shall hunt any wild animals specified in Schedule I, II, III and IV except as provided under section 11 and 12”.

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Tiger Census:

- Madhya Pradesh has largest number of tigers in India
- Largest tiger reserve Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger reserve, Andhra Pradesh
- Highest density tiger reserve Jim Corbett national park
- India is home to 75% of the world's tiger population
- Bharia community from Central India and Worli community from Maharashtra among others worship the tiger
- India is the largest tiger range country in the world.
- The largest Asiatic elephant range country in the world with nearly thirty thousand elephants
- The largest single-horn rhino country with a population of nearly three thousand.

Tiger range states and number of Tiger Reserve

- There are 18 states with 54 Tiger reserves.
- Latest added Tiger reserve - Guru Ghasidas National Park (53rd) & Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary (54th) in Chhattisgarh.

TX2 Award:

13 tiger range governments came together for the first time at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit (2010) where they committed to double the number of wild tigers by 2022.

This award is presented by Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS), Fauna and Flora International (FFI), Global Tiger Forum (GTF), IUCN's Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP), Panthera, UNDP, The Lion's Share, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and WWF.

TX2 Awards which stands for '**Tigers times two**'

TX2 Awards 2022:

- **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR)** in Erode has won TX2 award for doubling tiger numbers to 80 since 2010.
- **Bardia National Park** in Nepal has won this award for doubling the population of wild tigers.

TX2 Awards 2023:

- **Pench Tiger Reserve** in Madhya Pradesh and adjoining Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra have collectively won this year's **TX2 Award** for doubling their population of wild tigers.

Global Tiger Forum:

It was established in 1994. It is an inter-governmental body established to work exclusively for the conservation of Tigers. This forum is in partnership with the Governments of Bhutan, India and Nepal and accompanied by World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature.

Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme

Initiated in 2014, the Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP) is a grant-making initiative which contributes to the Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP), a global effort to double tiger numbers in the wild by 2022.

Funded by The German Cooperation via KfW Development Bank, conservation efforts are currently scheduled to run until 2027.

This programme consists of four phases that invest on high-quality projects in key Tiger Conservation Landscapes in countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar.

Way Forward:

The key issues that still need to be addressed to continue the comeback of India's tigers include improving “corridors” between isolated pockets of tiger territory, reducing poaching, and helping to build up prey numbers through habitat restoration.

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