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News: Elephant Census

- The number of elephants in Karnataka has increased by 346, from an estimated 6,049 in 2017 to 6,395 now, which is the highest in the country, according to an interim report on Asian Elephant population and demography estimates– 2023.

Elephant Census

- The Elephant Census is conducted by the Karnataka Forest Department in collaboration with neighbouring Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Goa.
- The number of elephants in Karnataka that had risen from 5,740 in 2010 to 6,072 in 2012 had decreased to 6,049 in 2017 then increased to 6395 in 2023.
- Census was taken up in 23 forest division.
- The State (Karnataka) has an average elephant density of 0.34 per sq km.
- Bandipur Tiger Reserve with 1,116 elephants has accounted for the highest density of 0.96 per sq km followed by Nagarahole Tiger Reserve that has 831 elephants with a density of 0.93.

- BRT Tiger Reserve with 619 elephants accounts for a density of 0.69, while MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary has a density of only 0.60 despite having 706 elephants.

Indian Elephant

- Indian Elephant is one of the 3 subspecies of Asian elephant and **native to mainland Asia**.
- More than **60% of the world's elephant population is in India**.
- IUCN protection status: **Endangered**.
- Indian Elephant is protected as per CITES in its **Appendix I** (African Elephant too) and Wildlife Protection Act in its **Schedule I**.
- It is found in **India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Malay Peninsula, Laos, China, Cambodia and Vietnam**.
- Major threats faced are Poaching for ivory resulting in the death of male elephants and creation of imbalance in sex ratio as no. of females become high, Human – elephant conflicts, Habitat destruction and Accidents by railways.
- The Elephant is protected through projects like **Surakshya Portal, Project Elephant, Plan BEE and MIKE**.
- **Elephant Census is conducted under the aegis of Project Elephant every 5 years (Quinquennial)**.

- Most recent census shows that the numbers of elephant in India are 27,312, most of which are in Karnataka (6049), followed by Assam (5719) and Kerala (3054).
- Government recently proposed to merge the Elephant Census and Tiger Census from 2022 onwards.
- Recently, Kerala government has decided to acquire private property and convert them into forests to reduce the human – elephant conflict. 13 estates in six divisions are decided to be acquired.