

16– 11 – 2023

News: Tiger Population

- Countries have submitted tiger population numbers from 2010-2022 to the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) and United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) under GTRP 2.0 which aims to pave the way for tiger conservation from 2023-2034.

Status of Tiger Conservation in World

- The wild tiger status is good in South Asia and Russia, but the picture in Southeast Asia is grim, posing challenges to the global tiger population recovery.
- There has been an overall increase in the tiger population of 60%, taking the number to 5,870.
- However, countries like Bhutan, Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao-PDR, and Vietnam showed a decline in tiger populations, making the situation “grim” in the Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) of Southeast Asia.
- The success of countries in South Asia like Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal including China and Russia in North East Asia is attributed to effective measures taken for habitat conservation and protection.
- India's wild tiger population is 3,167 in 2022. Nepal has tripled the tiger population.

Global Tiger Recovery Program 2.0 (2023-34)

- Global Tiger Recovery Programme (GTRP) 2.0 was released at Thimphu on 29 July International Tiger Day 2023 by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Royal Govt of Bhutan.
- GTRP was launched by the World Bank in 2010 under the Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) to double wild tiger populations by 2022, with commitments from Tiger Range Countries (TRCs).
- The Global Tiger Forum (GTF) became the implementing arm for the tiger agenda.
- GTRP 2.0 has been firmed up by tiger range countries through the intergovernmental platform of the Global Tiger Forum along with collaborators like the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).
- GTRP 2.0 emphasizes on strengthening tiger governance, enhancing resources and protection, while addressing contemporary challenges like Human-Wildlife Conflict.
- The new version has retained several ongoing archetypal actions along with new ones for a differentiated approach to save the endangered wild tigers.

Global Tiger Forum (GTF)

- The GTF is the **only intergovernmental international body** established with members from willing countries to embark on a global campaign to **protect the Tiger**.
- It was formed in **1993** and **located in New Delhi, India**.
- The **General Assembly of GTF shall meet once in three years**.
- In November 2010, leaders of the **tiger range countries (TRCs) assembled at an International Tiger Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia to adopt the St. Petersburg Declaration on Tiger Conservation** and endorsed its implementation mechanism, called the Global Tiger Recovery Program.
- Their **overarching goal was to double the number of wild tigers** across their geographical area from about **3,200 to more than 7,000 by 2022**.
- This is a **global goal and not per individual country**.

Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP)

- Initiated in 2014, the Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP) by the IUCN or 'Tiger Programme' 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.

- The programme consists of a **portfolio of 12 large-scale projects in key Tiger Conservation Landscapes across Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Myanmar.**

The Tiger Programme is based on three pillars:

- Protecting tiger species and their prey from the threat of poaching.
- Preserving tiger habitats, including core habitats, buffer zones and corridors.
- Supporting human populations living in tiger landscapes.

- The initiative is funded by **The German Cooperation via KfW Development Bank**, over two phases.
- The first phase is being **implemented from 2014 to 2020 and the second one from 2019 to 2023.**

Royal Bengal Tiger

- Royal Bengal Tiger is also known as **Bengal Tiger** and **Indian Tiger**.
- Tigers are **solitary animals**. They have **characteristic black stripes on their orange colour coat**. However, there are white tigers with bright white colour fur and black stripes.
- They are **excellent hunters and can run, climb trees, jump and swim**.
- Tiger is the **biggest of all big cats living** in the world. An average adult tiger usually **weighs around 300 kg**.

- CITES protection: **Appendix I**.
- Wildlife protection act: **Schedule I**.
- IUCN Red list: **Endangered**.
- It is distributed over India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan.
- Threats faced by the Tiger include poaching, Habitat destruction, Prey loss and Human conflict.
- Conservation programs include **Project Tiger, Tiger census, MsTripes, TX2 Goal, Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) awards and Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme (ITHCP by IUCN)**.
- The Tiger Census is **conducted every 4 years (Quadrennial) by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**.
- Government recently proposed to **merge the Elephant Census and Tiger Census**.
- Tiger was included in the **"Not all animals migrate by choice" campaign by Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)**.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered species of Wild flora and fauna (CITES)

- CITES Convention, also known as **Washington Convention**, is a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)**.

- It is administered by **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**.
- Headquarters of CITES is in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- CITES is in force **since 1st July 1975** when 10 countries ratified the agreement.
- Aim of the convention is to **control or prevent international commercial trade in endangered species or products derived from them**.
- India became a party to the convention in 1976.
- Although CITES is **legally binding** on state parties to the convention it is not self-executing. Parties are **obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation** to implement its goals.
- Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) along with World Customs Organisation; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); Interpol; and World Bank form the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC).
- It classifies plants and animals according to three categories, or appendices, based on how threatened. They are:

Appendix I species

- Appendix I list species that are in **danger of extinction**. It **prohibits commercial trade of these plants and animals except in extraordinary situations** for scientific or educational reasons.

Appendix II species

- They are those **that are not threatened with extinction but that might suffer a serious decline in number if the trade is not restricted.** Their trade is regulated by permit.

Appendix III species

- They are **protected in at least one country that is a CITES member state** and that has petitioned others for help in controlling international trade in that species.
- Conference of Parties (CoP) to CITES is **done once in every 3 years.**

Global Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards

(CA|TS) Awards

- Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) is an **accreditation tool by the global coalition of Tiger Range Countries (TRCs) and has been developed by tiger and protected area experts.**
- CA|TS is **organised under seven pillars and 17 elements** of critical management activity.

- Officially launched in 2013, it sets minimum standards for effective management of target species and encourages assessment of these standards in relevant conservation areas.
- CA|TS is a set of criteria which allows tiger sites to check if their management will lead to successful tiger conservation.

Working of CA | TS

- Sites taking part will initially be 'registered' (standards not yet attained) then, when all required standards are met, 'approved' (standards achieved).
- An approved site has achieved excellence in tiger site management. Sites are evaluated through an assessment and independent review process.
- Of the 13 tiger range countries Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Russia have registered and rolled out CA|TS, whilst discussion is ongoing with Bhutan, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and China.
- Till 2021, there were three sites that were CA|TS approved: Chitwan National Park in Nepal, Lansdowne Forest Division in Uttarakhand, India and Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve in Russia.
- Recently 14 Tiger Reserves in India received the accreditation of the Global Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards.
- The tiger reserves are Manas, Kaziranga and Orang in Assam, Satpura, Kanha and Panna in Madhya Pradesh, Pench in Maharashtra, Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar, Dudhwa in Uttar Pradesh, Sunderbans in West Bengal,

Parambikulam in Kerala, Bandipur Tiger Reserve of Karnataka and
Mudumalai and Anamalai Tiger Reserves in Tamil Nadu.