6th Cycle of Tiger Reserve Evaluation

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Environment*

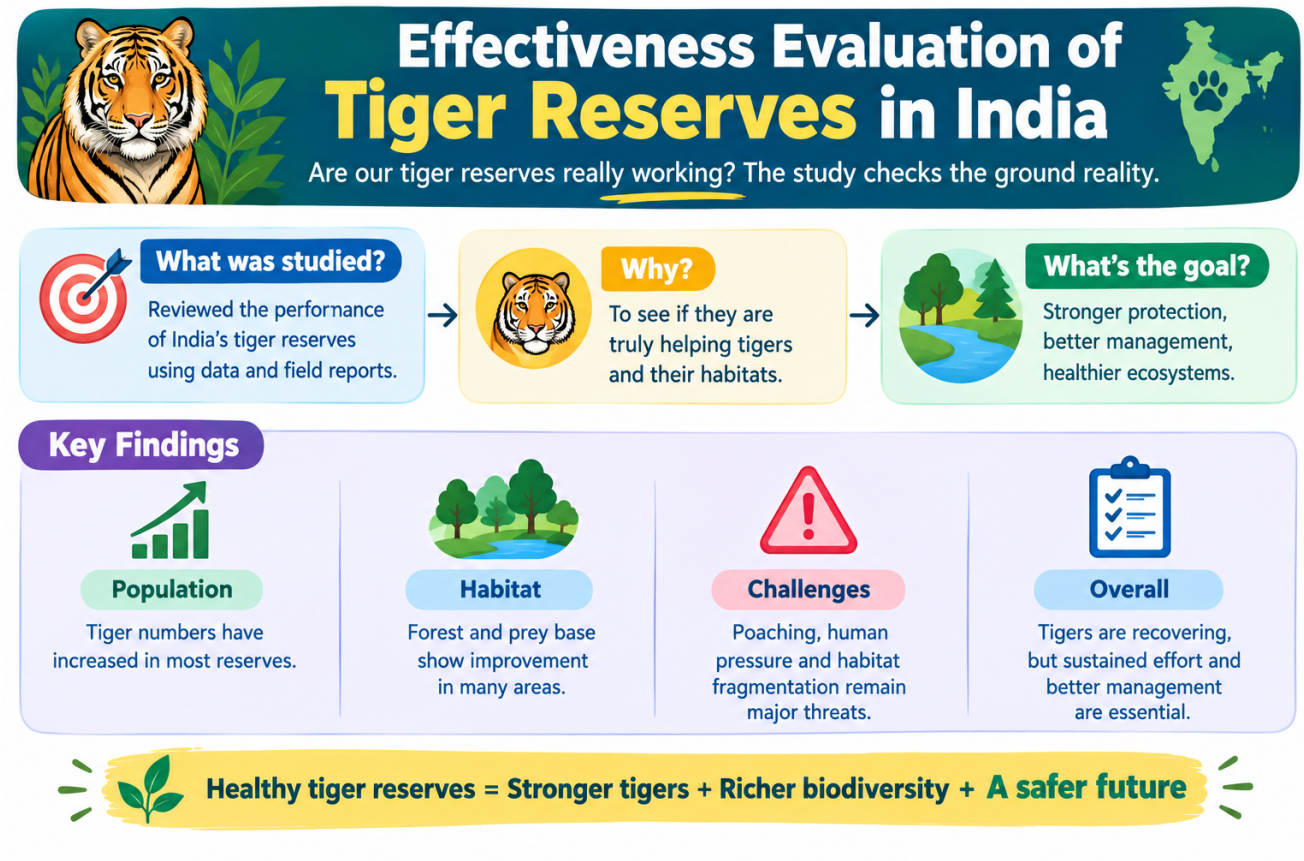
Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the Inception Workshop for the 6th Cycle of Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves (MEE-TR 2026) in New Delhi.

- **Organised by -** The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- The session marked the official release of the Technical Manual for MEE-TR 2026.
- This 6th cycle expands evaluation to cover ***all 58 notified Tiger Reserves*** across India.

Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE-TR)

- **Definition –** It is a systematic, evidence-based assessment framework.
- It is designed to evaluate how effectively protected areas are managed, auditing administrative capacity, input resources, planning, and long-term conservation outcomes beyond mere species headcounts.
- **Global Framework Adaptation -** Adapted directly from the ***IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)*** Framework for Assessing Management Effectiveness.
- **6 Core Evaluation Elements-**
  - **Context -** Value, threats, and policy environment.
  - **Planning -** Design, layout, and management plans.
  - **Inputs -** Financial, human, and material resources.
  - **Processes -** Management practices, field patrolling, and conflict protocols.
  - **Outputs -** Implementation of targets, anti-poaching infrastructure, and expenditure.
  - **Outcomes -** Prey-predator dynamics, habitat integrity, and community co-management.
- **Evolution of MEE Cycles in India -** Initiated in 2006, India is the only nation globally to conduct MEE for its big cat reserves quadrennially across five past cycles
  - **2006:** 28 reserves | **2010:** 39 reserves | **2014:** 43 reserves | **2018:** 50 reserves | **2022 (5th Cycle):** 51 reserves (*Periyar Tiger Reserve ranked No.1 with 94.38%*).



Key Innovations in the 6th Cycle (MEE-TR 2026)

- **Dedicated Solid Waste Management (SWM) Criterion -** Introduces an independent, mandatory evaluation metric focusing on containment, segregation, and disposal of solid waste across three internal streams
    - Anti-poaching forest camps (*chowkis*).
    - Eco-tourism zones and safari corridors.
    - Biomedical and organic waste generated at wildlife rescue centres.
- **Integration of Evidence -** Emphasizes satellite remote sensing, geo-tagged field patrolling logs, real-time spatial monitoring platforms, and data integration over subjective feedback.
- **Inclusion of Local Community -** Incorporates local community representatives, local youth, and independent sociological experts into multidisciplinary evaluation teams alongside retired forest officers and scientists.
- **Measurable Community Interfaces -** Enhanced scrutiny of voluntary village relocation schemes from core/critical tiger habitats.
    - Under Section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, alongside the functional efficacy of **Eco-Development Committees (EDCs)**.

Scoring Framework

Performance Band	Percentage Score Range
Excellent	90% and above
Very Good	75%" to " 89%
Good	60%" to " 74%
Fair	50%" to " 59%

Reference

PIB | Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves in India