Augmentation program in Buxa tiger reserve

Why in news?

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Recently National Tiger Conservation Authorityidentified Buxa tiger reserve in West Bengalfor the tiger augmentation programme.

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What is the significance of Buxa tiger reserve?

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- It has notified as a tiger reserve in 1983, located in Alipurduar district of West Bengal, parts of which border Bhutan.
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- The reserve is located very close to Assam’s Manas Tiger Reserve.
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- Buxa consists of moist, deciduous and evergreen forests.
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- It is home to at least 68 species of mammals, 41 species of reptiles and more than 246 species of birds, four species of amphibians, 73 species of fishes and over a hundred species of butterflies and moths.
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- The herbivore list includes elephants, Indian gaur, chital, sambars, barking deer and hog deer.
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How the augmentation program will be done?

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- Forest Department officials claimed there were tigers in the reserve, almost no sighting of the big cats raised questions about their presence.
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- The survey of tigers in 2011 based on DNA analyses of scat put the number of tigers at 20.
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- The initial plan is to introduce six tigers at Buxa.
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- Experts have consciously decided not to augment tigers in the Buxa reserve from the Sunderbans, a completely different mangrove ecosystem.
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- Instead, tigers from the forest reserves of Assam, which have a similar flora and fauna, will be introduced in Buxa.
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- Experts believes that tigers are migrating from nearer Manas wildlife sanctuary through Buxa-Bhutan corridor.
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What are the challenges?

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- The introduction of tigers is a challenge to forest officials as there is human habitation in the area.
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- There are also common clouded leopards, jungle cats and fishing cats,

which occasionally surface in the tea gardens nearby.
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- Chances of wild animals getting killed while crossing the tracks are high, as broad gauge rail line is passing through the reserve.
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- Tourist accommodationsrun by both the forest department and private operators, in the reserve possess high threat to tiger habitat.
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Source: The Hindu

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