Project Tiger

Why in news?

Recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched 5th cycle of India's Tiger Census to mark 50 years of 'Project Tiger'.

Why is tiger so significant?

- It is a ***top predator*** and is at the apex of the food chain.
- The presence of tigers in the forest is an indicator of the well-being of the ecosystem.
- Tigers are both a ***Flagship and Umbrella species.***
- As a Flagship species they are important for conservation and as Umbrella species, conservation of tigers leads to conservation of other species.

What is Project tiger?

- Project Tiger was launched by the Central government on April 1 1973 in a bid to promote conservation of the tiger.
- First launched at the ***Jim Corbett National Park.***
- ***Centrally Sponsored Scheme*** of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change providing central assistance to the tiger States for tiger conservation in designated tiger reserves.
- Focuses on the conservation of big cats and ensures the preservation of their natural habitat as tigers are at the top of the food chain.

What about the recent tiger estimates?

> *Nearly 75% of the world's tiger population can now be found in India and tiger reserves in the country span 75,000 square kilometres.*

- As per the All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) 2021-2022, the number of tigers in India has increased by 6.74% from 2,967 in 2018 to ***3,167 in 2022.***
- The tiger census is held *once in every 4 years* by ***National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)*** in association with state forest departments and the ***Wildlife Institute of India.***
- The current estimate is a part of a larger report and the final tiger estimates for 2022 are likely to be available in the near future.
- According to the 2022 report, the tiger population has increased substantially in the Shivalik and Gangetic flood plains in the north followed by central India.
- But the ***Western Ghats*** showed a *decline* in tiger population.

MSTrIPES (Monitoring System for Tigers: Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) *- Uses Global Positioning System (GPS), General Packet Radio Services (GPRS), and remote sensing, to collect information from the field, create a database, analyses the information to provide inferences for better management of tiger reserve.*

What is the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)?

- NTCA, a statutory body under the *Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change* was established in 2005.
- It has been constituted under ***Section 38 L (1) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.***
- **Composition**
  - *The Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change* (Chairperson)
  - The Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (Vice-Chairperson)
  - Three members of Parliament, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests and other members.
- **Headquarters** - New Delhi
- **Functions** - The NTCA has power to check poaching and preserve the tiger population.
- It sets up a Tiger Protection Force and funding the relocation of villages from the protected areas.
- It also provides statutory authority to Project Tiger.
- The NTCA / Project Tiger conducts the country level assessment of the status of tiger, co-predators, prey and habitat, using the refined methodology, as approved by the Tiger Task Force.

What is International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)?

- **Launched by** - Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2023 at Mysuru, Karnataka, to commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger.
- **Aim -** To conserve 7 big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma
- **Membership** - Open to ***97 range countries***, which contain the natural habitat of the big cats, as well as *other interested nations, international organisations,* etc.
- **Features** – Assured support over 5 years with guaranteed funding of over Rs 800 crore
- Rehabilitation of the big cats
- Dissemination of information on benchmarked practices, capacity building, resources repository, research and development, and awareness creation

References

1. The Indian Express | Project Tiger
2. Times Now | International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA)
3. NTCA | About NTCA

