Status of Tigers in India, 2018 Report

Why in news?

The 4-year tiger census report, Status of Tigers in India of 2018, released recently shows numbers of the big cat have increased across all landscapes.

What is it all about?

- The total number of tigers has risen by 33% since 2014.
- This is by far the biggest increase in terms of both numbers and percentage since the census using camera traps and the capture-mark-recapture method began in 2006.
- The 2018 figure has a great degree of credibility because83% of the total tigers have been photographed by trap cameras.

Why is a tiger census needed?

- As tiger sits at the peak of the food chain, its conservation is important to ensure the well-being of the forest ecosystem.
- The tiger estimation exercise includes habitat assessment and prey estimation.
- The numbers reflect the success or failure of conservation efforts.
- The Global Tiger Forum, an international collaboration of tiger-bearing countries, has set a goal of doubling the count of wild tigers by 2022.
- More than 80% of the world's wild tigers are in India, and it's crucial to keep track of their numbers.

Where has the tiger population increased the most?

- The biggest increase has been in Madhya Pradesh,71%as compared to the numbers in 2014.
- In Maharashtra, Karnataka and Uttarkhand, the number has gone up by 64%, 29% and 30% respectively.
- However, since tigers keep moving between states, conservationists prefer to talk about tiger numbers in terms of landscapes.
- **India's five tiger landscapes:**Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains, Central Indian Landscape and Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats, North-East Hills and Brahmaputra Plains, and the Sundarbans.

Which states/regions have done badly?

- Only one of the 20 tiger-bearing states has seen a fall in numbers — Chhattisgarh, where the number reduced to 19 from46 of 2014.
- The report has cited law and order as the reason,as large parts of the state are hit by the Maoist insurgency.
- No tiger has been found in the Buxa, Palamau and Dampa reserves.

How was the census carried out?

- **Phases 1 and 2**–
    1. Forest beats (15 sq km each)covered by Forest Departments,
    2. Collection of the signs of tiger presence like scat and pugmarks.
- **Phase 3** -
    1. Sample areas are of 2sq.km. parcels and trap cameras were laid in these grids.
    2. The information was plotted on the forest map prepared with remote-sensing and GIS application.
- **Phase 4 –**The data were extrapolated to areas where cameras could not be deployed.

Why have the numbers gone up?

- The success owes a lot to **increased vigilance and conservation efforts** by the Forest Department.
- The number of tiger reserves went up in 2018, extending protection to larger numbers of tigers over the years.
- The fact that organized poaching rackets have been crushed.
- The increased protection has encouraged the tiger to breed.
- The rehabilitation of villages outside core areas in many parts of the country has led to the availability of more inviolate space for tigers.
- Since state boundaries do not apply to the movement of tigers, conservationists prefer to talk about tiger numbers in terms of landscapes rather than of states.

Source: The Indian Express

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering