Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve

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

Why in News?

Recently, a 4 year-old tigress that entered the Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve (USTR) earlier this year and remained there throughout the intense summer has renewed optimism about the revival of the reserve's tiger population.

- **Location** –Chhattisgarh.
- **Formation** – It was created by merging the areas of the former Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary and Sitanadi Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **River System** – The reserve's drainage network is dominated by the Mahanadi River, along with its tributaries—the Udanti River, Sitanadi River, Indravati River, and Pairi River.
- **Ecological Importance** – The reserve occupies a strategically important position, linking the Kanker and North Kondagaon forest divisions and forming a continuous forest corridor with the Indravati Tiger Reserve in the Bastar region.
- **Topography** – The landscape includes 19 identified hills and mountains.
- Deo Dongri is the highest peak, while Atanga Dongar is regarded as the most prominent mountain in the reserve.
- **Vegetation and Flora** – The reserve is characterized mainly by *tropical dry and moist deciduous forests.*
- Sal (Shorea robusta) is the dominant tree species, forming extensive dense forest patches.
- Other important plant species include *Teak (Tectona grandis), Bamboo, Tendu, Mahua, Bija, and Harra*, which contribute significantly to the area's biodiversity.
- **Faunal Diversity**
- The critically important and highly endangered **Wild Buffalo** population,
- Bengal Tiger,
- Indian Wolf,
- Indian Leopard,
- Sloth Bear, and
- Mouse Deer.
- The reserve remains an important conservation landscape in central India due to its role in maintaining wildlife connectivity and protecting endangered species.

Reference

[The Indian Express| USTR]

