

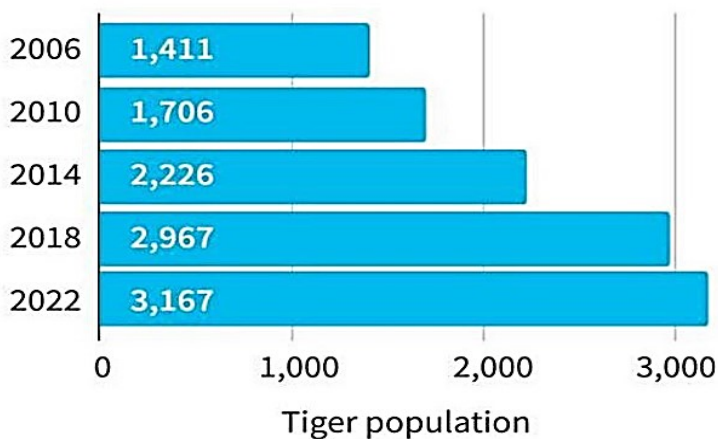
**4. India's tiger population tops 3,000, shows census**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Environment

**Mains Syllabus:** GS-III Environment & Biodiversity | Climatic Change Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Eia

**Big cat count**

According to the data released by the PM, the number of tigers in India increased by 200 in the past four years. A look at the tiger population



**Steady rise:** A tiger at Van Vihar National Park in Bhopal on Sunday. PTI

**Why in News?**

- The Prime Minister of India released the latest Tiger census data.

**Key findings of the latest Tiger Census report:**

- The 5th cycle of India's Tiger Census has revealed that the Tiger population stands at 3,167 in the wild as of 2022.
- The report also indicates that the Tiger population in the country has increased by close to 6.7% in the last four years.
- As per Tiger Census 2018, there were 2,967 Tigers in India.
- The data from the latest census report was announced by the Prime Minister at an event to mark the International Big Cat Alliance Conference and the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger.
- The International Big Cat Alliance Conference focuses mainly on the protection of seven major big cats of the world namely Lions, Tigers, Cheetahs, Jaguars, Leopards, Snow Leopards, and Pumas.

- According to the latest census report, the Tiger population has increased significantly in the Shivalik hills and the Gangetic flood plains, followed by central India, the northeastern hills, the Brahmaputra flood plains, and the Sundarbans.
- However, the Tiger population has declined in the Western Ghats region.

### **Key threats to Tiger Population:**

- As per the latest census report, all of the five major tiger zones in India are facing challenges to conserve and increase the Tiger populations because of the increasing demands from infrastructure development.
- The report also notes that the wildlife habitats in regions such as Central Indian highlands and Eastern Ghats are facing several threats which include habitat encroachment, illegal hunting of Tigers and their prey, man-animal conflicts, excessive harvesting of non-timber forest produce, unregulated cattle grazing, human-induced forest fires, expanding linear infrastructure and large scale mining.
- Further, the increase in the Tiger population outside the Tiger Reserves in the landscapes such as Shivalik hills and Gangetic plains in the states of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh has led to an increase in the instances of conflict between Tigers and mega herbivores.

### **Path ahead:**

- Mitigation measures such as lower mining impact techniques and rehabilitation of mining sites must be taken up as a priority in areas such as Central Indian highlands and Eastern Ghats which have a significant number of mining sites.
- There exists a need to invest in mitigating conflict between the Tigers and mega herbivores. Since 1973, when Project Tiger was first initiated, the number of Tiger reserves in India has increased significantly from only nine reserves (covering about 18,278 square km) to 53 (covering close to 75,796 square km).
- However, experts believe that most of the Tiger populations in India are focused within a handful of reserves that are reaching their peak carrying capacity.
- This highlights the need to develop new regions as reserves, as there might be a challenge to ensure further growth in numbers in the coming years.
- Post the translocation of Cheetahs from Africa, India is looking at Tiger translocation programmes as India now accounts for nearly 75% of the world's total Tiger population.
- India is in talks with Cambodia to translocate a few Tigers from India as the Tigers have gone extinct due in the country.