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Wildlife Protection:

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India's tiger population tops 3,000, shows census

The population has grown the most in the Shivalik hills and Gangetic flood plains, but there is a decline in the Western Ghats numbers, though 'major populations' are said to be stable

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NEW DELHI

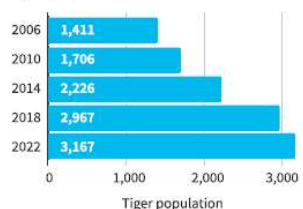
India has at least 3,167 tigers, according to estimates from the latest tiger census made public on Sunday. While this is ostensibly an increase since the census of 2018, the numbers are not strictly comparable, as a key calculation to compute the maximum and minimum range of the tiger population is yet to be done.

There were 2,967 tigers recorded in 2018, and 2,226 in 2014. Sunday's figures were provisional and could be revised, an official involved with the census told *The Hindu*.

The tiger population numbers were made public by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mysuru on Sunday, at an event to mark the International Big

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

Cat Alliance conference and the 50th anniversary of Project Tiger.

Western Ghats decline

The tiger population has grown the most in the Shivalik hills and the Gangetic flood plains, followed by central India, the north-eastern hills, the Brahma-

putra flood plains, and the Sundarbans. There was a decline in the Western Ghats numbers, though "major populations" were said to be stable.

The tiger numbers are estimated by adding animals caught in camera traps, and those that may not have been captured in

this way. The latter are estimated by statistical techniques. "We have found 3,080 unique tigers in camera traps this time. In the last census, it was 2,603. However, for the latest census, we have not finished computing the estimates of tigers outside such traps as well as the State-wise break-up of tigers, so the numbers may differ. We expect it to be done within three months," said Qamar Qureshi of the Wildlife Institute of India, one of the scientists involved in the census exercise.

In their four-year estimates, the scientists provide a range of the estimated tiger population, and the mean value is highlighted as the latest tiger population.

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Project Tiger

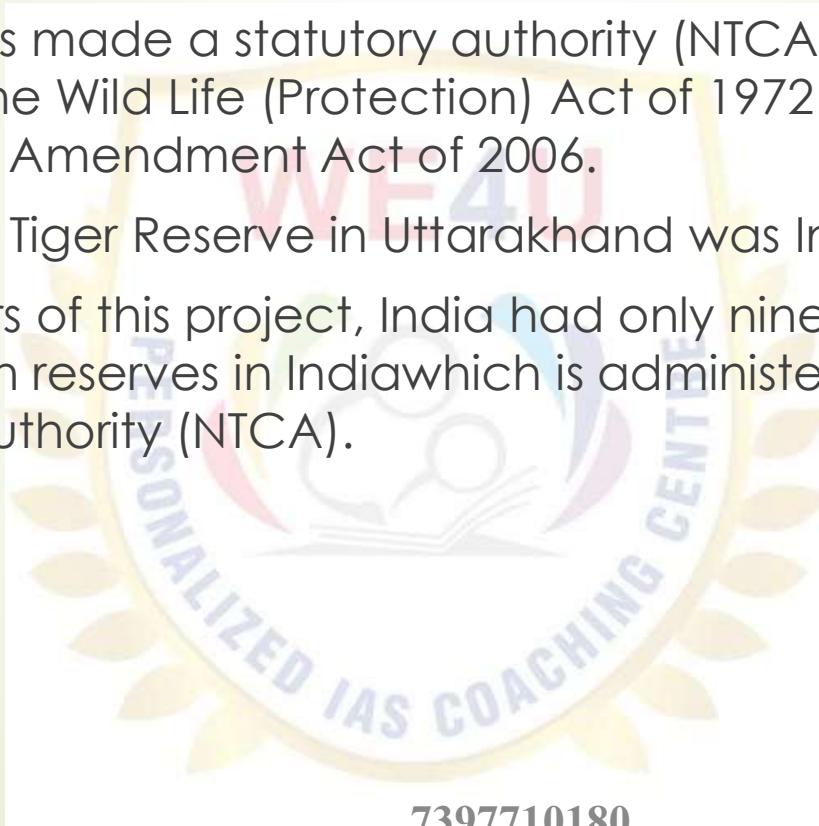
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- ▶ The 'Project Tiger' is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, and it has put the endangered tiger on an assured path of recovery by saving it from extinction, as revealed by the recent findings of the All India tiger estimation using the refined methodology.
- ▶ The Indira Gandhi government launched Project Tiger in 1973 from the Jim Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand.
- ▶ Dr. Kailash Sankhla, a notable conservationist, made a personal appeal to then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, who proved to be sympathetic and understanding of the need to protect India's Natural Heritage - the country's oldest heritage.
- ▶ As a result, the Wildlife Protection Act was drafted in 1972, effectively ending all hunting in India and legally protecting individual species.
- ▶ In 1973, Project Tiger was launched, and Dr. Kailash Sankhla was named the first Director of Project Tiger in India.

Project Tiger was made a statutory authority (NTCA) by inserting enabling provisions into the Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972 via an amendment, the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act of 2006.

The Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand was India's first tiger reserve.

In the early years of this project, India had only nine tiger reserves. There are currently 53 such reserves in India which is administered by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).



National Tiger Conservation Authority

- ▶ The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change established under the enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, to strengthen tiger conservation in accordance with the powers and functions delegated to it by the Act.
- ▶ It is the apex body that administers 'Project Tiger'.
- ▶ The NTCA was established in 2005 in response to the Tiger Task Force's recommendations.
- ▶ The authority is comprised of the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Chairperson), the Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (as Vice-Chairperson), three members of Parliament, the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, and other members.

Centre plans revamp of livestock insurance scheme to raise coverage

At present, less than 1% of the country's cattle population is insured; finding the yearly premium to be unaffordable for most farmers, the government is looking at reducing the rate and providing a subsidy for cattle rearers of SC/ST communities

Currently, less than 1% of cattle in the nation are insured, and the average monthly premium is 4.5% of the insured sum.

Low enrolment in animal Insurance is due to high premium rates and farmers' overall economic difficulties.

Around two lakh cattle died as a result of the lumpy skin disease outbreak. Farmers have asked the government for compensation for their losses. As a result, the Centre's objective is to keep the premium low while ensuring maximum livestock coverage.

Lumpy skin disease (LSD)

It is an infectious disease in cattle caused by the Poxviridae virus, often known as the Neethling virus.

It mostly affects cattle and water buffalo through vectors such as blood-feeding insects.

The disease is characterized by fever, swollen superficial lymph nodes, and numerous nodules on the skin and mucosal membranes. Affected animals lose weight quickly and may have a fever and oral sores, as well as a lower milk supply.

Additional symptoms include increased nasal and salivary discharge. Pregnant cows and buffaloes frequently miscarry, and in some circumstances, ill animals die as a result.

Early detection...followed by a rapid and extensive vaccination campaign...is essential for successful LSD control and eradication.

'Sikkimese
feel betrayed
as Article 371F
is violated'

➤ Article 371F

- Article 371F is a special provision in the Constitution of India that was created to provide for the unique status of Sikkim, a state located in the northeastern part of India.
- Sikkim was an independent kingdom until 1975, when it became the 22nd state of India.
- Article 371F was included in the Constitution to ensure that Sikkim's distinct identity and cultural heritage were protected and preserved after its merger with India.

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