



Man-Animal Conflict (MAC)

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This article based on **“The big picture on tigers”** which appeared in The Hindu on 8 August 2019. It talks about increasing incidents of Man-Animal Conflict and way forward.

According to **4th Tiger Census**, there are approximately 2,967 tigers in India. Tigers count in India has increased from 1,411 in 2006 to 1,706 in 2010 and to 2,226 in 2014, marking the success of **Project Tiger**.

India has achieved the goal of doubling the number of tigers as highlighted by the **St Petersburg declaration 2010**. However, according to the **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, India can have a maximum of 3,000 tigers with respect to the available area of tiger reserves.

St Petersburg declaration

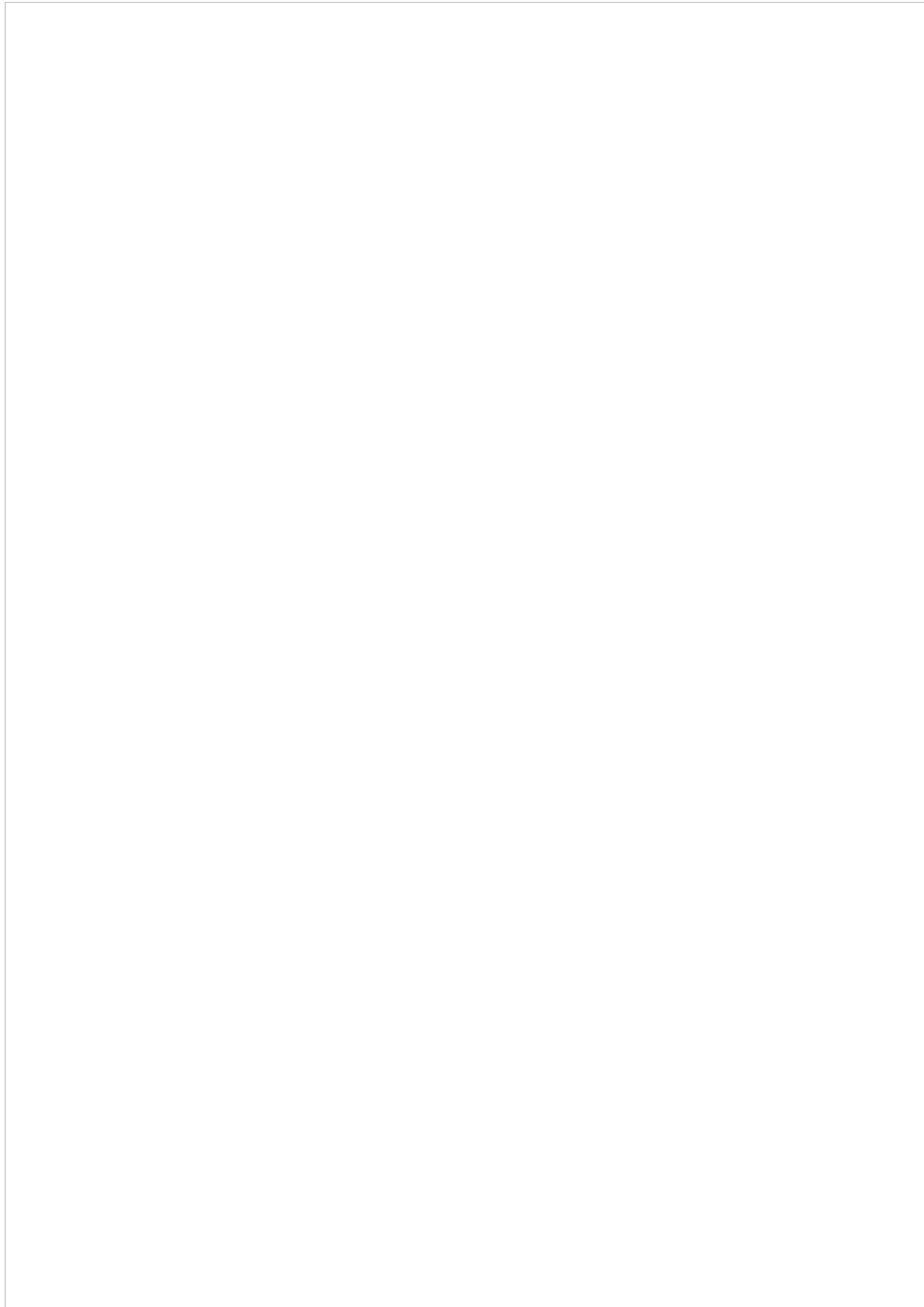
- **The governments of 13 tiger home range countries agreed to a Global Tiger Recovery Program**
- **The declaration seeks to double the global tiger population by 2022**
- **The tiger range countries that are part of the Global Tiger Recovery Program are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand, and Vietnam.**

Increased Tiger population has resulted in **Man-Animal Conflict (MAC)**, as the human population expands and natural habitats shrink, people and animals are increasingly coming into conflict over living space and food.

- MAC has become the main threats to the continued survival of many species in different parts of the world and is also a significant threat to local human populations.
- According to data from the Union environment ministry, **more than 1,608 humans were killed** in conflict cases involving tigers, leopards, bears and elephants between 2013 and 2017.

What are the reasons for increased MAC?

- **Habitat Loss: Only 5% of India's geographical area is in the protected area category.** This space is **not enough** to have a full-fledged habitat for wild animals.
 - A territorial animal like a male tiger needs an area of 60-100 sq km. But the area allocated to an entire tiger reserve, like the Bor Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, is around 140 sq km.
 - The territorial animals do not have enough space within reserves and their prey does not have enough fodder to thrive on.
 - **This has forced the wild animals to move out and venture close to human habitation in search of food, resulting in MAC.**
- **Increasing Infrastructure Development: Recent relaxations in norms** to allow for a widening of highway and railway networks near these protected areas are the new threats, adding to the old ones of retaliatory poisoning and poaching.
 - Apart from highways, railway and irrigation projects are coming up in tiger reserves. For example- the Ken-Betwa **river interlinking project** will submerge 100 sq. km of Panna Tiger Reserve.
 - Also, wildlife experts estimate that **29% of the tigers in India are outside the protected areas.**



Way Forward

- According to the Wildlife experts, if wildlife protection is confined to reserves and parks alone, several species will stand at the brink of extinction.
 - For example **Great Indian Bustard, which is a Schedule-I animal. Despite having sanctuaries to itself, the bird has been driven to the brink of extinction.**
 - **Co-occurrence approach: Building community participation** in conservation is a better idea than just having protected areas.
 - Events of MAC can be reduced by **integrating early warning systems with**

simpler damage-prevention practices (such as improving fencing of crops or better livestock husbandry).

- Hunting of prey animals, such as deer and pig, needs to stop as they form the base for growth of tiger and other carnivore populations.
- Efforts can be taken to better wildlife management practices and **understanding of animal behaviour**. So that people don't kill an animal out of panic.
- **Crop insurance** should be provided in the event of destruction by wild animals.
- Safeguarding Tiger corridors, building eco-bridges and such conservation measures can be part of **corporate social responsibility**.

The tiger is a unique animal which plays a pivotal role in the health and diversity of an ecosystem. The presence of tigers in the forest is an indicator of the well being of the ecosystem.

Drishti input

Sustaining the country's tiger population will require a deft balancing of the imperative of conservation with the needs of local people and the demands of infrastructure development.
Comment.
