



# drishti

## News Analysis (07 Feb, 2020)

 [drishtiias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/07-02-2020/print](https://www.drishtiias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/07-02-2020/print)

## Repo Rate Unchanged

### Why in News

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 5.15% in its sixth and last bi-monthly policy review meeting for the financial year 2019-20.

### Key Points

- This is the second policy review meeting where the rates have been kept unchanged.
  - The **rates also remained unchanged** in the last meeting which was held in **December 2019**.
  - The RBI **last reduced the rates** by **135 basis points (bps)** between February and October 2019.
- The RBI has decided to keep the **interest rates unchanged** in the wake of a rise in **inflation**.

The outlook for the **consumer price index-based inflation** has been **kept at 5.0-5.4%** for the first half of 2020-21.
- However, the RBI has said that there is a **scope for further easing**.
  - The downside risks to global growth have intensified and have increased in the wake of the outbreak of **coronavirus**.
  - Thus, the policy space available for future action needs to be used appropriately and should be suitably timed to optimise its impact on growth.
- The **GDP growth** for the financial year 2020-21 is projected at 6%.

The growth projection for the current financial year remains unchanged at 5%.

### Monetary Policy Committee

- It is a **statutory and institutionalized framework** under the **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934**, for maintaining price stability, while keeping in mind the objective of growth.
- The **Governor of RBI is ex-officio Chairman** of the committee.
- The MPC **determines the policy interest rate (repo rate)** required to achieve the **inflation target** (4%).
- An RBI-appointed committee led by the then deputy governor Urjit Patel in 2014 recommended the establishment of the Monetary Policy Committee.

## Repo Rate

- It is the **rate at which the central bank** of a country **lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds** (Reserve Bank of India, in case of India).
- It is used by monetary authorities **to control inflation**.
- In the event of inflation, central banks increase the repo rate as this acts as a disincentive for banks to borrow from the central bank. This ultimately reduces the money supply in the economy and thus helps in arresting inflation.
- The central bank takes the contrary position in the event of a fall in inflationary pressures.
- Ideally, a low repo rate should **translate into low-cost loans for the general masses**. When the RBI slashes its repo rate, it expects the banks to lower their interest rates charged on loans.

## Other Measures by RBI to Ease Lending Rates

---

- It opened a window to extend ₹1 lakh crore to the commercial banks at the **repo rate**, 5.15%.
- Banks have been exempted from maintaining the **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)**, which is 4% of the net demand and time liabilities now, for home, auto and MSME loans that are extended from January 31 to July 31, 2020.

## Cash Reserve Ratio

- Banks are required to hold a **certain proportion of their deposits in the form of cash**. This **minimum ratio** (that is the part of the total deposits to be held as cash) is stipulated by the RBI and is known as the CRR.
- It means that banks do not have access to that much amount for any economic activity or commercial activity.
- Banks can't lend the money to corporates or individual borrowers, banks can't use that money for investment purposes. CRR remains in the current account and banks don't earn anything on that.

**Source: TH**

---

## Motion of Thanks

---

### Why in News

---

Recently, a debate on Motion of Thanks to the President's Address was held in Lok Sabha.

### President's Address

---

- **Article 87** provides for the special address by the President. The article provides that at the commencement of the **first session after each general election to the House of the People** and at the commencement of the **first session of each year**, the President shall address **both Houses of Parliament assembled together** and inform Parliament of the causes of its summons.
- Such an Address is called '**special address**', and it is also an **annual** feature.
- No other business is transacted till the President has addressed both Houses of Parliament assembled together.
- This Address has to be to both Houses of Parliament assembled together.
  - If at the time of commencement of the first session of the year, Lok Sabha is not in existence and has been dissolved, and Rajya Sabha has to meet. And Rajya Sabha can have its session without the President's Address.
    - In 1977, during the dissolution of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha had its session on 28 February 1977 without the President's Address.
- In the case of the first session after each general election to Lok Sabha, the President addresses both Houses of Parliament assembled together after the members have made and subscribed the oath or affirmation and the Speaker has been elected.

### Content of the President of Address

---

- The President's Address is the statement of policy of the Government and, as such, is drafted by the Government.
- The Address contains a review of various activities and achievements of the Government during the previous year and sets out the policies, projects and programmes which Government of the day wishes to pursue with regard to the important national and international issues.
- The Address also indicates, in broad terms, items of legislative business which are proposed to be brought during the sessions to be held in that year.

### Discussion on the Address by Motion of Thanks

---

- The address of the president, which corresponds to the 'speech from the Throne in Britain', is discussed in **both the Houses of Parliament** on a motion called the '**Motion of Thanks**'.
- It is available to the members of Parliament to raise discussions and debates to examine and criticise the government and administration for its lapses and failures.
- Generally, **three days** are allotted for the **discussion** on the Motion of Thanks.
- If any of the amendments are put forward and accepted then the Motion of Thanks is adopted in the amended form.
  - Amendments may refer to matters contained in the Address as well as to matters which, in the opinion of the member, the Address has failed to mention.
- At the end of the discussion, the motion is put to vote.

## Significance of Motion of Thanks

---

The Motion of Thanks **must be passed in the House**. Otherwise, it amounts to the **defeat of the government**. It is one of the ways through which the Lok Sabha can also express a lack of confidence in the government. The other ways are:

- Rejection of a **money bill**.
- Passing a censure motion or an adjournment motion.
- The defeat of the government on a vital issue.
- Passing a cut motion.

**Source: IE**

---

## Lucknow Declaration

---

### Why in News

---

**India and 50 African countries** adopted the '**Lucknow Declaration**' at **first India – Africa Defence Minister's Conclave**.

The Conclave was held **on the sidelines of the ongoing DefExpo 2020** (5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2020) in **Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh)**.

### Highlights of the Declaration

---

- **Peace and Security**
  - All the signatories committed to continue their collaboration in the fields of peace and security including conflict prevention, resolution, management and peacebuilding.
  - It also aims to enhance the role of women in peacekeeping.

- **Maritime Security**

To exchange expertise and trainers, strengthening regional and continental early warning capacities and mechanisms.

- **Terrorism**

- Terrorism is a major threat in the region and thus aims to take resolute action in rooting out terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, eliminating financing channels and halting cross-border movement of terrorists.
- It also urges the international community to envisage the adoption of the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism** in the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**.

- **Importance of Indo-Pacific:**

To encourage enhanced cooperation between India and Africa on the evolving **concept of Indo-Pacific**.

- **India's SAGAR:**

It also welcomes the African Unions' vision for peace and security in Africa that coincides with India's vision of **SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region)**.

- SAGAR is an articulation of **India's vision for the Indian Ocean**.
- SAGAR has elements such as enhancement of capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories & interests; deepening economic and security cooperation in the littoral; action to deal with natural disasters and maritime threats like piracy, terrorism.

- **Compliance at UNSC:**

To strengthen the UN Counter-Terrorism mechanisms and to ensure strict compliance with the the **UN Security Council** sanctions regime on terrorism.

## **Origin and Status of Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)**

- India has pushed for an intergovernmental convention to **enhance prosecution and extradition of terrorists since 1996**.
- Although consensus eludes towards the adoption of the terrorism convention, discussions have yielded three separate protocols that aim to tackle terrorism:
  - International Convention for the Suppression of **Terrorist Bombings**, adopted on 15 December 1997;
  - International Convention for the Suppression of the **Financing of Terrorism**, adopted on 9 December 1999;
  - International Convention for the Suppression of **Acts of Nuclear Terrorism**, adopted on 13 April 2005.

**Source: IE**

---

# Genome India Project Approved

---

## Why in News

---

The **Department of Biotechnology** under the **Ministry of Science and Technology** has cleared the **Genome India Project**.

- It is a **gene-mapping project** involving 20 leading institutions including the **Indian Institute of Science (IISc)** in Bengaluru and a few **Indian Institute of Technology (IITs)**.
- The project is said to be among the most significant of its kind in the world because of its scale and the diversity it would bring to genetic studies.

## Key Points

---

- The first stage of the project will look at samples of 10,000 persons from all over the country to form a grid that will enable the development of a **reference genome**.
- The **Centre for Brain Research**, which is an **autonomous institute in the IISc, Bengaluru**, will serve as the **nodal point** of the project.
- **Significance:**
  - The diverse genetic pool of India will be mapped and it will help in making personalised medicine. Today, the goal of personalized medicine is to utilize information about a person's genes, including his or her nucleotide sequence, to make drugs better and safer.
  - It will be a hard task considering the population diversity and the disease burden of complex disorders like diabetes, mental health, etc but once the genetic basis is ready it will be possible and easy to take action before the onset of a disease.
  - Mapping of India's genetic landscape is critical for next-generation medicine, agriculture and for biodiversity management.
- The Government of India got inspiration from the **Human Genome Project**.

## Human Genome Project

- It was an **international research effort** to determine the **sequence of the human genome** and identify the genes that it contains.
- It was a 13-year-long, publicly funded project **that ended in 2003**.
- The HGP has revealed that there are probably about **20,500 human genes**. This information can be thought of as the basic set of inheritable "instructions" for the development and function of a human being.

**Source: IE**

---

# Cancer-Causing Mutated Genes Mapped

---

## Why in News

---

The Pan-Cancer Project involving 1,300 scientists has completed a **decade-long project** to map the many **gene mutations that drive cancer's development**.

This might be helpful in a treatment tailored for specific **cancers**.

## Key Findings

---

- Scientists read the **cancer genomes** (DNA sequences) in 2,600 samples of **38 types of cancer** and **compared** them with the genomes of healthy tissue in the same patients.
- The project found people's cancers contain, on average, between four and five fundamental mutations that drive a cancer's growth.
  - The researchers divided cancer mutations into **"drivers"** and **"passengers"**.
  - Driver genes are genes whose mutations are linked to the development of a disease, in this case, cancer.
- However, 5% of cancers appeared to have no driver mutations at all, showing there is still more work to do.
- The genome of each patient's cancer is unique, but there are a finite set of recurring patterns, so with large enough studies, all patterns can be identified **to optimise diagnosis and treatment**.
- The mapping project also **developed a new method for "carbon dating" the origins of cancer tumours**. They were able to identify early mutations in cells that occurred years or decades before cancer appears — possibly opening a window for detection well ahead of any symptoms.

## Pan-Cancer Project

- Pan-Cancer Project is also called **Pan-Cancer Analysis of Whole Genomes (PCAWG)**.
- It is an international collaboration of the **International Cancer Genome Consortium** and **The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA)** to identify and define similarities and differences between cancer types.

## International Cancer Genome Consortium

- The International Cancer Genome Consortium (ICGC) was **launched in 2007**.
- It is a **voluntary scientific organization** that provides a forum for collaboration among the world's leading cancer and genomic researchers.
- The ICGC solved numerous data governance, ethical and logistical challenges to make global genomic data sharing for cancer possible, providing the international community with comprehensive genomic data for many cancer types.

## The Cancer Genome Atlas

The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) is a landmark **cancer genomics program** of the US, which has molecularly characterized over 20,000 primary cancer and matched normal samples spanning 33 cancer types.

**Source: FI**

---

## Longest Spaceflight by a Woman: Christina Koch

---

### Why in News

---

The **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)** astronaut **Christina Koch** landed on the Earth on 6<sup>th</sup> february, 2020 after a **record stay of 328 days on the International Space Station.**



- **Single Spaceflight**
  - The previous **longest single spaceflight** by any **woman** was 289 days by **Peggy Whitson**, also an American, who set that record in 2017.
  - **Valery Polyakov of Russia** holds the **combine (i.e. for both men and women)** record for the longest single spaceflight in history (438 days).
- **Cumulative Record**
  - **Gennady Padalka at 879 days is the world record holder in terms of cumulative time in space** across one or more spaceflights.
  - **Whitson at 665 days** holds the world record for **women**.



- **Significance**

- One particular research project Koch participated in is the '**vertebral strength investigation**', which better defines the extent of spaceflight-induced bone and muscle degradation of the spine, and the associated risk for broken vertebrae.
- This is expected to provide insight into the development of **future countermeasures, such as preventative medicine or exercise.**
- These results also could provide recommendations for limiting the amount of **force astronauts are subjected to during launch.**

## Challenges of Human Spaceflight

---

- **Gravity Field:** Transitioning from one gravity field to another is tricky. It affects **hand-eye and head-eye coordination.** NASA has learned that without gravity working on the human body, **bones lose minerals.** Even after one returns from a space mission, one could be at greater **risk of osteoporosis-related fractures.**
- **Isolation:** No matter how well trained one is, behavioural issues are likely to crop up. Due to isolation, an astronaut may encounter **depression, fatigue, sleep disorder and psychiatric disorders.** This may lead to performance decrements, adverse health outcomes, and compromised mission objectives.
- **Radiation:** In space stations, astronauts receive **over ten times the radiation than what people are subjected to on Earth.** Radiation exposure may increase the risk of **cancer.** It can damage the **central nervous system.** Radiation can also cause **nausea, vomiting, anorexia, and fatigue.**
- **Hostile Environment:** Rockets are extreme machines. These needs to have habitability factors including temperature, pressure, lighting, noise, and quantity of space. It's essential that astronauts get the **requisite food, sleep and exercise needed to stay healthy and happy.**
- **Distance from Earth:** An astronaut over a spaceflight may face a **communication delay** with its team on the Earth. Also, there is a possibility of **equipment failures or a medical emergency.**

**Source: IE**

---

## National Means Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme

---

### Why in News

---

The Union Minister for Human Resource Development updated the progress of **National Means Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS)** in the written reply tabled in the Rajya Sabha during Budget Session 2020.

## Key Points About NMMSS

---

- **Aim:**

The objective of the National Means Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS) is to award scholarships to meritorious students of economically weaker sections to reduce drop-outs in class VIII. It also intends to encourage students to continue the study at a secondary stage.

- **Type:**

It is the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** which was launched in **2008**.

- **Details about Scholarship:**

Scholarship of Rs. 6000/- per annum (Rs.500/- per month) per student is awarded to selected students every year for study in classes from IX to XII in State Government, Government aided and local body schools.

- The selection of students award of the scholarships is made through an examination conducted by the State Governments.
- Scholarships are disbursed by the State Bank of India directly into the bank accounts of students on a quarterly basis

- **Eligibility Criteria:**

- Students whose parental income from all sources is not more than Rs. 1,50,000/- per annum are eligible to avail the scholarships.
- The students studying in Kendriya Vidyalaya, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, Residential Schools run by the State Government Institutions and private schools are **not eligible** for the scholarship under this scheme.

- **Performance of the Scheme:**

- An evaluation study conducted by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) in 2017 states that about 70.1% beneficiary students would have been unable to continue their studies without this scholarship.
- Additionally, students selected under NMMSS register better performance in Class IX, X, XI and XII in order to continue getting the scholarship for the next four consecutive years.

### **National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration**

- The National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) was established by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.
  - The National Institute has its origin dating back to **1962 when the UNESCO established the Asian Regional Centre for Educational Planners and Administrators** which later became the Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration in 1965.
  - After 4 years of its existence, it was taken over by the Government of India.
  - Subsequently, with the increased roles and functions it was renamed as the **National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) in 1979.**
- The Government of India has empowered it to award its own degrees by way of conferring it the status of Deemed to be University in August, 2006.

**Source: PIB**

---

## Centre Persists with 'toothless' Pharma Codes

---

### Why in News

---

The **Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP)**, under the **Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers**, has requested the pharmaceutical companies to abide by the **voluntary Uniform Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP)**.

### Key Points

---

- The **Indian Medical Association (IMA)**, **Alliance of Doctors for Ethical Healthcare (ADEH)**, doctors, civil society and patients groups have asked the centre to make the UCPMP mandatory because it holds no value unless it becomes compulsory.
- DoP has also requested to ensure that the pharma companies adhere to the provisions of UCPMP and **do not promote pharma products unethically** during the conferences conducted by doctors.

### Uniform Code of Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices

- This is a set of guidelines published by the Central Government in December 2014 to the pharmaceutical industry for the promotion and marketing of drugs and medical devices. However, these guidelines are voluntary and do not have the force of law, at present.

- According to **Clause 7.2 of the UCPMP**, “companies or their associations/representatives shall not extend any hospitality like hotel accommodation to healthcare practitioners and their family members under any pretext”.

## Background

---

- Till now, there have been **several instances of breach of the UCPMP by pharma companies**.
  - In order to promote their products, pharma companies allegedly arrange accommodation in five-star hotels, local sight-seeing, etc. in conferences conducted by doctors.
  - This is considered unethical marketing and promotion by the experts and they have demanded implementation of a mandatory mechanism for company disclosures of payments towards doctors and professional bodies, including via third parties.
  - The disclosures, which should be made at intervals and put in the public domain, should include the amount spent, individual or entity to which payment was made, and the reason for payment, including any services rendered.
- DoP needs to take steps towards instituting statutory regulation of unethical marketing and promotion and make compliance under the UCPMP compulsory.

### Indian Medical Association

- It is the only **representative, national voluntary organisation** of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large.
- Indian Medical Association is the founding member of the **World Medical Association (WMA)**.
- IMA hosted the **3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on Medical Education** in New Delhi in 1966.

### Alliance of Doctors for Ethical Healthcare

- It is a pan-Indian network of doctors who want to raise voice from within the medical fraternity about malpractices, systemic issues and policies related to healthcare.
- It aims to build critical social demand to bring in Universal Healthcare in India.

**Source: TH**

---

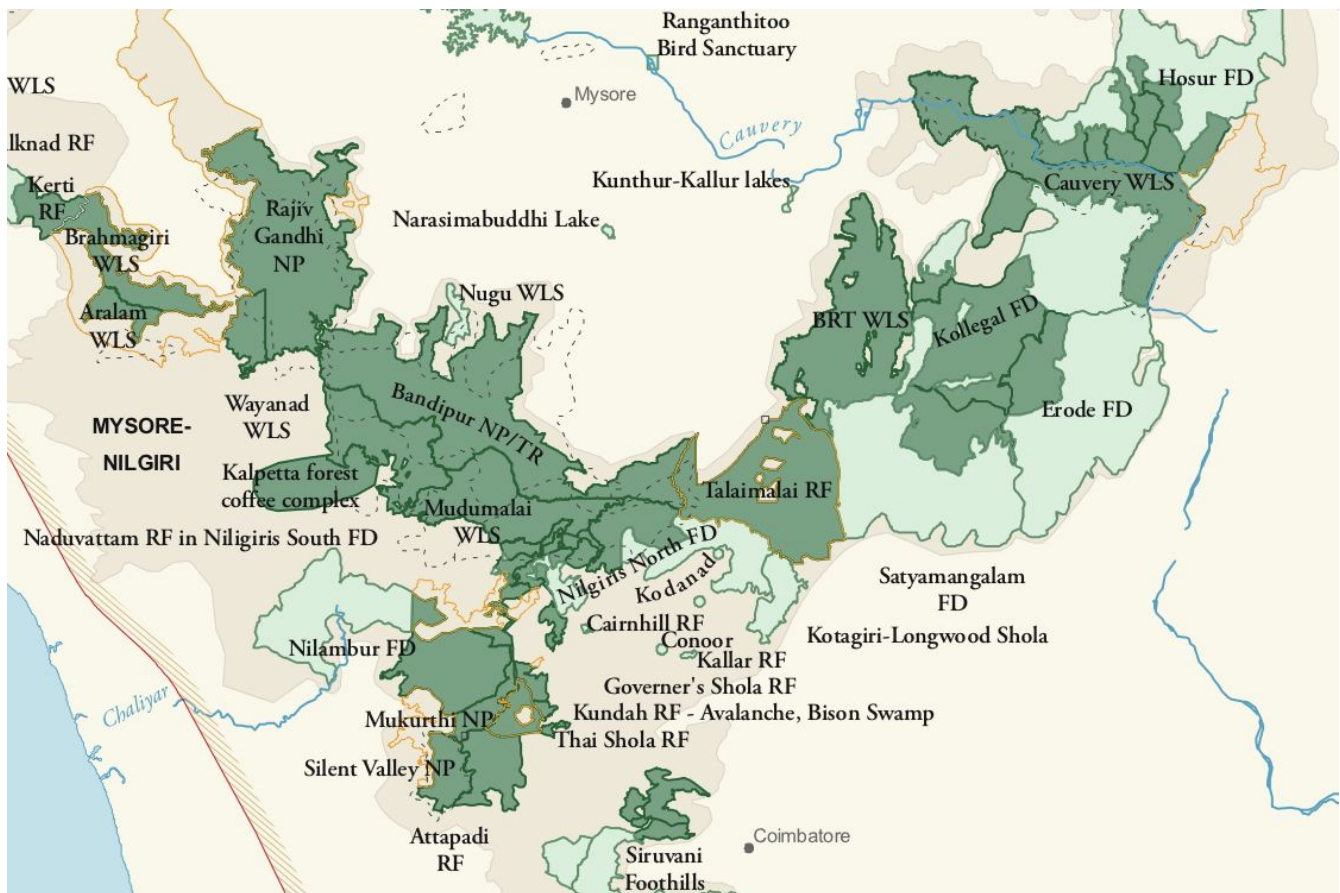
## Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

---

## Why in News

Recently, rejuvenation camp for captive elephants was inaugurated inside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR).

- Mudumalai Tiger Reserve is located in the Nilgiris District of Tamil Nadu state at the **tri-junction** of three states, viz, **Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu**.
- It is a **part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (1<sup>st</sup> Biosphere Reserve in India)** along with **Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala)** in the West, **Bandipur National Park (Karnataka)** in the North, Mukurthi National Park and Silent Valley in the South.



The name Mudumalai means " the ancient hill range". Indeed, it is as old as 65 million years when **Western Ghats were formed**.

## Important Flora and Fauna

- **Flora:**
  - The Reserve has tall grasses, commonly referred to as '**Elephant Grass**'.
  - **Bamboo** of the giant variety, valuable timber species like **Teak, Rosewood**, etc.
  - There are several species of **endemic flora**.

- **Fauna:**
  - Flagship Species: **Tiger and Asian Elephant.**
  - **Other species:** Indian Gaur, Spotted Deer, Common Langur, **Malabar Giant Squirrel, Wild Dog,** Jungle Cat among others.
  - **Birds:**
    - Reserve has got a wide variety of **more than 260 species of birds.**
    - **8% of bird species** found in India are recorded in Mudumalai.
    - This includes **rare birds** like Malabar grey hornbill, Malabar pied hornbill, Malabar laughing thrush among others.

## Other Tiger Reserves in Tamil Nadu

---

- **Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR)**
- **Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR)**
- **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR)**

## Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve

---

- Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) lies in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari District of **Tamil Nadu.**
- Vegetation types gradually change from **dry thorn forest to dry deciduous.**
- Mundanthurai Tiger Sanctuary was declared as **Nation's first Tiger Sanctuary** during 1962, much before Tiger conservation was a national focus.
- Kalakad Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1976 primarily for the conservation of **Lion Tailed Macaque.**
- **River Thamirabarani** and 13 other rivers originate from KMTR. Hence, KMTR is called popularly as **River Sanctuary.**

## Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve

---

- Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (**STR**) is located at the confluence region of **Western and Eastern Ghats.**
- This area holds a significant population of tiger, and it is also **contiguous to other Tiger conservation landscapes like BRT, Bandipur, Mudumalai and Nagarahole.**
- The region is also a part of Nilgiri-Eastern Ghats Elephant Reserve.
- It has got a high diversity of flora and fauna owing to its location. Apart from Tigers, the region is noted for Elephants, Gaur, **Black Buck, Four Horned Antelope, White Backed Vulture,** and a variety of other creatures.

**Source: IE**

---