



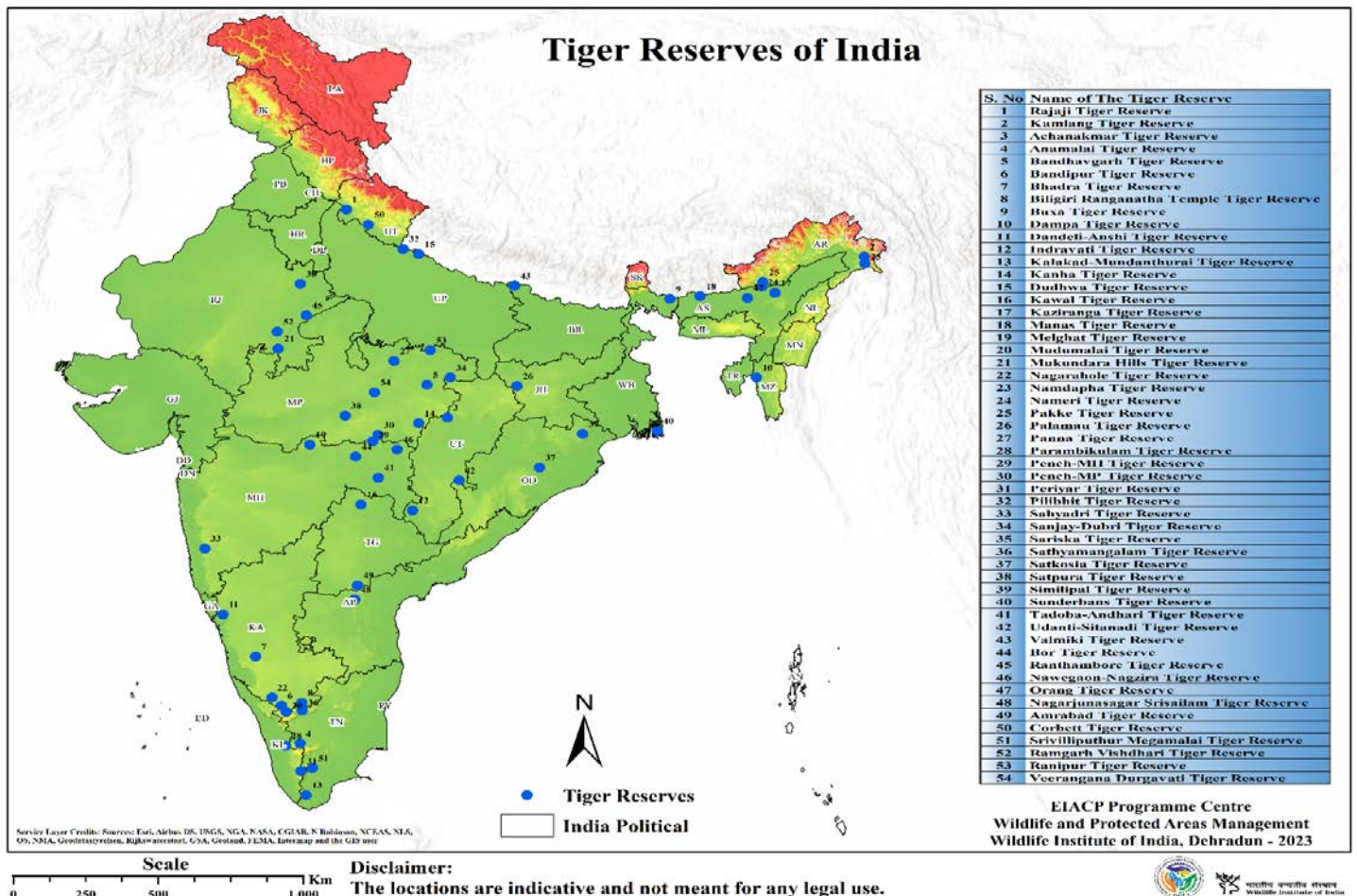
30 December, 2023

Achievements of NTCA

Context: National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has released a paper on its achievements in 2023.

- **Project Tiger's 50th Anniversary Celebration:**
 - Hon'ble Prime Minister inaugurates the commemorative event in Mysuru, Karnataka on April 9, 2023.
 - Releases publications, including 'Amrit Kaal Ka Vision For Tiger Conservation.'
 - Unveils a commemorative coin marking 50 years of Project Tiger.
- **India's Tiger Population and Global Leadership:**
 - India houses over 70% of the world's wild tiger population, with a minimum of 3167 tigers.
 - Released the 5th cycle of All India Tiger Estimation 2022 summary report.
 - Reflects a commendable annual growth rate of 6.1%.

- **International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA) Launch:**
 - Hon'ble Prime Minister launches IBCA for the conservation of seven big cats globally.
 - Aims to strengthen global cooperation for the conservation of tigers, lions, leopards, snow leopards, cheetahs, jaguars, and pumas.
- **Amrit Kaal Ka Vision For Tiger Conservation:**
 - Vision plan released by the Prime Minister during the commemorative event.
 - Aims to sustain tigers for posterity through landscape planning, sectoral integration, and convergence.
- **Successful Cheetah Reintroduction Project:**
 - Historic reintroduction of cheetah in India after being extinct.
 - MoUs signed with Namibia and South Africa, leading to successful translocations.
 - Conservation efforts include establishing a second home for the cheetah meta-population.



- **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of Tiger Reserves:**
 - 5th cycle of MEE conducted for 51 tiger reserves in 2022.
 - Report released during 'Global Tiger Day Event 2023' in Corbett Tiger Reserve.

- Twelve Tiger Reserves achieve 'Excellent' category.
- **Tiger Reintroduction and New Reserves:**
 - Active management initiative for tiger reintroduction in various reserves.
 - Declaration of new tiger reserve "Rani Durgavati" in Madhya Pradesh, bringing the total to 54 reserves.

Face to Face Centres





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- **Conservation Assured Tiger Standards (CA|TS) Accreditation:**
 - Six tiger reserves awarded CA|TS accreditation in the current year.
 - A total of 23 tiger reserves in India have received CA|TS accreditation.
- **Bilateral Cooperation with Tiger Range Countries:**
 - Bilateral meetings with Bangladesh for transboundary conservation in Sundarbans.
 - MoU with Cambodia for tiger conservation and field assessments.
- **International Awards to Tiger Reserves:** Pench Tiger Reserves in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, and Satpura Tiger Reserve receive Tx2 awards.
- **Tiger Mortality and Conservation Challenges:**
 - Reports highlight tiger deaths, with NTCA emphasizing the need for context.
 - 177 tiger deaths reported as of December 25, 2023, with Maharashtra recording the highest number.
 - More than half of the deaths occurred outside tiger reserves.
 - Emphasis on transparency and the importance of considering natural causes in mortality analysis.
- **Overall Progress and Ongoing Challenges:**
 - India's wild tigers show a healthy growth rate of 6% per year.
 - Despite progress, challenges like poaching and habitat fragmentation persist.
 - NTCA continues to collaborate with Forest Departments for the protection of habitats and corridors.

11th Century Jain Sculptures

Context: Three Jain sculptures from the 11th century were found in Varuna village in the Mysuru district earlier this week.

- Discovered in a heap of debris during drainage work in Varuna village, Mysuru district.
- Out of the three sculptures found, one was severely damaged, while the other two were in relatively good condition.
- One of the sculptures appears to be a Jain Teerthankara, but its identity is challenging to confirm due to erased or damaged symbols.
- The sculptures were transferred to the archaeology museum on the premises of the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalay.



Jain Sculptures' Artistry:

- **Depiction of Tirthankaras:**
 - ✓ Jain sculptures showcase the brilliance of Jain Tirthankaras through delicate images.
 - ✓ The sculptures can represent any of the twenty-four Tirthankaras, with popular depictions including Parshvanatha, Rishabhanatha, and Mahavira.
- **Mathura School of Sculptures:**
 - ✓ Developed around Mathura, a key city on the Uttarapatha and the second capital of the Kushanas.
 - ✓ The discovered images encompass all three religions: Buddhism, Brahmanism, and Jainism.
 - ✓ Crafted using red spotted sandstone from the nearby Aravalli region.
- **Features of Jain Sculptures in Mathura School:**
 - ✓ Depictions of Jina in seated or standing poses.
 - ✓ Standing Jina is straight with hands reaching the knee, while seated Jina is in padmasana with hands in dhyana mudra.
 - ✓ Generally nude, they venerate 24 Tirthankaras distinguished by emblems on their throne or chest.
 - ✓ Contributions to the stupa include ayagapatas – square slabs depicting Jina stupa, swastika, twin fish symbols, and various scenes.
 - ✓ Recovered from the ruined stupa at Kankali Tila in Mathura.
- **Examples of Jain Sculptures:**
 - **Lohanipur Torso:**
 - ✓ Polished sandstone statue in Patliputra, Bihar, representing a damaged Jain Tirthankara.
 - **Gopachal Rock-cut Jain Monuments:**
 - ✓ Located around the walls of Gwalior Fort, Madhya Pradesh.
 - ✓ Depict Tirthankaras in seated Padmasana and Kayotsarga postures in a typical naked form.
 - **Vasantgarh Hoard:**
 - ✓ Located in Rajasthan, evidence of a strong Jain presence with the discovery of 240 Jain bronze idols.
 - ✓ Idols feature images of Tirthankara, sashandevatas (yaksha and yakshi), and Jain deities in Shwetambar iconography.

New epaulettes for Admirals in Indian Navy

Context: The Navy has introduced a redesigned version of admirals' epaulettes, incorporating an octagon inspired by both the naval ensign and the rajmudra of Chhatrapati Shivaji.

- **Symbol of Maritime Heritage:**
 - The Navy describes the new epaulettes as a "true reflection of our rich maritime heritage."
 - It signifies a departure from the mindset of subjugation, denoted as "Ghulami ki Maansikta."
- **Renaming Ranks:**
 - The Navy plans to rename ranks, currently in British nomenclature, to establish a stronger connection with Indian identity.

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testbook

OFFICER RANKS OF THE
INDIAN ARMY, AIR FORCE & NAVY
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

ARMY	NAVY	AIR FORCE
Field Marshal	Admiral of the Fleet	Marshal of the Indian Air Force
General	Admiral	Air Chief Marshal
Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral	Air Marshal
Major General	Rear Admiral	Air Vice Marshal
Brigadier	Commodore	Air Commodore
Colonel	Captain	Group Captain
Lieutenant Colonel	Commander	Wing Commander
Major	Lieutenant Commander	Squadron Leader
Captain	Lieutenant	Flight Lieutenant
Lieutenant	Sub-Lieutenant	Flying Officer

- A step towards embracing "Bharatiyata" in all aspects, aligning with the pillars of "Panch Pran - Virasat Par Garv & Ghulami ki Mansikta se Mukti".

➤ **Symbolic Design Elements:**

- The new epaulettes feature a golden Navy button top, followed by an octagon, an Indian sword, a crossed telescope, and stars denoting ranks.
- Alignment with Naval Insignia: The new epaulettes align with the insignia of the Navy, presenting a cohesive visual identity.

➤ **Previous Initiatives:**

- In September 2022, during the commissioning of INS Vikrant, Prime Minister Modi unveiled a new Naval ensign.

- He had also announced the Navy's intention to rename ranks in line with Indian traditions.

➤ **Symbolic Significance of Each Design Element:**



• **Golden Navy Button:**

- Signifies the determination to eliminate the mindset of subjugation known as 'ghulami ki maansikta.'
- Represents a commitment to independence and self-reliance.

• **Octagon:**

- Represents the eight directions, symbolizing the comprehensive, all-encompassing vision of the forces.
- Reflects a long-term perspective, indicating a strategic approach to challenges.

• **Indian Sword:**

- Emphasizes the Navy's core purpose to serve as the forefront of national power.
- Signifies the cutting edge of military strength, aiming to achieve victory in wars, dominate adversaries, and conquer challenges.

• **Telescope:**

- Symbolizes the Navy's commitment to long-term vision and foresight.
- Represents a vigilant approach, akin to a "weather eye," in navigating the complexities of an ever-changing world.
- Highlights the importance of preparedness and strategic planning in facing evolving challenges.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Nandankanan Zoological Park



Recently, the Central Zoo Authority has allowed the Odisha government to carry out planned transfer of a cheetah, African lion and chimpanzee from Dubai Safari Park to Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar.

About Nandankanan Zoological Park:

- Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZP) is a **botanical garden** and zoological park in **Odisha**.
- On **29th December, 1960**, Govt. of India inaugurated the new Biological Park christened as "Nandankanan" **the heavenly garden of God**.
- In **2009**, it became the first zoo in India to join the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (**WAZA**).
- It is the **first zoo in the World to breed White tiger and Melanistic tiger**.
- Nandankanan is the only zoo in India after which an express train Puri-New Delhi express has been named as "**Nandankanan Express**".
- Nandankanan is the first zoo in India where **endangered Ratel** was born in captivity.
- The zoo has over 166 species of animals, including **1175 mammals, 1546 birds, 262 reptiles and 21 amphibians**.

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Kuvempu Award



Recently, the noted Bengali writer **Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay** honoured with Kuvempu award presented at a function organised by the Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Trust at Tirthahalli taluk in Karnataka.

About Kuvempu Award:

- The Kuvempu Rashtriya Puraskar is a **national award** given annually to a writer **in memory of the late poet laureate Kuvempu**.
- The Rashtrakavi Kuvempu Trust has been presenting the award since **2013**.
- The award carries a cash award of **Rs. 5 lakh**, a **silver medal** and a **citation**.
- In **2022**, Tamil poet **V. Annamalai** was selected for the Kuvempu National award.
- In **2020**, Odia poet **Dr. Rajendra Kishore Panda** received the award.
- Kuvempu is considered the greatest **Kannada poet of the 20th century**.
- He was the first Kannada writer to receive the **Jnanpith Award in 1967** for his work **Sri Ramayana Darshanam**.

Synthetic Diamond



Recently, India and Hong Kong collaborated to dismantle a syndicate involved in synthetic diamond trading.

About Synthetic Diamond:

- Synthetic diamond, also known as **lab-grown diamond** or cultured diamond, is diamond created in a controlled laboratory environment.
- It has the same **physical** and **optical properties** as natural diamond and can be grown in similar colors and clarity.
- It is used in **electronics** as heat spreaders for high-power laser diodes, **laser arrays** and **high-power transistors**.
- It is also used as **cutters** and in other tools and machinery that need these characteristics.
- It has **high thermal conductivity**, but negligible electrical conductivity.
- It is also a much smaller environmental footprint than naturally occurring diamond.
- It is created using large presses that can **weigh hundreds of tons** to produce a pressure of 5 GPa (730,000 psi) at 1,500 °C (2,730 °F).
- Another method involves **chemical vapor deposition (CVD)**, which creates a carbon plasma over a substrate onto which the carbon atoms deposit to form diamond.

Place in News

Kuril Islands

Recently, the National Centre for Seismology revealed that an earthquake of magnitude 6.3 on the Richter Scale jolted Japan's Kuril Islands.

About Kuril Islands:

- The Kuril Islands are a **volcanic archipelago** that has been a disputed territory between **Russia** and **Japan** since the **mid-19th century**.
- The islands are part of the **Sakhalin Oblast** in the Russian Far East and stretch from **Hokkaido** in Japan to the **Kamchatka Peninsula** in Russia.



- The Kuril Islands are made up of **56 islands** and minor rocks and cover 6,000 square miles.
- The chain is part of a belt of geologic instability and contains at **least 100 volcanoes**, of which 35 are still active, and many hot springs.
- **Japan calls the Kuril Islands the Northern Territories**, while **Russia calls them the South Kurils**.
- The territorial dispute has hindered the signing of a formal peace **treaty between Russia and Japan** to officially end **World War II hostilities**.

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Place in News

Nicaragua

A recent flight carrying 303 Indians to Nicaragua was stopped in France due to suspected human trafficking, the third incident this year.

Nicaragua (Capital: Managua)

Location: Nicaragua is the **largest Central American country** located between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

Boundaries: Nicaragua shares its border with the **Caribbean Sea** (East), the **Pacific Ocean** (West), **Honduras** (North) and **Costa Rica** (South).



Physical Features:

- Nicaragua is known as the "**Land of Fire and Water**" because it has many volcanoes and lakes, as well as two coastlines.
- **Mogoton** is the highest point in Nicaragua.
- **Lake Nicaragua (Cocibolca) is the largest freshwater lake** in Central America.
- The **Coco River**, also known as the Wangki River, is a river that runs along the border of Honduras and Nicaragua.
- Nicaragua is also rich in natural resources, including deposits of **gold, silver, zinc, copper, iron ore, lead** and **gypsum**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Which Mountain range does the Kolyma River cut through? - **Verkhyansk Range**
- Where are the Polymetallic Ferromanganese (Fe-Mn) nodules and crusts primarily located? - **Andaman Sea and Lakshadweep Sea**
- What health hazards can arise from the presence of excessive nitrate in drinking water? - **Methaemoglobinaemia or blue baby syndrome**
- In which Indian state is the Neora Valley National Park located? - **West Bengal**
- Which movement did Swami Shradhanand participate in but later resigned due to disagreement with Gandhi ji? - **Non-cooperation Movement**

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