

# 11<sup>th</sup> March Daily Current Affairs

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# Closing the gender gap in the higher judiciary

## Current Representation of Women in Higher Judiciary

### High Courts:

- Women constitute only **14.27%** of judges (109 out of 764).
- Some High Courts, such as Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, and Tripura, have no women judges.
- The **Allahabad High Court**, the largest in India, has only **3 women judges out of 79** (around 2%).

### Supreme Court:

- The apex court currently has just **two women judges**—Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice Bela Trivedi.
- With **Justice Bela Trivedi retiring in June 2025**, the Supreme Court will be left with only **one woman judge**.

### Age Disparity:

- Women judges are appointed at an **average age of 53**, whereas men are appointed at **51.8 years**, limiting their chances of attaining senior positions.

### Leadership Gap:

- Among **25 High Courts**, only the **Gujarat High Court** has a woman Chief Justice.

# Cont.

## Global Trends in Women's Representation in Judiciary

### Overall Representation:

- Women constitute **just over 25%** of judicial officers worldwide.
- However, this percentage varies significantly across regions, with some countries having **less than 10%** women in the judiciary.

### Progress in OECD Countries:

- In several **OECD nations**, women account for **over 54%** of professional judges.
- This increase is largely attributed to more women entering the legal profession and judiciary in recent decades.

### Findings from the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF):

- Countries like the **United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada** have made strides in promoting female judges.
- Despite this progress, **gender disparities remain**, especially in higher judicial positions.

# India's Legacy in UN Peacekeeping

## What is UN Peacekeeping?

UN Peacekeeping is a crucial tool employed by the **United Nations** to uphold global peace and security.

It functions alongside other UN initiatives such as **conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding.**

Peacekeepers, commonly known as **Blue Helmets**, derive their name from the distinctive light blue color of the **UN flag**.

## Historical Background

- The first UN peacekeeping mission was established in **1948** with the creation of the **United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)** in the **Middle East** to oversee ceasefires.
- During the **Cold War**, peacekeeping efforts were limited due to geopolitical conflicts.
- However, after the **Cold War ended in the 1990s**, there was a **significant expansion** in both the **number** and **scope** of peacekeeping missions.



# Visit of External Affairs Minister to the United Kingdom

## Overview of India-UK Relations

### Strategic Partnership

- The **India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** was upgraded in **2021**, accompanied by a **10-year Roadmap**.
- A **2+2 Foreign and Defence Dialogue** facilitates bilateral engagement in these key areas.

### Trade Relations

- **India is the UK's 11th largest trading partner**, while the **UK ranks 14th for India**.
- Bilateral trade stands at **GBP 42 billion**, with India enjoying a surplus—Britain's trade deficit with India was **GBP 8.3 billion in 2023**.
- **FTA negotiations** began in **2022**, aiming to **double trade by 2030**.

### Defence and Security Cooperation

- The **UK contributed only 3%** of India's defence imports in the last decade.
- India is working towards **reducing dependence on Russian defence supplies** and strengthening its **indigenous defence industry**.
- The UK can assist through **technology transfers and advanced defence collaborations**.
- **Open General Export Licence (OGEL) (2022)**: The UK's first such license for an **Indo-Pacific country**, easing military technology exports to India.

- **Joint Military Exercises:**

- *Ex Ajeya Warrior*
- *Exercise Konkan*
- *Ex Cobra Warrior*

## **Multilateral Engagement**

- **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** – *India is a Member; UK is a Dialogue Partner.*
- **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)** – *Both India and the UK are Members.*
- **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)** – *India and the UK co-lead the Maritime Security pillar.*
- The **UK supports India's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC).**
- Collaboration within the **G20** on **global trade, economic stability, and climate change.**

## **People-to-People Ties**

- **Growing presence of Indian-origin politicians in the UK.**
- The **Indian diaspora** is considered a "**model minority**", excelling across various sectors.
- The **British Indian community** comprises **over 1.6 million people**, accounting for **2.5% of the UK's population.**

**India-UK  
bilateral defence  
projects**

DRDO-Rolls Royce co-development of gas turbine propulsion technology for India's next generation fighter aircraft engines

Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) - Thales co-production in India Very Short-Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) missiles

DRDO-DSTL agreement for joint research on defence tech innovation

BDL - MBDA UK - co-development of live build capacity in India for Advanced Short-Range Air to Air Missile (ASRAAM)



- Platform Workers to Register on e-Shram Portal for Formal Recognition

## **India's Growing Gig Economy**

### **Overview**

India is undergoing a **gig economy transformation**, driven by its **large workforce, rapid urbanization, widespread smartphone usage, and digital adoption.**

Recognizing the **importance of gig and platform workers**, the **Union Budget 2025-26** has introduced several key provisions:

- **Registration of online platform workers** on the **e-Shram portal.**
- **Issuance of identity cards** for gig workers.
- **Healthcare coverage** under **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).**

## Healthcare Support for Gig Workers

- **AB-PMJAY** provides health coverage of **₹5 lakh per family per year** for **secondary and tertiary care hospitalization**.
- Over **31,000 public and private hospitals** across India are empaneled under this scheme.

## Understanding the Gig and Platform Economy

### Definition

- The **Gig Economy** consists of a **flexible labor market** where workers take on **short-term or freelance jobs** instead of traditional full-time employment. These workers, known as **gig workers**, perform tasks (gigs) on demand without long-term commitments.
- The **Platform Economy**, a subset of the gig economy, involves **digital platforms (such as Zomato, Ola, and Uber)** that connect workers with employers or customers.

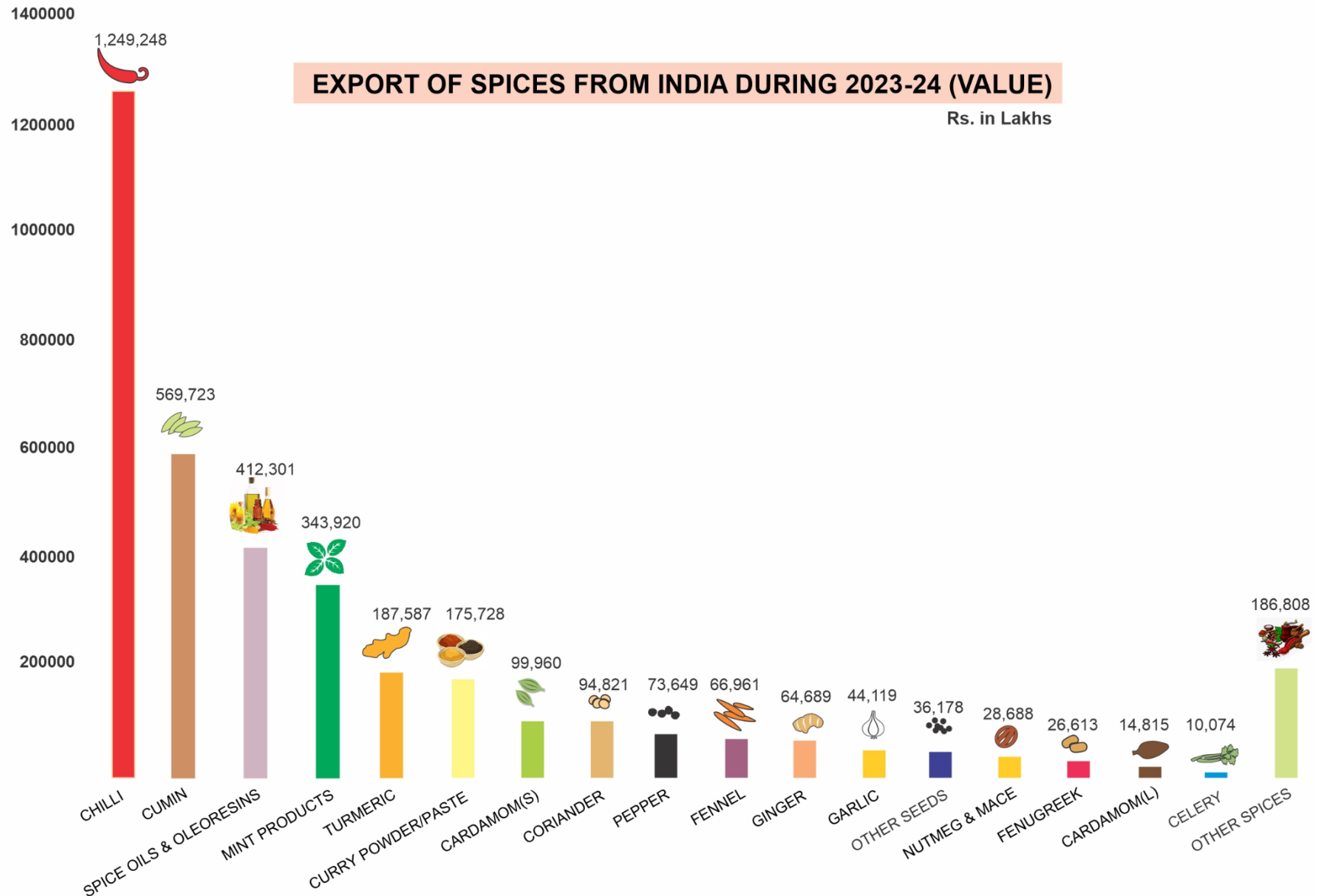
### Growth and Trends

- **NITI Aayog projections** estimate that India's **gig workforce will exceed 1 crore (10 million) in 2024-25**, growing to **2.35 crore (23.5 million) by 2029-30**.
- **Employment trends** show a **decline in medium-skilled jobs**, while **low- and high-skilled job opportunities** are on the rise.

# Strengthening India's Spice Industry

## Spices Market In India

- India is known as the **'Spice Bowl' of the world**. It produces a number of quality, rare and medicinal spices.
- India is the **world's largest spice producer**. It is also the **largest consumer and exporter of spices**.
- India holds only **0.7% of the \$14 billion global seasoning market in 2024**, compared to China's 12% and the USA's 11%.
- India **exports 1.5 million tonnes of spices** worth \$4.5 billion, capturing a quarter of the \$20 billion global spice market.
- **Only 48% of India's spice exports** are value-added products and to meet the Spices Board of India's \$10 billion export target by 2030, the share of value-added spices should rise to 70%.
- The largest spice-producing states in India are Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.



# Government Initiatives to Boost Spice Production & Exports

- **Spices Board of India (SBI):** Established under the **Spices Board Act 1986**, functions under the **Ministry of Commerce & Industry**.
  - SBI, headquartered in Kochi, Kerala, promotes cardamom and 52 spices, regulates quality, supports research, and links Indian exporters to global markets.
  - **National Sustainable Spice Program (NSSP)** under SBI and WSO unites stakeholders to address sustainability in India's spice industry.
- **Spices Parks:** SBI established **eight crop specific Spices Parks** across the country, to assist farmers in post-harvest handling, value addition, and better pricing.
- **Spice Complex in Sikkim:** Aimed at improving **spice processing and value addition** in the Northeastern region.

# Cotton imports increase despite pressure on Indian cotton prices

## Reasons for High Cotton Imports

- **Global cotton prices are weak**, making imports more attractive.
- **Indian cotton prices are higher than those of key exporters** like Brazil, U.S., Australia, and Africa.
  - **Example:** Indian cotton costs 80-85 cents per pound, while Brazilian cotton is 60-65 cents per pound.
- **Export demand for garments & home textiles** is rising (over 60% of India's textile exports are cotton-based).
- Mills imported cotton despite an **11% duty** as **international prices were lower**.

## Import woes

An increase in the import of cotton in the last two years has brought to fore the urgent need for measures to improve cotton productivity in India



## Cotton and raw cotton imports (in \$ million)

Month	2023	2024
January	28.99	19.62
February	34.69	31.43
March	55.01	48.8
April	45.3	37.91
May	58.09	43.88
June	95.1	70.22
July	88.72	86.29
August	74.9	104.89
September	39.91	134.2
October	36.68	127.71
November	30.61	170.73
December	29.47	142.89
Month	2024	2025
January	19.62	184.64

# Madhav National Park: India's 58th Tiger Reserve

## Context

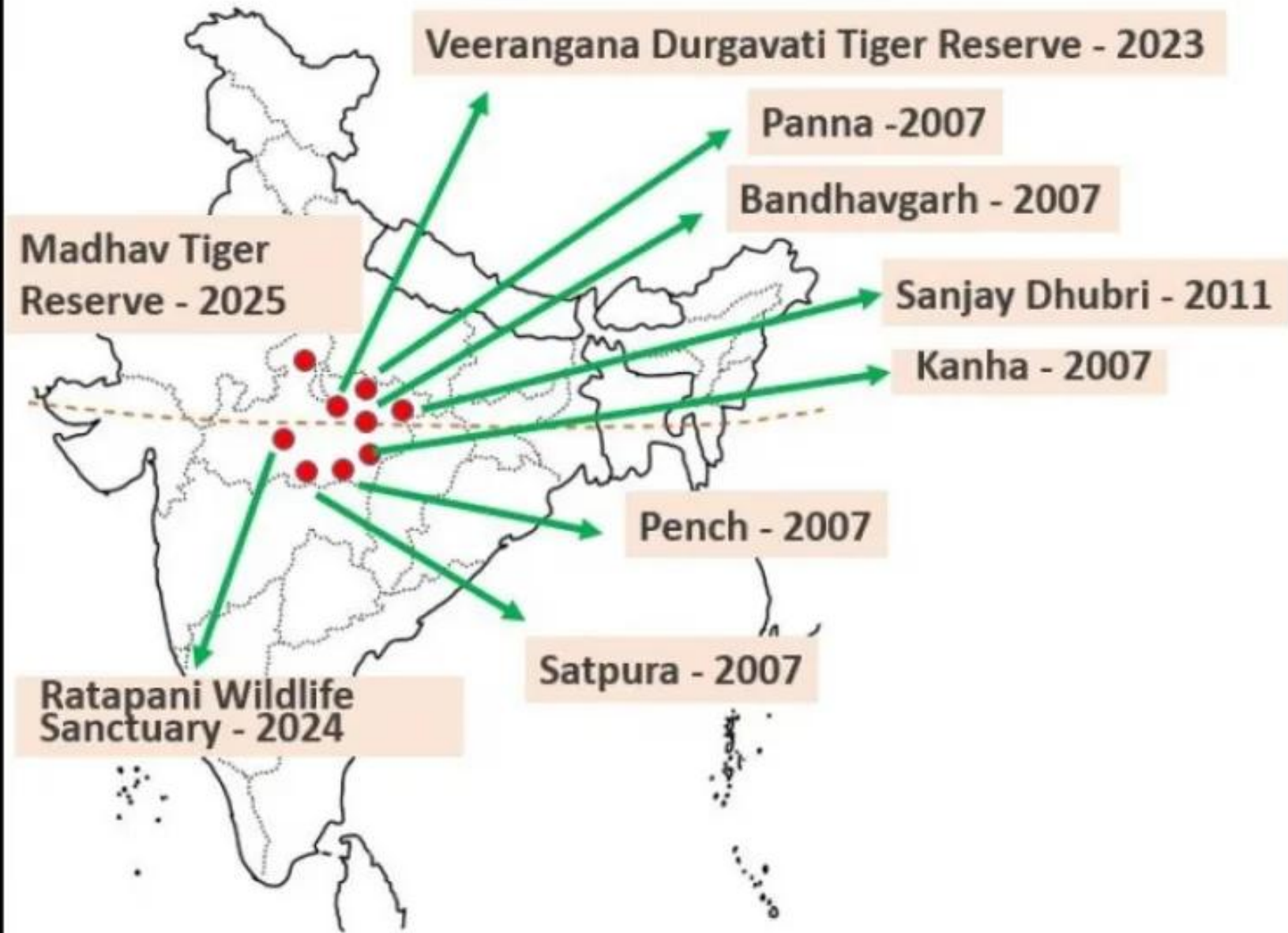
The central government has designated **Madhav National Park** in **Madhya Pradesh** as the **58th tiger reserve** in the country.

## Key Highlights

- **Madhya Pradesh now has nine tiger reserves**, the highest in any Indian state.

## About Madhav National Park

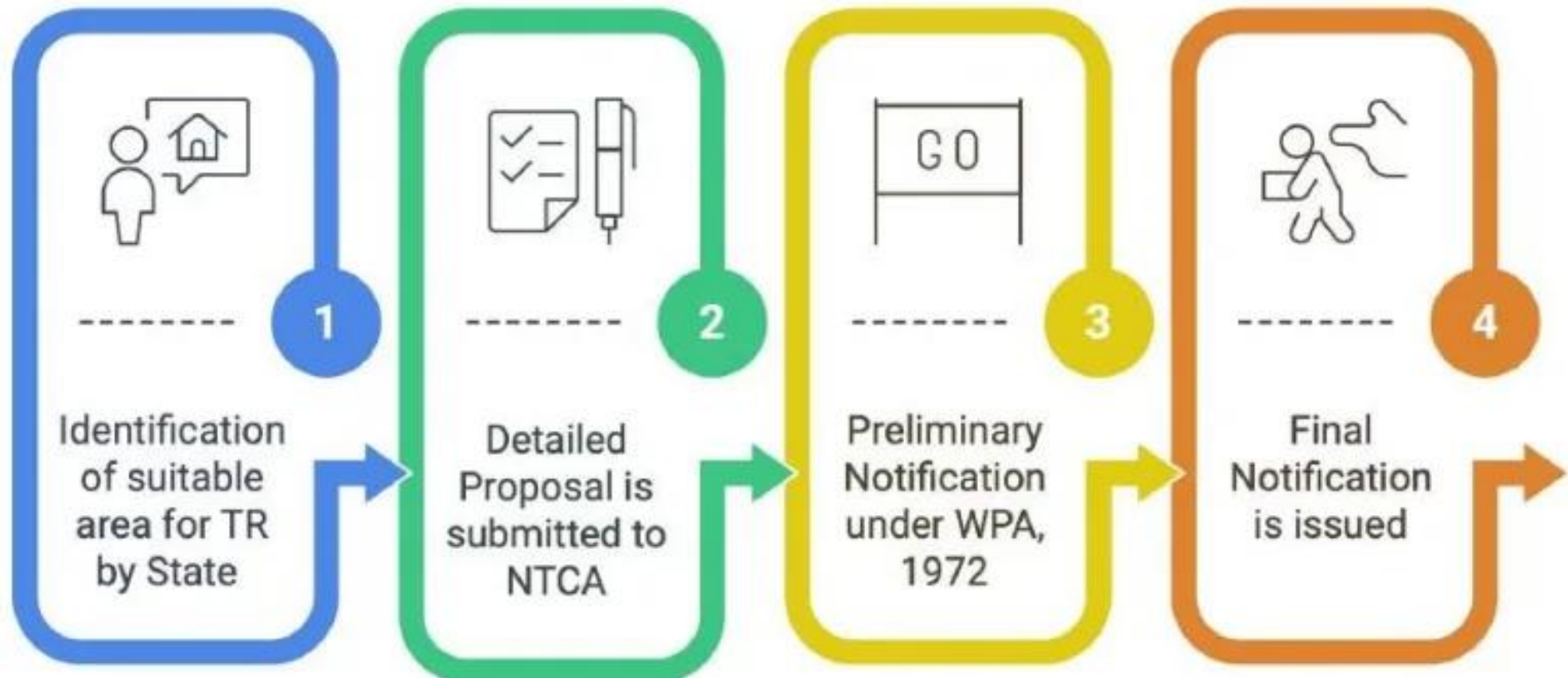
- **Location:** Situated near **Shivpuri town** in **Madhya Pradesh**, within the **upper Vindhyan hills**.
- **Lakes:** Home to **Sakhya Sagar (a Ramsar site since 2022)** and **Madhav Sagar**.
- **Rivers:** Drained by the **Manier and Sind rivers**.
- **Vegetation:** Features **tropical dry deciduous forests** and **dry thorn forests**.
- **Flora:** Dominated by **Kardhai, Salai, Dhaora, and Khair trees**.
- **Fauna:** Inhabited by species like **Nilgai, Chinkara, Chowsinga, Chital, Sambar, and Barking Deer**.
- **Historical Significance:**
  - Once served as a **hunting ground** for **Mughal emperors** and the **Maharaja of Gwalior**.
  - Declared a **national park** in **1958**.





# Declaration of Tiger Reserve

Section 38 V of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972



# JOURNEY OF TIGER CONSERVATION IN INDIA

## LANDMARK YEARS

**1969** | Ban on the export of all wild cat skins

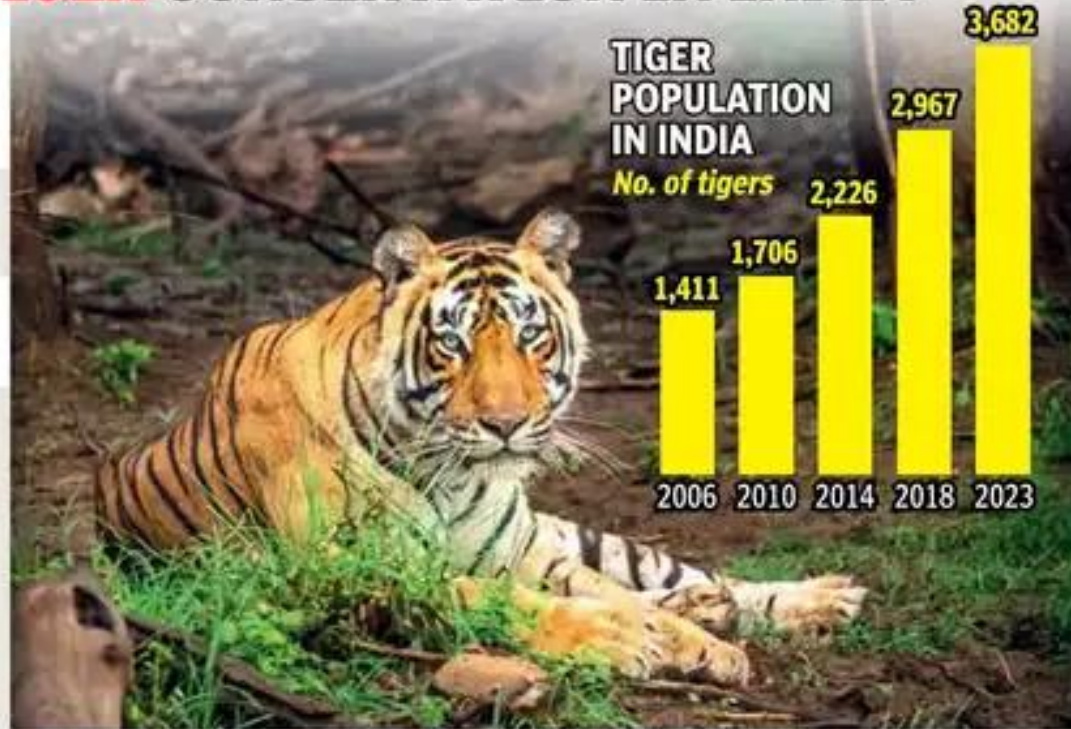
**1972** | Wildlife Protection Act enacted

**1973** | Project Tiger launched

**2006** | Amendment in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, resulting in establishment of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)

**2010** | Global Tiger Reserve Day celebrated to bolster international efforts for tiger conservation

**2023** | International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA) launched



## STATE-WISE LIST OF TIGER RESERVES



# Exercise Khanjar-XII

## Context

The **12th edition of Exercise Khanjar-XII** is scheduled to be held in **Kyrgyzstan**.

## About the Exercise

- **Type:** Joint special forces exercise.
- **Frequency:** Conducted annually, alternating between **India and Kyrgyzstan**.
- **Objective:**
  - Facilitate **exchange of expertise** and **best practices** in **counter-terrorism** operations.
  - Focus on **special forces tactics** in **urban warfare** and **high-altitude mountainous terrains**.