Maharashtra gears up for tiger translocation

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Context:

The Maharashtra forest department is gearing up for translocation of a few tigers from the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Chandrapur to Sahyadri, the lone tiger reserve in the state's western region.

Background:

The translocation project is an important step in conservation of tigers in the forests of the northern Western Ghats, which form a key wildlife corridor between Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Key Takeaways:

1. The Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) is one of only five tiger reserves in the country — Kaval in Telangana, Kamlang in Arunachal Pradesh, Dampa in Mizoram and Satkosia in Odisha being the other four — with zero tigers within the reserve and the translocation is part of a long-term plan to revive the population of the big cats in the northern Western Ghats forests.
2. STR straddles Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli and Ratnagiri districts in western Maharashtra. Spread over 1,165 sq km, the reserve was notified in 2010 by amalgamating the Chandoli national park and Koyna wildlife sanctuary.
3. The Maharashtra forest department is awaiting the final go-ahead from the Union Environment Ministry. The NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) had cleared the translocation plan in October 2023. In the initial phase, a male tiger or a pair of male and female tigers would be translocated from TATR to STR.
4. The 2023 tiger population estimation report highlighted the threats posed to the wildlife corridor between the STR and Karnataka's forests from mining activities, road projects and human settlements.
5. The translocation of tigers from TATR will be followed by their translocation from the Pench Tiger Reserve landscape, which is spread over Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. In all, the plan involves translocation of eight tigers — three males and five females.
6. The translocation is part of the phase-II of the tiger recovery project; phase-I involves preparing the habitat for the big cats' reintroduction, augmentation of prey, improving forest protection and building of a temporary enclosure for their soft release.