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## Illegal Sand Mining | Bihar | 30 Dec 2023

### Why in News?

Recently, Bihar police **arrested sand smugglers in a major crackdown against [illegal sand mining](#)**.

- This operation, near the [Sone River](#), signifies a significant step in the ongoing battle against powerful criminal syndicates involved in illicit sand mining activities.

### Key Points

- **Initiatives to Prevent Sand Mining in India** are Mines and Mineral Development and Regulation Act, 1957 (MMDR Act), 2006 Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), Sustainable Sand Management Guidelines (SSMG) 2016 and [Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining 2020](#).
- The Sone River, a **perennial river in central India, is the [Ganges](#)' 2nd-largest southern tributary**.
- Originating near Amarkantak Hill in Chhattisgarh, **it flows through Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, forming waterfalls** at the Amarkantak plateau.
  - It merges with the Ganges near Patna, Bihar.
- **Tributaries include** Ghaghar, Johilla, Chhoti Mahanadi, Banas, Gopad, Rihand, Kanhar, and North Koel River.
- **Prominent dams include** the Bansagar Dam in Madhya Pradesh and the Rihand Dam near Pipri in Uttar Pradesh.

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## A Rise in Tiger Numbers in Valmiki Tiger Reserve | Bihar | 30 Dec 2023

### Why in News?

Recently, the [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#) had officially announced the increase in [tiger](#) population in Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR).

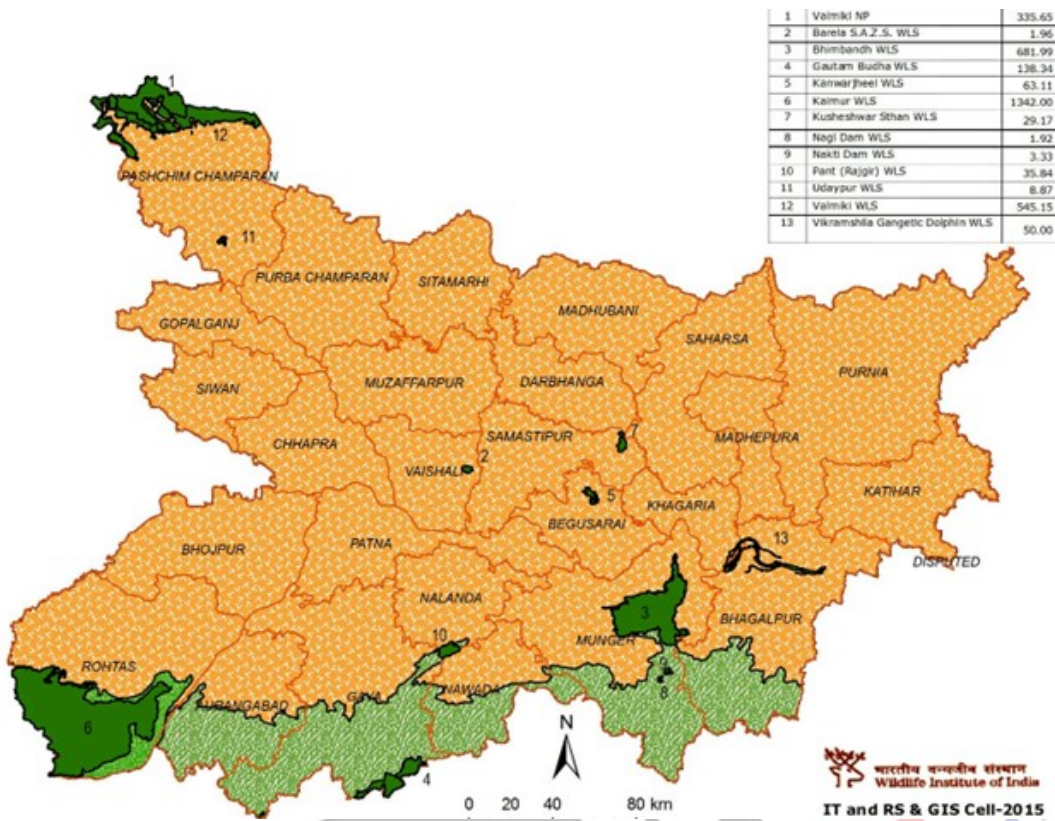
- It **witnessed the growth in the number of big cats from 31 (2018) to 54 (2023)**.
- The Bihar government is **waiting to obtain NTCA approval for declaring Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary as the state's second [tiger reserve](#)** after VTR.

### Key Points

- A total **ban on sand and stone mining** inside VTR, and strict restrictions on mining in its eco-sensitive zone, helped increase grassland cover.
- An **increase in grassland cover** thus helps in supporting the prey population, in turn increasing the chances of the carnivores' survival.
- The VTR is the **only tiger reserve in Bihar**, which forms the easternmost extent of the Himalayan Terai forests in India.
  - The VTR is **located in Bihar's West Champaran district**, bordering Nepal to its north and Uttar Pradesh to its west.
- According to the Forest Survey of India Report 2021, **85.71% of its total area is covered by**

**forest cover.**

- Wild mammals found in the forests of Valmiki Tiger Reserve include tiger, sloth bear, leopard, wild dog, bison, wild boar etc.
- Rivers Gandak, Pandai, Manor, Harha, Masan and Bhapsa flow through various parts of the reserve.



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