

2018 TIGER CENSUS REPORT GETS DELAYED DUE TO 'NEW METHODS'

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Beating the heat:A white tiger cools off in a pond at the Alipore Zoo in Kolkata on Tuesday.PTISwapan Mahapatra

The much awaited 2018 tiger census report is likely to be delayed and will be released only after the formation of a new government at the Centre, an official said citing "huge data" which is to be analysed.

The four-yearly report, which gives out the number of big cats living in the country, was to be released this month, but officials say it is not expected before June due to addition of states in the survey, intense methods and delay by states in submitting the data.

However, an official had said in February the report would be released in March as the tiger count was almost completed and only data analysis was pending.

According to Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII), an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Environment, the process of estimating tigers commenced late and it has been an elaborate exercise with minute details being taken care of so the report is likely to come out in May end.

"We are analysing the huge data. It will take time. It's definitely not coming out before a new government gets elected. The process of estimation began six months late this time. So the report is likely to come out by May end," Y.V. Jhala, a senior scientist in WII, said.

A wildlife official from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), a statutory body of the environment ministry, said the delay was on the part of state governments in submitting their data to the Centre and due to the increase in the number of states from where the data is being collected.

"Number of states have increased this time. Nagaland, Manipur and Gujarat have been included this time besides the 18 tiger reign states. We started the process of tiger estimation from our side but submission of data from different state forest departments took time," DIG of NTCA Nishant Verma said.

This is the fourth cycle of the tiger census. The first was conducted in 2006, second in 2010 and third in 2014. A team of over 44,000 officials is working on the census along with 55 biologists, the WII scientist said.

According to the last survey conducted in 2014, the tiger count was 2,226.

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