



Detail News

State fares poorly in improving tiger count

Jan 20 By Ramesh Marulkar

Forest Department has come under a big scanner, following a very dismal performance on protecting and improving tigers in Maharashtra. During last four years, the number has increased just by 21 which is one of the lowest in entire country raising a serious question-mark over sincerity of efforts taken by department and various NGOs who got liberal financial aid from Government.

Wildlifers were dejected to learn that the number of tigers in Maharashtra was only 190 as declared by Prakash Javadekar, the Minister for Environment, Forests and Climatic Change, in Delhi on Tuesday. The state and particularly Vidarbha region was touted as destination for tiger centric tourism and Nagpur as Tiger Capital of India, but the official figure has shattered the dream of wildlife buffs.

According to rough estimates, out of 190 tigers in Maharashtra about 170 to 175 exist in the landscapes of Tadoba-Andhari, Pench and Melghat Tiger Reserves. Of them, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve could reach at the figure of 105. The rise of tigers in Maharashtra is 12.4 per cent.

It may be mentioned here that Karnataka, which ranks highest with 408 tigers in this estimation, had recorded 290 tigers in 2006 and 300 in 2010, which is now a remarkable rise. In Madhya Pradesh, the number of tigers in 2010 was 257 but now it has gone up to 308 whereas in Tamil Nadu the number of tigers has increased by 66 during the last four years.

Uttarakhand has registered the number at 308, which is second highest in the country.

They feel that increase in tigers in Maharashtra is not satisfactory if the rise in tigers in States like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh or Kerala is any indication. During the All India tiger estimation conducted in 2010, the number of tigers in Maharashtra was 169 whereas it has now increased just by 21, despite passing of four years and spending hundred of crores and creation of so many tiger reserves, restricting industrial activity and expanding forest bureaucracy by giving IFS officers fast-tracked promotions and liberal perks to protect and conserve tiger, a sign of healthy forest.

Kishor Rithe, President of Satpuda Foundation, Amravati, and former member of National Board for Wildlife, attributed the main reason for failure in checking pressure of poaching tigers. As many as 22 tigers were poached in this region by Bahelia community members and the Forest Department miserably failed to check it. Otherwise, there would have been a significant rise in the numbers of this majestic animal. No doubt, the department arrested many poachers last year and this resulted in saving further tigers being poached, he pointed out.

While appreciating the relocation work, he expressed the view that the department's efforts fell short in protection level and conservation practices. Moreover, looking at the policy of the present government to clear projects around tiger reserves, the number may fall down dramatically again, Rithe claimed. However, during last four years, when most of the industries in and around forests were shut down, the insignificant rise in tiger population has effectively challenged this theory of putting forest and development against each other.

The other wildlife lovers also expressed dissatisfaction over the rise in the number in Maharashtra. Even petty reasons like absence of open wells without parapet walls, scant attention towards prey base due to which many tigers are forced to scout for prey, inadequate number of companion for male tigers, territorial fights among sub-adult male tigers and even accidental deaths are responsible for dwindling tiger numbers.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) released a report on Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves in India 2014-15 at Delhi on Tuesday. The rating of Tadoba-Andhari, Melghat and Pench Tiger Reserves has improved from good to very good in management effectiveness evaluation while Sahyadri Tiger Reserve is from fair to good.

On the occasion, four tiger reserves were given awards in appreciation of the works. **Dinesh Tyagi, CCF and Field Director, Melghat Tiger Reserve, received the NTCA Award in appreciation of rehabilitation work in the reserve.**

