

Maharashtra To Translocate Tigers To Sahyadri Reserve

Why In News

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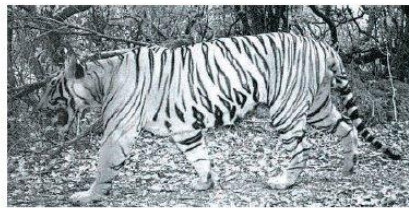
Maharashtra gears up for tiger translocation to Sahyadri reserve in bid to revive numbers

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NEW DELHI, MAY 5

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.

The Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) is one of only five tiger reserves in the country — Kaval in Arunachal Pradesh, Kamlang 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.

STR straddles Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli and Ratnagiri districts in western Maharashtra. Spread over 1,165 sq km, the re-



A tiger caught on a camera trap inside the reserve in 2018. File

serve was notified in 2010 by amalgamating the Chandoli national park and Koyna wildlife sanctuary. The Maharashtra forest department is awaiting the final go-ahead from the Union Environment Ministry to tranquilise the tigers in TATR for the translocation process, senior officials said.

The National Tiger

Conservation Authority (NTCA) 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.

"Once we have the permission to tranquilise the tigers under Section 12 of the Wildlife Protection Act, we will go ahead with the field work. We have cre-

ated a special vehicle to transport the big cats," said Maheep Gupta, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Maharashtra forest department.

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.

This corridor allows connectivity of tiger population in Sahyadri reserve, Radhanagari wildlife sanctuary, Amboli reserve forest, Mhadei wildlife sanctuary in Goa and Bhingad wildlife sanctuary and Kali tiger reserve in Karnataka, according to the government's All India Tiger Estimation report, 2023.

During the 2022 population estimation exercise in Sahyadri, no evidence of tiger was captured on camera traps. However, in December last year a camera trap captured a tiger within the

reserve limits. 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.

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.

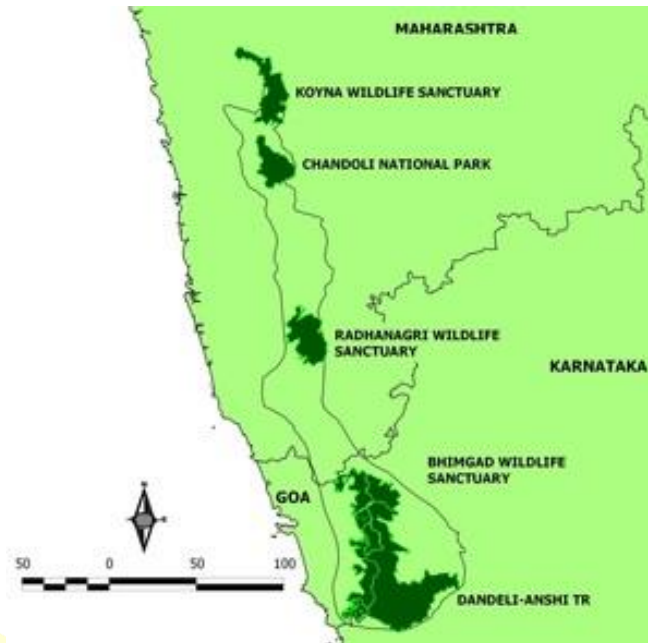
The translocation is part of the phase-II of the tiger recovery project. "There will be a soft release, which involves keeping the tiger in an enclosure, and it would be monitored closely before releasing it in the tiger reserve's habitat," said K Ramesh, senior scientist, Wildlife Institute of India, who is providing technical support to the state.

- Sahyadri Tiger Reserve** is one of only five tiger reserves in 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.

Why Is Maharashtra Planning To Translocate Tigers To STR

- STR, located in northern Western Ghats**, was established in **January 2010** and straddles Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli, and Ratnagiri districts in western Maharashtra. It comprises **Chandoli National Park and Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary**.

- The **tiger population** in the region has been historically low due to poaching, poor prey base, and changing habitat. Even after the STR was notified, the number of tigers did not increase as breeding tigers did not colonise the reserve.



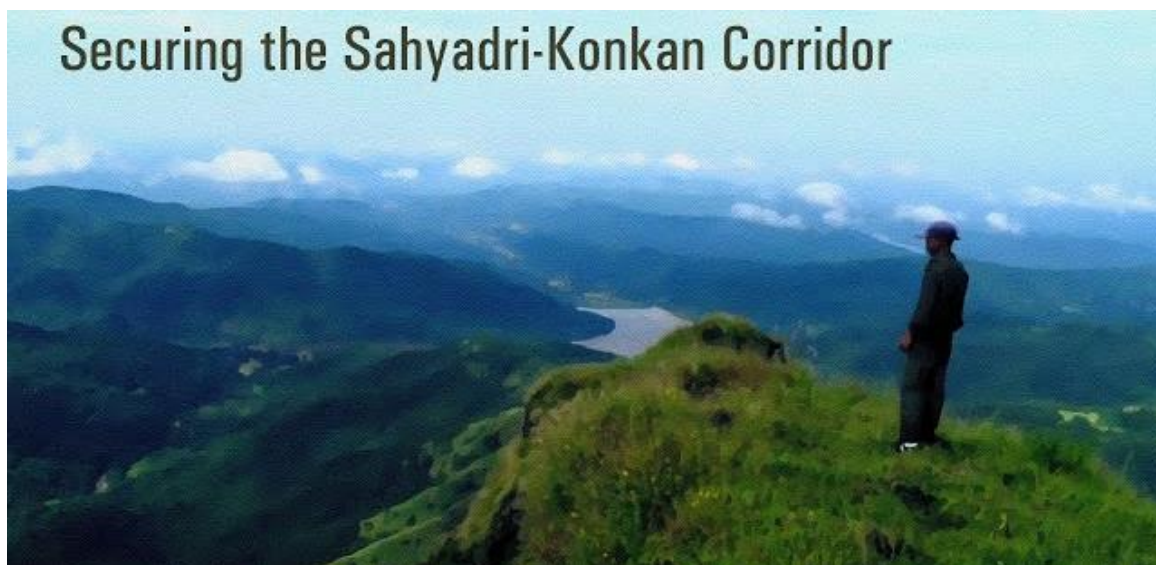
- **Photo evidence of tiger presence** within the boundaries of STR has been few and pugmark evidence has shown the presence of seven to eight tigers from time to time.
- One way the population can increase is through the inflow of tigers from the forests, **located towards the south of STR**, in Goa and Karnataka, especially with the strengthening of the wildlife corridor. However, the spike in tiger numbers can take years this year.



- **Tiger translocation projects** have been undertaken in India since 2008. Sariska Tiger Reserve, in 2008, and Panna Tiger Reserve, in 2009, have witnessed successful tiger reintroduction and translocation projects.
- There have also been failures and shelving of reintroduction plans, like in the case of **Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Odisha**, which was the country's first inter-state translocation project.

What Is Importance Of Sahyadri Konkan Corridor

- **Sahyadri-Konkan corridor** or the Sahyadri-Radhanagari-Goa-Karnataka corridor is crucial for the long-term survival of tiger populations in northern Western Ghats.
- This corridor connects the source population area in **Kali Tiger Reserve** in Karnataka to the forests in **Goa's hinterland**, which in turn provides tigers connectivity to **Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary**, conservation reserves in Sindhudurg district and STR.



- The high occurrence of **human-dominated settlements** and development activities fragments this corridor at several locations, posing a threat to tiger movement and raising the chances of man-animal conflict.
- With authorities planning the **translocation of tigers to Sahyadri**, strengthening this corridor is crucial. Without those efforts, even a breeding population of tigers would face difficulties in dispersing to other forests.
- Nirmal Kulkarni, director of the Mhadei Research Centre in Chorla Ghats, Karnataka, said that tigers from **Kali Tiger Reserve** disperse regularly towards Goa where the prey base is comparatively low.

- Goa's protected areas now have seven to eight tigers. However, the state's forest department has resisted demands to declare a tiger reserve.



About Sahyadri Tiger Reserve:

- It is located in **Sahyadri Ranges of the Western Ghats** in Maharashtra. It was notified by amalgamating the Chandoli National Park and Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It includes the area around the **Koyna Dam, the Warna River**, and many other small rivers and streams originating from the Western Ghats and flowing to the east.



- It is undulating with steep escarpments along western boundary.
- The most distinct feature of the Tiger Reserve is the presence of numerous barren rocky and **lateritic plateaus, locally called "Sadas"**, with less perennial vegetation and over hanging cliffs on the edges along with numerous fallen boulders with dense thorny bushes.

- **Sahyadri Tiger Reserve** is the only place where climax and near-climax vegetations are plentiful and prospects of adverse anthropogenic influence in the future are minimal.

