

No move to ban tourism in tiger reserves: Jairam Ramesh

'Activities in 39 reserves will be strictly regulated'

Agencies

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There is no proposal to ban tourism in tiger reserves in the country but it will be strictly regulated, the Environment Minister, Mr Jairam Ramesh, said on Wednesday.

He said the Ministry is working on detailed guidelines for promoting eco-tourism, in line with the carrying capacity of each reserve.

"My attention has been drawn to some news reports that the Ministry is planning a ban on tourism in tiger reserves. I would like to state categorically that there is no

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such proposal. But in 39 tiger reserves in the country, tourism will be strictly regulated," he said in a statement here.

Pointing out that tourism is essential, Mr Ramesh said: "The revenues from tourism must flow back directly into the management of each of the tiger reserves so that local communities can benefit. The advantages of tourism

should be felt by these local communities. The communities should be encouraged to develop a stake in the protection of these tiger reserves."

He expressed concern over the danger posed by mushrooming tourist lodges around tiger reserves, especially the Corbett National Park.

Four big cats have died in the past two months in Cor-

bett Tiger Reserve due to poaching and poisoning. Sixteen tigers have been killed so far since January this year while 66 died last year, Forest officials said.

"The advantages of tourism should be felt by the local communities who should be encouraged to develop a stake in the protection of tiger reserves. This policy of ploughing back is already in place in most reserves and it will be in place in all Project Tiger reserves very soon," Mr Ramesh said.

He also said States have been advised against unregulated tourism, which is as

much a threat to tiger population as poaching and poisoning is.

There are 39 tiger reserve and 663 protected areas across the country.

The Tourism Ministry also issued a statement that "there is no proposal to stop tourism activities in tiger reserves."

"Tourism Ministry lays emphasis on development and promotion of tourism on a sustainable and responsible basis, safeguarding the environmental interest as laid down in the National Tourism Policy 2002," the statement said.