

Four new tiger reserves soon

Press Trust of India

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NEW DELHI: As part of efforts to protect tigers, Government is setting up four new reserves in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa for the endangered animal.

In-principle approval has been accorded for the creation of the new reserves in Sahyadri in Maharashtra, Pilibhit in UP, Ratapani in MP and Sunabeda in Orissa, official sources said.

At present, there are 38 tiger reserves in the country, covering an area of over 50,000 sq km. The government pays Rs two crore annually to each tiger reserve and also meets the expenses incurred for relocating people from the core area.

The selection of the reserves is guided by the need to conserve unique eco-system or habitat types across the geo-



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graphical distribution of tigers in the country, sources said.

Tigers had almost become extinct in the reserves like Sariska and Panna mainly due to poaching, mining and operation by real estate mafia. Reintroduction of

tigers have been carried out in both these reserves as part of efforts to rebuild them.

The government has also implemented a tripartite MoU with tiger states for fund flow for effective implementation of

BIG CAT WORRIES

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tiger conservation initiatives.

As per 2008 estimates, the total country-level population of the big cat is 1411, including 601 in central India, 412 in Western Ghats, 297 in Shivalik Gangetic and 100 in northeast-

ern states.

The government has decided to bring in comprehensive amendments to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 for enhancement of punishment in cases of offences relating to a tiger reserve or its core area.

The amendment is intended at providing enabling provisions for constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau. The steps assume significance in view of the dwindling population of the tigers in the country. As per the data of the NTCA, eight tigers have died in the last two months in India, while 66 deaths were reported in 2009.

Tiger pelts were seized from two places — Dharmapuri town in Tamil Nadu and Venamani, Kalpetta in Kerala — in the last two months.