

State to set up Special Tiger Protection Force

Special Correspondent

ST/WS/cm-5
Under a scheme fully funded by the Centre

CHENNAI: The State government will establish a Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) for Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Minister for Forests N. Selvaraj announced in the Assembly on Thursday.

It would be formed under a scheme fully funded by the Centre and on the basis of regulations framed, using the recommendations of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), he said, replying to a debate on the demands for grants to his department.

A senior official of the State Environment and Forests Department said it was planned to rope in tribals who had knowledge about the Reserve.

Stipulations

According to the NTCA's document on security plan for tiger reserves, each tiger reserve must have one or more special strike forces deployed on the field.

The deployment should be at locations where the force would be able to reach a given area within a reasonable amount of time to take charge of any crisis.

In most situations, a strike force is best deployed along the periphery in the Code Red Zone. This will be in response to a threat percep-

tion. The Special Tiger Protection Force should be preferably used as a strike force and deployed as such. Strike teams should carry out regular mock drills to test their level of preparedness and their response time. Their visibility will also send out a strong psychological message to poachers, the document states.

Mr. Selvaraj also announced the government's plan to set up a rehabilitation centre at M.R. Palayam in Tiruchi district for elephants, which were orphaned or abandoned by temples and private persons or found in illegal possession of individuals.

Estimated to cost Rs.1.25 crore, it would come up on 19.7 acres.

Of the 737 anti-poaching watchers being employed by the Forest Department on temporary basis, the services

of 137 watchers with 10 years' experience would be regularised.

Flying squads

Minister for Environment T.P. M. Mohideen Khan said three flying squads, headed by Environmental Engineer (Monitoring), would be formed with the headquarters in Erode, Tirupur and Vellore districts, where dyeing and bleaching units and tanneries were located.

They would act against industrial units, which did not comply with environmental laws.

A vigilance and anti-corruption wing would be set up at the headquarters of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board.

Mr. Khan, who also handles Youth Welfare and Sports Development, said Rs. 3.5 crore would be required to form a world-class synthetic track in Tirunelveli, for which an additional Rs.2.16 crore had been sanctioned.

Last year, allocation of Rs.1.34 crore was made.