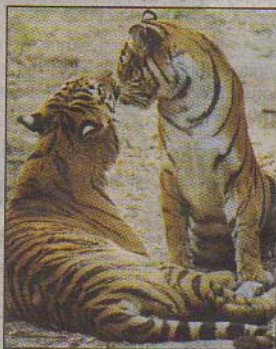


Coming soon, eco-friendly norms for hotels near parks

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New Delhi: Concerned over the blatant commercialization of areas around tiger reserves, the tourism ministry is considering stricter regulations for resorts and lodges. The guidelines will make it mandatory for lodges to follow ecology-friendly practices. Union tourism secretary Sujit Banerjee said, "Separate regulations for resorts and lodges that are coming up in eco-sensitive zones are under consideration. The hotels need to follow certain good ecological practices."

A study commissioned by the ministry on Corbett National Park found that 70% of resorts around the area were venues for weddings, rain dances and parties rather than visitors interested in wildlife. The survey found that



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there were 77 resorts in the area catering to over 3,000 visitors a day with an additional 17 resorts likely to come up.

The tiger reserve has a ceiling of 600 visitors a day and it is this rampant commercialisation and mismatch in numbers at Corbett that has set off alarm bells within the

'No ban on tourism in tiger reserves'

Countering claims from the tourism lobby, the environment ministry clarified that there was no proposal to ban tourism in tiger reserves but warned that tourism would be strictly regulated. Environment minister Jairam Ramesh said, "The ministry believes revenue from tourism must flow back into management of each of the tiger reserves." TNN

ministry that is now considering tighter norms for hotels and resorts in ecologically-fragile environments. The worrying factor is that these regulations have to be implemented. Bringing in norms with stiffer penalties may not help if states were not strict in enforcement.