

# Tourism zone to come up in Sonanadi sanctuary

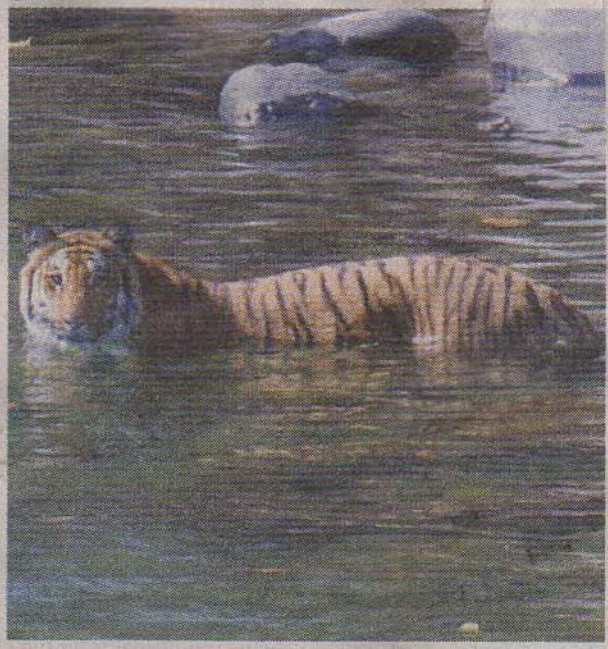
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Following concerns raised on the adverse effect of indiscriminate tourism in the areas adjoining Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR), the Forest Department has decided to develop tourism zone in Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary to lessen tourists' influx on other zones in the reserve area.

The Forest and Revenue Departments will work together to prevent the indiscriminate growth of tourist lodges in the area lying between the gate of the Jim Corbett National Park (JCNP) and Ramnagar. The decisions were arrived at during two meetings presided over by the State Chief Secretary.

Talking to *The Pioneer*, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) RBS Rawat said that the focus of the meetings was on reducing the negative impact of tourism activities on the environment and wildlife in the Corbett with special emphasis on facilitating tiger conservation in CTR. In order to reduce the pressure of tourism activities on the eastern part of the national park, the tourism zone in Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary (SWS) would be developed for tourists. The sanctuary, which adjoins the park and forms an important part of the Corbett, covers an area of 301 sqkm.

Referring to the negative impact of growth of tourist lodges and activities of tourists therein, Rawat said the Forest Department doesn't own the land where the resorts are located. However, it was proposed in the meeting that the area between the gates of the national park and Ramnagar be declared eco-



sensitive zone under the Environment Protection Act, after which the Revenue and Forest Departments would take joint action to prevent indiscriminate growth of tourist lodges and tourism activities in the area.

Earlier, a survey conducted in January this year on the direction of the Union Tourism Secretary found that tigers and other wildlife in the Corbett area are facing problems due to uncontrolled human activities in 77 tourist lodges adjoining the reserve. The survey revealed that though a maximum of 600 persons are allowed in a day to enter the CTR; the tourist lodges provide boarding and lodging facility to about 3,197 persons. About 70 per cent of guests arriving in the tourist lodges adjoining Corbett come here not for eco-tourism but for dance parties and other recreational activities which create light and noise pollu-

tion in addition to which the garbage dumped by their activities in the tourist lodges creates problem.

While an area used by tigers and other wildlife as a corridor is taken over by the settlements of people relocated from Tehri, the other corridor area is taken over by the tourist lodges, which affect the movements of tigers and other wildlife.

Moreover, the garbage generated in 31 per cent of the 71 tourists lodges which are built on agriculture land adjoining CTR, is dumped improperly while garbage generated in 26 per cent of the lodges is simply burnt without any scientific regulation. It remains to be seen whether the decisions taken during the meeting presided over by the State Chief Secretary are able to prevent indiscriminate tourism activities from damaging the environment in the national park.