

MP'S FORAY INTO CORE TIGER AREAS EARNS RAP

Chetan Chauhan

chetan@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The environment ministry has said tourism cannot be allowed in core areas of tiger reserves, just a week after the Madhya Pradesh government allowed the same.

The ministry also said the MP government was violating laws of the land and tourism can be allowed only in fringe or buffer zones.

If the ministry decides to implement the decision, flow of tourists to tiger reserves will take a hit.

The Madhya Pradesh forest department this week allowed tourist operators of around eight tiger reserves to take vehicles loaded with tourists inside the core areas for a limited time. The parks opened for tourists from October 16. MP is one of the first states in India to allow tourists inside the core areas, also described as safest homes of tigers.

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SP YADAV, NCTA

The order, challenged in the MP high court by activist Ajay Dubey, got a twist when the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NCTA) said the state government has violated the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which clearly stipulated that core/critical tiger areas have to be kept inviolate.

"Core or critical habitat areas of National Parks and Sanctuaries... are required to be kept as inviolate for the purpose of tiger conservation, without affecting the rights of the Scheduled Tribes or such forest dwellers, and notified as such by the state governments for the purpose," said SP Yadav, Deputy Director, NCTA, in a written reply to the court.

Madhya Pradesh's decision not only violated the Act, but it was also against the Centrally-sponsored scheme for tiger areas started in 2008.