

Now, a tiger reserve in Praful backyard

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EVEN as Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh and his colleague in the government, Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel, lock horns over environmental clearances to the Navi Mumbai airport and take pot-shots at each other publicly, Patel has found a reason to thank his counterpart. Jairam's ministry has

given the green signal to the proposal to declare Nagzira-Navegaon Wildlife Sanctuary, which falls in Patel's constituency, a tiger reserve.

"The efforts to declare Nagzira-Navegaon a tiger reserve were on for quite some time, however, the clearance from the Environment Ministry came only last week. This will provide a big boost to the area and conservation efforts," said Patel.

An MP from Gondia, Patel had been making efforts for declaration of the area as tiger reserve. "There are 10-15 tigers in the area," said Patel. In 2009, a state panel had approved it as a critical tiger habitat following strong demands by the locals and conservationists.

After receiving the tiger reserve status, the area will now be governed by Project Tiger that includes wildlife manage-

ment, protection measures and site specific eco-development to reduce the dependency of local communities on tiger reserve resources.

Nagzira Sanctuary is spread over 150 sq km and is connected to Navegaon National Park lying at a distance of 25-30 km through a forest corridor. The area of the tiger reserve will be increased to 300 sq km by adding nearby contiguous forest areas.