

Madhav National Park Declared India's 58th Tiger Reserve

On **March 9, 2024**, India's **Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav** announced that **Madhav National Park** in **Madhya Pradesh** has been officially designated as the country's **58th tiger reserve**. This makes it the **ninth tiger reserve** in Madhya Pradesh, the state with the highest number of tiger reserves in India. The declaration aims to strengthen conservation efforts and ensure the long-term survival of tigers in the region.

Why Was Madhav National Park Declared a Tiger Reserve?

India has been at the forefront of tiger conservation for decades, with the launch of **Project Tiger** in **1973** to curb the alarming decline of the tiger population due to **hunting, poaching, and deforestation**. Establishing a tiger reserve at Madhav National Park plays a crucial role in expanding **protected habitats** and maintaining a sustainable tiger population.

Location and Importance

Madhav National Park, covering **355 sq km**, is situated in **Shivpuri district, Madhya Pradesh**. Although it did not have a tiger population for several years, recent **tiger relocations in 2023** have led to an **increase in the population to seven tigers**. The park is strategically significant as it serves as a **connecting corridor** between the **Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan)** and **Kuno National Park (Madhya Pradesh)**, facilitating wildlife movement and genetic diversity.

Criteria for Declaring a Tiger Reserve

Before a national park can be designated as a **tiger reserve**, several factors are taken into consideration:

- **Presence of a viable prey base** (deer, wild boars, etc.)
- **Suitability of habitat** for tiger movement and breeding
- **Connectivity with other wildlife reserves** to ensure genetic exchange
- **Minimal human disturbance** in core areas

- **Approval from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** after state government proposals

Tiger Population in India (2023 Census)

According to the **2023 All India Tiger Estimation**, India's total tiger population stands at **3,682**. Notably:

- **Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of tigers (785)**
- **30% of tigers live outside protected reserves**, highlighting the need for more conservation areas

Funding and Conservation Efforts

Under **Project Tiger**, the **Central Government** provides **60% of the funding**, while the respective **State Government** contributes **40%**. For **Northeastern and Himalayan states**, the Central Government covers **90%** of the cost. These funds are utilized for:

- **Anti-poaching measures**
- **Habitat restoration**
- **Relocation of villages from core areas**
- **Community awareness programs**
- **Scientific monitoring of tiger populations**

Challenges and Future Prospects

1. Prey-Predator Balance

With **Kuno National Park hosting cheetahs**, conservationists are concerned about potential competition between **tigers, cheetahs, and other predators** for prey.

2. Corridor Conservation

Ensuring that **wildlife corridors remain intact** will be essential for maintaining **free movement** of tigers between reserves and preventing inbreeding.

3. Potential Lion Relocation

There have been discussions about relocating **Asiatic lions from Gujarat's Gir Forest to Kuno National Park**, which could introduce additional conservation complexities.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. Why was Madhav National Park declared a tiger reserve?

Madhav National Park was designated as a tiger reserve to enhance conservation efforts, provide a protected habitat for tigers, and establish a crucial wildlife corridor between Ranthambore and Kuno National Parks.

2. How many tigers are currently in Madhav National Park?

As of **2024**, Madhav National Park has **seven tigers**, following a successful relocation program.

3. How does the government fund tiger reserves?

Under **Project Tiger**, the **Central Government provides 60% of the funds**, while the **State Government covers 40%**. In special cases (Northeastern and Himalayan states), the **Central Government covers 90%**.

4. What is India's total tiger population as per the 2023 census?

India has **3,682 tigers**, with **Madhya Pradesh having the highest number (785 tigers)**.

5. What are the major challenges faced by tiger reserves?

Key challenges include **poaching, habitat fragmentation, human-wildlife conflict, prey depletion**, and **maintaining ecological balance** between tigers, cheetahs, and other predators.

Conclusion

The declaration of **Madhav National Park as India's 58th tiger reserve** marks a significant step in strengthening tiger conservation efforts. With its strategic location,

rich biodiversity, and government-backed initiatives, the park is set to play a vital role in ensuring the survival of tigers for future generations. As conservation challenges continue to evolve, proactive measures and sustainable policies will be key to safeguarding India's wildlife heritage.

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