4. Translocation of Tiger - Environment

To revive tigers in Sahyadri ranges, Centre clears translocation from Tadoba, Pench to northern Western Ghats. To revive the tiger population in Maharashtra's Sahyadri Tiger Reserve, the government has approved the translocation of 8 tigers from the high-density Tadoba and Pench reserves. This initiative aims to restore ecological balance in the northern Western Ghats and strengthen India's global leadership in tiger conservation.

The Translocation Initiative - An Overview

The Action - The Union Environment Ministry has given its final approval for the capture and translocation of 8 tigers to the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) in Maharashtra.

Source Population - The tigers will be moved from the high-density and genetically robust populations of Tadoba-Andhari and Pench Tiger Reserves, also in Maharashtra.

Core Objective - The primary goal is to revive the tiger population in the northern Western Ghats. STR has a rich forest habitat but currently lacks a resident, breeding tiger population, with only a few transient individuals recorded.

Scientific Backing - This initiative is backed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and studies from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), which have confirmed that STR's habitat is suitable and can sustain a population of over 20 tigers.

About Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR)

Establishment and Location - STR was established in 2010 and is a sprawling 1,165 sq km reserve located in the Western Ghats region of Maharashtra.

Formation and Geography - It was created by merging two significant protected areas - the Chandoli National Park and the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary.

Ecological Importance - The reserve is a crucial part of the Western Ghats, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's most important biodiversity hotspots.

Existing Challenges - Despite its potential, STR faces several challenges, including poaching, habitat fragmentation, a depleted prey base, and the critical absence of a resident breeding tiger population.

The Ecological and Conservation Significance

Restoring the Apex Predator - Reintroducing a stable tiger population will restore the ecological balance of the reserve. As an apex predator, the tiger plays a vital role in controlling herbivore populations, which in turn helps in the natural regeneration of the forest.

Strengthening Wildlife Corridors - A successful breeding population in STR will act as a crucial link, strengthening corridor connectivity between the northern Western Ghats and other tiger habitats in Goa and Karnataka. This promotes genetic flow and long-term survival of the species.

National Conservation Goals - This initiative is a key part of India's broader conservation strategy, aligning with the goals of Project Tiger and reinforcing India's status as a global leader in tiger conservation, as it is home to approximately 75% of the world's wild tigers.

The Scientific and Administrative Process

This is a carefully planned, two-phased scientific operation -

1. **Phase 1 (Preparation) -** The initial focus is on habitat improvement and strengthening the prey base within STR to ensure the translocated tigers have an adequate and sustainable food source.
2. **Phase 2 (Translocation) -** This phase involves the meticulously managed capture and release of the 8 tigers.

Strict Ministry Conditions - The Environment Ministry has mandated several strict conditions for the process -

1. Continuous veterinary care at all stages of capture, transport, and release.
2. The use of methods that minimize trauma and stress to the animals.
3. Intensive post-release monitoring using modern technology like camera traps and GPS radio collars to track the tigers' health and movement.

Key Challenges and Risks Involved

Animal Welfare - There is an inherent risk of stress, injury, and even mortality for the tigers during the highly complex capture and translocation process.

Human-Wildlife Conflict - The introduction of an apex predator into a new area could lead to potential conflicts with human settlements in the fringe villages surrounding the reserve.

Long-Term Sustainability - The ultimate success of the project hinges on long-term, intensive scientific monitoring and, crucially, the active participation and support of local communities to prevent poaching and ensure peaceful coexistence.

India's Tiger Conservation Legacy

The Bengal Tiger - The Indian tiger, with the scientific name *Panthera tigris tigris*, is the most numerous tiger subspecies.

Global Leader - India is home to the world's largest wild tiger population, which was estimated to be 3,167 according to the 2022 All India Tiger Estimation report.

Key Conservation Milestones -

1. **Project Tiger (1973) -** A landmark, centrally sponsored conservation program that established a network of protected tiger reserves across the country.
2. **Wildlife Protection Act (1972) -** The primary legal framework that provides robust protection to tigers and other wildlife from poaching and illegal trade.
3. **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) -** The apex statutory body, established in 2005, that is responsible for the governance, policy-making, and monitoring of all 50+ tiger reserves in India.

Source - https - //indianexpress.com/article/india/reviving-population-in-northern-western-ghats-centre-clears-translocation-of-tigers-from-tadoba-and-pench-to-sahyadri-reserve-10246810/# - ~ - text=The%20Union%20Environment%20Ministry%20has,in%20the%20northern%20Western%20Ghats.