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Maharashtra first to have its own wildlife action plan

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NAGPUR: In a significant move, Maharashtra on Tuesday passed its own wildlife action plan for 10 years, the first state in the country to do so, and cleared the expansion of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) by 79 sq km, equivalent to more than 19,500 football fields.

After the expansion, which will be done by relocating Karwa village outside the Kolsa range of Tadoba, TATR's core area will become 704 sq km, more than Pench (430 sq km) and Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (650 sq km). Tadoba will be elevated to 25th position from 31 among the 52 tiger reserves in the country.

The state wildlife action plan (SWAP) focuses on wildlife management activities with a long-term perspective. The state board for wildlife meeting discussed plans for a rapid strike force among forest guards and a regulator for the SWAP.

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240 families agree to shift to give Tadoba's tigers space

Besides the expansion of Tadoba, the state board for wildlife (SBWL) on Tuesday approved two reports of the expert committees on human-leopard and human-tiger conflict, which will help in conservation and translocation of tigers from Chandrapur district. It was attended, among others, by CM Uddhav Thackeray and environment minister Aaditya Thackeray.



Sources said the most debated topic was whether wildlife clearance should be granted to MP Birla's cement plant in Zari-Zamni taluka in Pandharkawda division in Yavatmal. The plant has got forest clearance for 467.5 hectares.

“However, as the forest area falls in the tiger corridors of Tadoba, Kanhargaon and Tipeswar sanctuaries, a section of

members opposed it. The project proponents said they have invested crores to set up the plant and the corridor issue came up at a later stage. An expert committee will pay a visit to the area before taking a final decision,” said a source.

The extension of Tadoba by shifting Karwa village, which is in the buffer zone, will be the first case in the country where a village will be relocated with people’s voluntary consent. Till now such relocation has been affected only in core areas of tiger reserves.

There are around 240 families in the village, facing difficulties as there is no human habitation up to 15 km. The relocation of Karwa will need around Rs 70-75 crore. It will be a win-win for both tigers and humans.

There are over 85 tigers in Tadoba’s core and its adjoining landscape and owing to lack of space, man-animal conflict is at its peak. Over 56 persons have died in the state in the last eight months. Of them, 50 alone have died in Chandrapur (35) and neighboring Gadchiroli (15) district.