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F. No. PS-DIR-P7/2003
National Tiger Conservation Authority
(Statutory Body under the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India)

21/12/07
17/12/07
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Dated: 14th December, 2007

607- To
The Chief Wildlife Warden
(All Tiger Reserve States)

Sub: Regulation of tourist visitation in tiger reserves

Ref: 1. This Ministry's letter of even number dated 9.04.2003
2. Technical document - NTCA/01/07

Reference is invited to the correspondence/guidelines cited above.

There have been several instances of man killing by tigers in Tiger Reserves, apart from reports of tigers frequenting and resorting to cattle depredation near villages close to the core tiger habitats. These are issues of very serious concern, which are pointers of behavioral habituation of such animals in their natal areas to human presence, owing to proximity of humans, more or less in a recurring manner, on account of increased tourist influx in the area. It has been well documented that such changed behaviour patterns foster aberrant behaviour in territorial big cats like tiger, leading to increased man-wild animal conflicts, on account of loss of "critical distance" in such animals. The "critical distance" is a minimum distance which is required to be maintained from a wild animal, for avoiding behavioral responses in them (viz. aggressive attack by a wild carnivore or fleeing or attack by a wild herbivore).

In this context, the following suggestions are made for compliance:

- i. The tourist visitation may be strictly regulated in accordance with the carrying capacity computed for the area as per the guidelines under reference.
- ii. In accordance with Section 33 (a) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, no tourism infrastructure may be permitted inside the core/critical tiger habitat, and the existing infrastructure may be phased out in the buffer areas for safeguarding the natal areas of tiger.
- iii. A minimum mandatory distance of 30 meters, as per the guidelines under reference, should be maintained by tourist vehicles/elephants while spotting a tiger or any other wild animal.

No entry points may be created in the core/critical tiger habitat.
No safeteries or entry may be created in the core/critical tiger habitat.
Tigers which have been radio collared for research should not be tracked for tourists.

Dead tigresses or injured tigers should not be tracked for tourists.

iii. The tourism infrastructure in the non-forest private holdings outside the critical tiger habitat may be regulated under Section 38V (2) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, apart from according protection under Sections 3 and 5 of the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, keeping in mind the corridor value of such areas.

It should be appreciated that our tiger reserves are smaller in size, and are natural areas / repositories of endangered gene pool, harbouring the remaining tiger populations of tiger, co-predators and prey animals. Under no circumstances can they become competing destinations for large size safari parks of other countries for tourism, at the cost of the critical tiger habitat, as explained / mentioned under Section 38V of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The relocation of villages from such areas at a great cost, to provide the desired inviolability for tigers. It is requested, necessary directives on the above line may be issued to field officers for needful action from their end.

Yours sincerely,

Rajesh Gopal
(Dr. Rajesh Gopal)
Member Secretary

National Tiger Conservation Authority

Copy to

PP: Secretary (F&F), Ministry of Environment and Forests, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi.
PP: Secretary (F&F), Ministry of Environment and Forests, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi.
PP: Secretary (Forests) (All Tiger Reserve States).
PP: Chief Conservator of Forests (All Tiger Reserve States).
PP: Directors.

Rajesh Gopal
(Dr. Rajesh Gopal)
Member Secretary

TTF (Report)

Recommendations

1. The regulation and management of tourism in tiger reserves must remain in the charge of the forest department. The Ranthambore experience clearly shows that tourist interests, if allowed to take precedence over conservation, can be extremely detrimental to the park. If the park management does not have the capacities to manage tourism, efforts must be made to involve local communities and staff welfare associations in the running of affairs. These interested communities will bring benefits to the conservation efforts in the park for their interests are enjoined with its protection. Under no circumstances should there be any move to 'privatise' the park management for tourism activities.
2. The zone adjacent to the park ~~on its fringe~~ and high impact zone ~~on its fringe~~ must be reserved for homestead-based tourism run at a small scale by local communities. This zone should ideally extend up to three km from the outer periphery of a reserve's boundary. In case it is not possible to extend this zone up to three km, the reserve management must decide how far the zone should extend, after due consultation with the Project Tiger directorate.
3. All other resorts and hotels can only be allowed beyond this zone reserved for homestead tourism. This reservation will promote alternative tourism and provide for opportunities for local communities to directly benefit from this economic activity.
4. The Union ministry of environment and forests must finalise an eco-tourism policy for tiger reserves that incorporates this land-use reservation into the Environment Protection Act, 1984.
5. Reserve managements must increase gate ticket prices by imposing an ecological cess, which must be ploughed back to each reserve. Ideally all gate money should go back to the reserve. But given the requirements of state governments, this may not be possible. In this case, the extra revenue collected as ecological cess should be given to the reserve, explicitly to be shared with local communities who continue to live within its boundaries and for staff benefits.
6. Hotels within a radius of 5 kilometres from the boundary of a reserve must contribute 50 per cent of their turnover to the reserve. This has to be a compulsory cess on the hotel industry, for this industry is drawing advantages out of investment made from public funds for the protection of reserves. The hotels can be allowed to claim 100 per cent income tax benefit for the same, as an incentive.
7. The tourism plan for each reserve must be developed and approved by the Project Tiger directorate. The plan must designate the tourism zones, clearly demarcate the zoning plan and be based on carrying capacity studies. The plans must be available in the public domain along with all tourism regulating rules.
8. The reserve must ensure that all possible avenues of engaging local communities are exhausted before it resorts to using off or resources as guides and for other employment and work opportunities.
9. The pilgrim sites inside the park must be designated as sacred groves with strict controls and regulations. All transit camps and places of stay for such pilgrimages inside the park must be minimised and severely restricted. The benefits of the pilgrimage activity must accrue to local communities. The temple boards must be persuaded to allow this to happen.