

Panna hangs on to tiger's tail with three cub births

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Forest officials found a tigress with three cubs in Panna on Friday.

THE big cats, once extinct, have made a comeback of sorts with three newborns in the Panna Tiger Reserve.

In a major boost to the tiger population in the country, a translocated tigress has for the first time given birth to three cubs in Madhya Pradesh's Panna forest.

A team of seven forest officials on Friday spotted the miracle and wildly hugged each other.

"I quietly sat above a cave after sensing a tiger in the area. The distance between us was about 50m. I then noticed a tigress appearing from the cave and started rolling my camera, and concentrated completely on the tigress's movements.

"The tigress, after staying there for a while, went inside the rock cave and returned with something in her mouth. But it is difficult for me to guess how many little ones she was carrying," Vikram Singh Parihar,

By **Anup Dutta**
in Bhopal

deputy director of the Panna Tiger Reserve, said.

The team later returned to the forest base and reported the matter to the park director.

"The cubs were believed to be 20 days old and were spotted by the forest officials when the tigress was taking them out of her den. The tigress and its three cubs are doing fine. The cubs have opened their eyes. This development usually takes place after 10 days of birth," park director R. Sreenivasa Murthy said.

It is for the first time that a translocated tigress has given birth in the country. Two tigresses and a tiger were translocated to Sariska in Rajasthan in 2008 after it lost its tiger population, but the animals have been unable to breed till now. There were reports

that the tigers brought from Ranthambore could be siblings.

The Panna reserve, which had more than 30 big cats four years ago, lost all its tigers by last year following which two tigresses — one from Bandhavgarh and another from Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh — were translocated in March last year. A tiger from Pench reserve was also translocated in November.

Security has been beefed up in the forest area and the entry of tourists has been banned for the safety of the tigers. "We will not allow tourist entry into the region to ensure the safety of the tigress and its cubs," Murthy said.

Now, there may be more good news from Panna soon. The forest officials said the second translocated tigress could also be expecting.

With inputs from PTI