

# State gets Rs 100 crore for human-free tiger reserves

On his visit to the city, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh allocated funds to rehabilitate people living inside the restricted Melghat and Tadoba Tiger Reserves

PIC: SACHIN HARALKAR



Ashok Chavan (I) with Jairam Ramesh

**RAVIKIRAN DESHMUKH**

In an attempt to stop the number of tigers from dwindling in the state forest reserves, the Centre has sanctioned Rs 100 crore to rehabilitate people living within these restricted areas. Union

Minister of State for Forests and Environment Jairam Ramesh announced the grant on his visit to the State on Saturday.

B P Pandey, additional chief secretary (Forests) confirmed the Centre's decision. "On a priority, these funds will be used to reha-

bilitate people living within Melghat Tiger Reserve in Amravati district and Tadoba Tiger Reserve in Chandrapur district. Though we were expecting more funds, the sanctioned sum would suffice to start the first phase, wherein a thousand people can be given

dwelling with facilities for livelihood," he told *Mumbai Mirror*.

While the latest tiger census figures are yet to be made public, the 2001-2002 statistics had put the tiger count at 73 in Melghat and 38 in Tadoba, State Forest Department officials said.