

## TN Govt plans protection force for sanctuary

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**T**he Tamil Nadu Government is mulling to set up a Special Tiger Protection Force for Mudumalai sanctuary in the State, where the wild cat's population has risen from 62 to 76.

Forest Minister N Selvaraj told the State Assembly that the STPF was proposed to be set up under guidelines laid down by the National Tiger Protection Authority of the Government of India.

It will be formed with 100 per cent central assistance, Selvaraj, replying to the debate for grants for his department, said.

Quoting recent surveys, the Minister said the tiger population in Tamil Nadu has risen 25 per cent, from 62 to 76 in number.

The State Government also proposed to build an Elephant Rehabilitation Centre near Tiruchirappalli to take care of elephants "orphaned" by their owners or those rescued from illegal ownership.

The Government proposed to construct the centre at a cost of Rs 1.25 crore on more than 19 acres, according to Selvaraj.