

Kaziranga has revived hopes on tiger conservation'

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KAZIRANGA: Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh on Monday said Kaziranga has brought fresh hopes on tiger conservation in the country with the National Park registering a density of about 30 tigers over 100 sq. km. of the park, which he described to be the highest in the country.

After a field visit, the Minister told journalists inside the world heritage site, that such a high density indicate that Kaziranga with a total area of more than 1000 sq. km. should have more than 100 tigers.

Regional offices

Mr. Ramesh said the figures of the tiger census would be out in November. Assam Forest and Environment Minister Rockybul Hussain accompanied Mr. Ramesh.

The Union Minister announced that four regional offices of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) would be opened in Bangalore, Nagpur, Kolkata and Guwahati to extend the activities of NTCA to field areas and to ensure that it did not remain Delhi-centric. The NTCA headquarters in Delhi would also look after northern India.

Of the 39 project tiger areas, the situation in nine were good, 12 satisfactory while the scenario in 18 was precarious, he said.

Mr. Ramesh said about 50 to 60 per cent of the wild tiger population of the world was found in India and this had become possible because of huge and sustained efforts under Project Tiger.

Mr. Ramesh and Mr. Hussain were given a demonstration on how the camera-trapping method was

used for tiger census by wildlife biologist Firoz Ahmed of Aranyak, a society for biodiversity conservation, engaged in tiger census.

Fresh pug marks

The Ministers and top forest officials witnessed fresh pug marks of tigers inside the national park.

He said that if the State government wanted financial assistance to Kaziranga to double, the Centre would meet the demand as the barrier of treating it as a non-project tiger area had been breached.

Night vision devices

Mr. Ramesh said the Centre would provide the field staff of Kaziranga with night vision devices.

The money collected at the tiger reserves would be recirculated for the benefit of local communities.