

On death of tiger in Bor reserve: Avoiding roadkill

The [tragic death of Bajirao](#), one of India's breeding tigers from the Bor reserve in Maharashtra, on a highway is a reminder that building unsuitable roads through wildlife habitats has a terrible cost. Losing a charismatic tiger in its prime to a hit-and-run accident is an irony, given that it is one of the most protected species. Successive Prime Ministers have personally monitored its status. Yet, the fate of the big cat, and that of so many other animals such as leopards, bears, deer, snakes, amphibians, butterflies and birds that end up as roadkill, highlights the contradictions in development policy. It is inevitable that new roads are built, but good scientific advice to keep them out of wildlife corridors is mostly ignored. The sensible response to the growing number of roadkills should be to stop road construction in wildlife habitat and reassess the impact. After all, protected areas are just 4% of the land. India is committed to such an approach under Article 14 of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Centre and the National Highways Authority of India have been repeatedly advised by the National Board for Wildlife, as well as independent researchers, to realign or modify sensitive roads. They should heed their sound advice.

An assessment by the Wildlife Institute of India states that tigers in at least 26 reserves face the destructive impact of roads and traffic. The National Tiger Conservation Authority should insist on modification of existing roads to provide crossings for animals at locations identified in various studies. A more robust approach would be to realign the roads away from all such landscapes. Users can be asked to pay a small price for the protection of vital environmental features, and more areas for nature tourism can also raise revenues. This would ensure that tigers and other animals are not isolated, and can disperse strong genetic traits to other populations. In one well-studied case of two populations of breeding tigers in the Kanha-Pench corridor, which also forms part of the sensitive central Indian belt, scientists commissioned by the Environment Ministry found that a national highway could block flow of genes between regions. The remedy suggested for NH7 was a combination of realignment and creation of long underpasses for animal movement. That is the sustainable way forward, and the Centre should order the modifications without delay wherever they are needed. It would be consistent with the Wildlife Action Plan 2002-2016 announced by Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Prime Minister. Also, curbs should be imposed on traffic on existing roads passing through sanctuaries. This can be done using speed restraints and by allowing only escorted convoys, with a ban on private vehicular movement at night. Restrictions should be applicable to religious tourism as well. Without a determined effort, roadkill will severely diminish India's conservation achievements.

Receive the best of The Hindu delivered to your inbox everyday!

Please enter a valid email address.

Rajinikanth is seeking votes as a repository of people's trust, as MGR and Jayalalithaa did

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com