

# IN 2019, 95 TIGER DEATHS IN INDIA, 22 INCIDENTS OF POACHING, SAYS MOEFCC

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

Wild Indian Tiger mother with her young cubs, walking on a hilly forest path in Ranthambore National Park in Rajasthan. | Photo Credit: [Special arrangement](#)

For the first time in the past three years, the number of tiger deaths in a year in the country has been less than 100. According to data from the Ministry of Forest Environment and Climate Change (MoEFCC), there were 84 cases of tiger deaths in the country and 11 cases of seizures (in which a tiger is presumed dead on the basis of body parts seized by authorities). Both put together, the number of tiger deaths in 2019 is 95.

In 2018, the number of tiger deaths recorded was 100 (93 mortalities and seven seizures). The number of tiger deaths in 2017 was 115 (98 mortalities and 17 seizures), and the number of tiger deaths in 2016 was 122 (101 mortalities and 21 seizures).

Speaking to *The Hindu* on the issue of tiger mortality, Anup Nayak, Member Secretary of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), said that these figures should be seen in the context that tiger numbers in the country were growing.

The last tiger census report, released in July 2019, had placed the number of tigers in India at 2,967, up by a third when compared with the numbers reported in 2014.

“This is encouraging to us. The reduced numbers of tiger mortalities are because of surveillance, good management of Tiger Reserves and a lot of awareness and education programmes on tiger conservation,” Mr. Nayak said. The Member Secretary added that using technology to maintain surveillance on tigers has also come as an added advantage. “We have ensured that the M-STriPES (Monitoring System for Tigers-Intensive Protection & Ecological Status) patrolling app is deployed and used in every Tiger Reserve,” he said.

An analysis of the tiger mortality figures shows that 57 of the 95 deaths occurred inside Tiger Reserves, while 38 cases of tiger deaths were recorded outside Tiger Reserves.

Madhya Pradesh, which has the highest number of tigers in the country (526, as per the last census), has recorded the most number of cases of tiger deaths, with 31 tiger deaths reported from the central Indian State in 2019. This was followed by Maharashtra, which reported 18 deaths. Karnataka, another State with high tiger population, recorded 12 deaths, and Uttarakhand recorded ten deaths. Tamil Nadu recorded seven cases of tiger deaths.

Deaths were also recorded from non-tiger bearing States like Gujarat, where a tiger had strayed into the State and died.

The data on tiger mortality also confirms 22 cases of poaching in the country and one case of tiger poisoning in 2019. An analysis shows that in 16 out of 22 poaching incidents, which is almost over 70% of cases of poaching, have been reported outside Tiger Reserves.

Eight cases of poaching have been reported from Madhya Pradesh, six from Maharashtra, and two each from Assam and Karnataka. Mr. Nayak said that the NTCA is counting deaths due to electrocution among the incidents of poaching. According to experts, tigers are most vulnerable

when they are outside Reserves as they are not under surveillance. In all, 17 cases of natural deaths of tigers have been recorded, while the reason for 56 other deaths could not be ascertained.

Mr. Nayak said that with the increase in tiger numbers, more areas in the country need to be declared Tiger Reserves. "We have 50 Tiger Reserves with an area of about 73,000 sq. km. With tigers coming out of Reserves and covering long distances, we need more Tiger Reserves," he said. According to the NTCA Member Secretary, at least three new Tiger Reserves will be added in 2020. He said that the areas under consideration are in both south Indian and central Indian landscapes.

Touching on the issue of the first inter-State translocation of tigers to the Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Odisha, which did not go as planned, Mr. Nayak said that the effort was not a failure but a "learning experience".

A pair of tigers were brought to the Satkosia Tiger Reserve from Madhya Pradesh in 2018. While the male tiger was killed, the female tiger had to be shifted to an enclosure following death of two persons. At present, the Odisha government is in the process of shifting the female tigress back to Madhya Pradesh.

"The inter-State translocation was taken up on the basis of a well-planned protocol. If we don't follow [the protocol], the results will not be as expected," Mr. Nayak said. The NTCA Member Secretary said that inter-State translocation of tigers has not been stalled. He said that there are plans to translocate tigers to the western part of Rajaji National Park and also to the Buxa Tiger Reserve from similar tiger landscapes in Assam.

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