

ODISHA TO ESTABLISH A MELANISTIC TIGER SAFARI – A FIRST OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD

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Melanistic tigers in wild have been captured by cameras installed in Odisha forests. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

The Odisha Government on January 24 announced to establish a melanistic tiger safari — a first of its kind in the world.

The safari will be established near Baripada, district headquarter town of Mayurbhanj. An area of 200 hectares adjoining National Highway-18 has been identified for the purpose. About 100 ha will be the display area and the balance area shall be utilised for creation of veterinary care facilities, including rescue centre, staff infrastructure and visitor amenities.

“Glad to announce that Odisha is setting up an exclusive melanistic tiger safari near Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj. Tourists and visitors can now have a glimpse of the rare and majestic species found only in Odisha,” Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced on social platform site ‘X’.

Melanistic tigers in wild have been captured by cameras installed in Odisha forests. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

According to Susanta Nanda, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), the site is about 15 km from the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) matching the same landscape.

The STR is the only home for melanistic tigers in wild in the world. As per the last All India Tiger Estimation Report published by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in 2018, melanistic tigers have been found in wild only in the Similipal Tiger Reserve.

“Surplus tigers from the Nandankanan Zoo and rescued or orphaned tigers which are not fit for wild but fit for display will be housed in the safari in an open enclosure,” said Mr. Nanda.

The State Forest and Environment Department said the safari was set to elevate the wildlife tourism sector in Odisha to new heights.

“This pioneering attraction will highlight the State’s commitment to preservation and showcasing its unique biodiversity. This initiative will allow conservationists, researchers and enthusiasts and

the general public to witness the rare beauty of these majestic creatures up close, while raising awareness about their conservation needs,” it said.

Moreover, the site being located adjoining the National Highway and near to Baripada town is expected to receive impressive footfall of visitors. Further, it would be an added attraction for visitors coming to the Similipal Tiger Reserve.

“The proposal in this respect submitted by the State Government to the NTCA has been accorded in-principle approval by the Technical Committee of the NTCA. A committee to be constituted by the NTCA will visit the site for feasibility study before giving final nod by the authority. Other statutory clearance including CZA approval, will follow,” said Mr. Nanda.

As per the ‘All India Tiger Estimation’ report, there are around 20 tigers in the State in 2022. However, cameras installed for tiger estimation have recently captured good number of tigers in Odisha forests.

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