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Title : Need to release funds for rehabilitation of villagers living in Tadoba and Pench National Parks in Maharashtra, constitute a Special Tiger Protection Force and declare Nagpur as World Tiger Capital.

SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR (NAGPUR): I raise a very important matter concerning the Tiger Conservation in Central India. There are 7 premier Tiger Sanctuaries around Nagpur, harbouring over nearly 300 Wild Tigers. This includes Tadoba, Bor, Nagzira-Navegaon, Pench, Melaghat, Tipeswar and their respective buffer zones. Owing to easy connectivity from Nagpur, these sanctuaries are accessible from Nagpur airport at a distance of only 70 to 150 kms. Realizing the importance of conservation of forests and saving Tigers in the Vidarbha region, it is a matter of great satisfaction that the Government of Maharashtra has declared Nagpur as the Tiger Capital of India.

To achieve this objective of creating a safe Tiger habitat for posterity, the foremost requirement would be the rehabilitation of the people of remaining villages located inside the boundaries of Tadoba, Pench, Tipeswar, Navegaon, Melaghat, A sum of Rs. 100 crores is required to be released by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Government of India to rehabilitate the people of villages in Tadoba, Melaghat and Pench reserves.

Poaching of Wild Tigers has resulted in the rapid decrease in their population. During the last over 10 years, 337 Tigers lost their lives in and outside various reserves in the country. In Maharashtra alone, 37 Tigers lost their lives besides extinction of hundreds of leopards. In the sanctuaries surrounding Nagpur 7 Tigers died during the last two months. While the Government have announced various steps to protect the precious life of the rare wild animals but there is a wide difference between the walk and talk of the Government. Day by day poaching of wild tigers has been assuming an alarming situation. While the Hon'ble Prime Minister has all along been stressing the need to make all out efforts to protect the tigers but the continued killing of tigers is posing great threat to the survival of tigers. Therefore, there is the urgent need to have a Special Force to check this menace by establishing two battalions of Special Tiger Protection Force in Tadoba and Pench, employing 200 local youths to be part of the special force.

Nagpur has immense potential to emerge as a gateway for eco tourism for Tiger at the International level and has rightly sought to be made as the World Tiger Capital. The aim of promoting Nagpur as World Tiger Capital project is to "Make safe home for Wild Tigers in Central Indian landscape for future generations, facilitate access to tourists using Nagpur's strategic location advantage to enable local Adivasis and local operators to benefit from tourism based livelihoods and opportunity". About 8 million foreign tourists annually visit India and if the tourist infrastructure is aggressively marketed and created with all the attractive opportunities for productive investments in the Nagpur-Vidarbha region and in that case assuming that 1/10th of the foreign tourists (wildlife lovers) visit annually Nagpur-Vidarbha the earning from these wildlife lovers will go a long way in the economic development of the region.

I would urge upon the Government to have Rs.100 crores released by NTCA for the rehabilitation of the people in villages in Tadoba, Melaghat and Pench reserves, sanction of funds also by NTCA for creation of two battalions of Special Tiger Protection Force in Tadoba and Pench and declaration of Nagpur as the World Tiger Capital.