



# Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve and Vaigai River: Tamil Nadu

## Why in News

The recently declared **Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve** in **Tamil Nadu** will provide protection to **Megamalai**, the **Vaigai's primary catchment**, in turn helping water levels to rise in the river.



## Key Points

- **About Vaigai River:**
  - **Origin and Tributaries:**

- It **originates in the [Western Ghats](#)** (Varushanad Hills).
- It travels through the **Pandya Nadu region** of Tamil Nadu.
- Its **main tributaries** are Suruliyaru, Mullaiyaru, Varaganadhi, Manjalaru, Kottagudi, Kridhumaal and Upparu.
- The Vaigai is **258 kms long** and finally **empties into the Palk Strait** near the **Pamban Bridge in Ramanathapuram district.**
- **Heritage River:**
  - The Vaigai was the river that **flowed through the noted city of Madurai**, the **capital (4<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century CE) of the ancient and prosperous Pandya kingdom** located in southern Tamil Nadu.
  - The river finds a mention in [Sangam literature](#) dated to **300 before the Common Era.**
- **Significance:**
  - The river fulfils the **drinking water requirement of five districts of Tamil Nadu** namely Theni, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai and Dindigul.
  - It also provides **irrigation to 2,00,000 hectares** of agricultural land.
- **Rejuvenation of Vaigai:**
  - Its **deterioration happened at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century** when the British started **deforesting the Megamalai region** which acts as a major catchment for Vaigai. Consequently, the **water flow in the river reduced gradually.**
    - Some **2,00,000 people died** in this region during the **Great Famine of 1876-77.**
  - Following the famine, the British Crown **proposed diverting water from the Periyar river (Kerala)** and feeding it to the Vaigai through a tunnel.
    - The Vaigai presently **gets about 80% of its water from the Periyar dam.** The **balance 20%** is obtained from the **major watershed of the Megamalai region** during the northeast monsoon season.
  - The **Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve** will **protect wild animals and the natural forests, their habitats** which **act as watersheds.**
- **Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve:**
  - **Establishment:**
    - It was established **in February 2021.** It was jointly declared by the Centre and Tamil Nadu governments.
    - For this, the **Megamalai WLS** and the adjoining **Srivilliputhur WLS** were clubbed together.
    - Srivilliputhur-Megamalai Tiger Reserve is the **fifth Tiger Reserve of Tamil Nadu**, and **51<sup>th</sup> tiger reserve of India.**
  - **Ecological Diversity:**
    - Animals seen here are [Bengal tiger](#), [elephants](#), [gaur](#), Indian giant squirrel, [leopard](#), [Nilgiri Tahrs](#), etc.
    - It has a mix of tropical evergreen forests and semi-evergreen forests, dry deciduous forests and moist mixed deciduous forests, grassland.
- **Other four Tiger reserves of Tamil Nadu:**
  - [Anamalai tiger reserve](#)
  - [Kalakkad - Mundanthurai tiger reserve](#)
  - [Mudumalai tiger reserve](#)
  - [Sathyamangalam tiger reserve](#)

**Source: DTE**

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