



Concerns Over Ken-Betwa Project in Panna Tiger Reserve

Why in News?

Wildlife experts and forest officials have raised concerns that construction under the [Ken-Betwa river linking project](#) is severely impacting wildlife in **Madhya Pradesh's Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR)**.

Key Points

▪ About Panna Tiger Reserve:

- Panna is the **22nd Tiger Reserve in India** and the **5th in Madhya Pradesh**.
- It lies in the [Vindhyan Ranges](#), covering parts of Panna and Chhatarpur districts in northern Madhya Pradesh.
- Panna National Park was **established in 1981**. It was **declared a Tiger Reserve in 1994**.
 - The National Park consists of areas from the former **Gangau Wildlife Sanctuary** created in 1975.
- The forests in the reserve were once **hunting grounds for the royal families** of the former princely states of Panna, Chhatarpur, and Bijawar.
- **Flora:**
 - Dominated by **dry deciduous forests** interspersed with grasslands.
 - In the north, the reserve is surrounded by [teak forests](#).
 - To the east, it is bordered by **Teak-Kardhai mixed forests**.
- **Fauna:**
 - The reserve is home to a significant population of [tigers](#), sloth bears, [leopards](#), and [striped hyenas](#).
 - Other notable carnivores include **jackals, wolves, wild dogs, jungle cats, and the rusty spotted cat**.
 - The [Vindhya Hill ranges](#), running from NE to SW, help connect the eastern and western populations of wildlife.

▪ Ken-Betwa River Linking Project Overview and Purpose:

- The Prime Minister launched the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project in December 2024, aiming to channel excess water from the Ken River to Betwa.
- The project **seeks to provide drinking water to about 6.5 million people in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh**.
- **Construction and Forest Impact:**
 - In March 2025, authorities began constructing a road to the **Daudhan dam** site in the core Chandra Nagar range of **PTR**.
 - Trees on 15 hectares of forest land were cut, triggering wildlife migration from the affected area.
- **Wildlife Disturbance and Migration:**
 - Herbivores are moving northwards, disrupting traditional territorial zones.
 - Monkeys and birds are fleeing the area due to the growing human presence and machinery at the project site.
 - The [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#) raised concerns about forest degradation and prey scarcity in PTR.
 - An April 2025 [Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#) report showed prey density had

fallen to 6 animals/sq km — well below the ideal 30–60.

◦ **Government Measures:**

- The displaced wildlife will be relocated to newly notified areas:
 - [Ranipur Tiger Reserve \(UP\)](#)
 - [Rani Durgavati Tiger Reserve \(MP\)](#)
 - [Dr Bhim Rao Wildlife Sanctuary \(MP\)](#)
- Plans are underway to translocate prey species from other forests to PTR.
- To mitigate the environmental impacts, the government has planned [compensatory afforestation](#) and [wildlife relocation measures](#).
 - The expansion of the reserve by 60 square kilometers has been proposed, with land acquisition already in progress in Chhatarpur and Panna districts.
- The Ministry of Environment approved the project with three conditions:
 - Expanding PTR's boundaries.
 - Planting 2.5 million trees as [compensatory afforestation](#).
 - **Monitoring tiger and leopard** behaviour via radio-collaring.
- So far, the forest department has acquired only 30% of the land earmarked for afforestation.

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