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## Delhi move to save tigers

A STAFF REPORTER

**Guwahati, April 15:** The Centre has sanctioned Rs 646 lakh to relocate people staying inside Manas Tiger Reserve so that the habitat of tigers and other wild animals can be preserved.

A total of 912 families have been identified for relocation.

According to the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, rights of people recognised in forest areas within core/critical wildlife habitats of tiger reserves/protected areas may be modified and resettled to provide inviolate spaces to tiger/wild animals.

“This requires payment of compensation and, therefore, payment of compensation for the immovable property of people, forms a part of modifying/settling their rights, which is a statutory requirement,” a forest official said.

“We have identified 912 families who are staying inside the tiger reserve for relocation,” A. Swargiari, field director of Manas Tiger Reserve, said.

With tiger being an “umbrella species”, this move will also ensure viable population of other wild animals (co-predators, prey) and forest, thereby ensuring the ecological viability of the entire area/habitat. Thus, it becomes an ecological imperative to keep the core areas of tiger reserves inviolate for the survival of source population of tiger and other wild animals.

There are two options in the relocation. The first is payment of the entire package amount (Rs 10 lakh per family) to the family in case the latter opts so, without involving any rehabilitation/relocation process by the forest department. The second option is carrying out relocation/rehabilitation of villagers from protected areas/tiger reserves by the forest.

Swargiari said the tiger reserve had opted for the first option, which is, payment of the entire package amount to the family as the second option involving relocation process was difficult to carry out.

He said in the first option, a monitoring process involving the district magistrate of the district would be ensured so that the villagers rehabilitate themselves with the package money provided to them.

“The money would have to be released by the state government to us. Let us see when the money comes as there is often a delay in releasing the assistance from the Centre,” another park official said.

The relocation process would be monitored/implemented by the state-level monitoring committee of which the chairman would be the chief secretary of the state and the district-level implementing committee for ensuring convergence of other sectors of which the district collector would be the chairman.

