

Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve to collect toll fee from today

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The funds will be primarily utilised for improving the livelihood of the Chenchus, the tribals, who inhabit the forest areas. Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

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Hyderabad, June 1:

There is good news for the tribal Chenchus and tigers in the Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR) and adjoining areas of Andhra Pradesh.

Starting today, a biodiversity fee or toll fee of Rs 20 and 10 will be charged for all tourist vehicles to Srisailam from both the Andhra and Telangana regions that enter the Tiger Reserve. The move is to get people pay for any damage to the forests. Toll collection will be made at four check posts--Munnanur and Domalapenta in Telangana and Dornala and Sikharam in Andhra region.

The proposal was made by NGO Tiger First and others and the Government came up with orders recently.

According to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (wildlife), AV Joseph, the money will go to Tiger Foundation, set up by the Government of AP. The funds will be primarily utilised for improving the livelihood of the Chenchus, the tribals, who inhabit the forest areas. All Government vehicles will however be exempt to the toll fee, he told *Business Line*.

There is lot of littering of plastic bottles, cigarette butts, eatables and other junk in the area, which is creating problems to the wildlife and sometimes resulting in small fires. During festivals, the problems becomes acute, as lakhs of people from even neighbouring States like Karnataka and Maharastra visit the famous pilgrim temple of Srisailam. The funds can be used to clear the mess as well.

Collection of toll fee is common in several tiger reserves like the Jim Corbett, Ranthambore, Periyar, Sariska etc.

The forest department will put in place appropriate manual and technology scanners to track vehicles. Several steps have already been initiated to conserve the tigers in the NSTR, Joseph said.

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