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New centre to give hospitality industry training, assured jobs to Pench youths

Nagpur: Pench Tiger Reserve will launch a training centre on Independence Day in Sillari to provide jobs to youths living in fringe villages of the tiger reserve. "This will be the first such centre in any tiger reserve or protected area (PA) in Maharashtra and second in the country after Kanha tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh," said forest department sources. At Sillari, youths belonging to eco-development committee (EDC) villages will be trained in hotel management, housekeeping & food and beverage services. There are 42 EDCs in Pench buffer villages.

The project, which plans to provide jobs to at least 360 youths in a year, will be run jointly by Pench Tiger Conservation Foundation (TCF) and Pratham Arora Centre for Education, Mumbai.

Pratham has been providing training to needy youths living on the fringes of Bor, New Bor, Umred-Karhandla, Tipeshwar and Pench tiger reserves since 2013. However, this is for the first time that a training centre itself is coming up in Pench. Earlier, youth were sent to Aurangabad, Ralegaon, and Satara where PACE has centres.

Divisional forest officer (DFO) and wildlife wing's spokesperson GK Vashisht said, "It is a good move. We will provide the infrastructure. The project will go a long way in conserving tigers."

The 16,000 course fee, which includes food and accommodation for the two-month-long training, will be borne by Pench TCF and Biodiversity Conservation & Rural Livelihood Improvement Project. "Each batch will have 60 youths and we have already received over 80 applications," official sources said. "It is a good move. Unless you keep fringe villages happy, tiger conservation cannot be achieved in real sense," said Sanjay Dhote, a teacher in Paoni school.

The centre at Sillari will be equipped with a demo room and youths will be provided with necessary first-hand experience of the hospitality business. Pratham has tie-up with leading names in hotel industry like the Taj Group. Employment to the candidates is assured after completion of the course.

"We give 100% job guarantee through campus interviews. Youths who come here hail from rural areas and have poor grooming background. We teach them communication skills and etiquettes needed for the hospitality industry," said a Pratham official.