



Forest Minister Patangarao Kadam at Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

COURTESY: BANDU DHOTRE

Compensation to be raised to Rs 5 lakh, says Kadam

VIVEK DESHPANDE
NAGPUR, MAY 30

THE state government has decided to raise compensation in case of fatalities in man-animal conflict from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. This was announced by Forest Minister Patangarao Kadam at Chandrapur on Wednesday.

Kadam visited the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) and its buffer areas on Wednesday in the wake of two successive incidents of tiger poaching there.

Addressing mediapersons, the Minister reiterated that probe into poaching cases were being handed over to the CID. He said “a new division will also be created by combining the areas other than those that have gone into making of TATR buffer.” These areas will come largely from the existing Chandrapur and partly from Brahmapuri divisions.

He informed that the Maharashtra Electric-ity Distribution Company Limited has agreed to put its 11 KV line passing through forest areas underground and that Rs 72 crore has been sanctioned for it. The measure is against the backdrop of the large number of poaching by electrocution cases witnessed for years in the TATR landscape.

He also announced that forest beats inside TATR will be reorganised into 84 numbers, thus making the beat management easier and more focused. Ten more gypsies and 25 bikes will be procured for TATR



COURTESY: BANDU DHOTRE

Raj Thackeray began his three-day visit to TATR on Wednesday.

monitoring, he added.

The Minister earlier visited the Gondmohadi spot where two tigers were trapped last month. He then went to TATR areas affected by forest fires and also met villagers. He also held a meeting of officials.

Kadam also inaugurated a new “eco-tourism route” of about 14 km in TATR buffer, where spillover TATR visitors can travel. This is the first time such an experiment is being done outside TATR. “The route has good wildlife visibility,” Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) S WH Naqvi told The Indian Express.

The idea is also to involve local villagers in tourism management and utilise the proceeds for village development.

ANIMAL ATTACK FATALITIES

A POLITICAL BATTLE

A POLITICAL battle of sorts was witnessed over the issue of tiger conservation with Kadam belatedly rushing to TATR rocked by tiger poaching incidents after MNS president Raj Thackeray announced his three-day visit that also began on Wednesday. Kadam clarified that he had to hold back his proposed visit for 15 days in view of the “model code of conduct” in effect due to Legislative Council elections and that his visit was not in response to Thackeray’s visit. When he was told that some ministers had still attended kharif crop meetings in the region by taking special permission, Kadam told them to ask the Collector about it.

All senior Forest officials were with Kadam while Thackeray had some lower rung staff to guide him. Thackeray entered TATR and met Rantaldhi villagers.

While Thackeray didn’t talk to media on Wednesday, MNS MLA Bala Nandgaonkar accompanying him criticised Kadam at Nagpur. “He is not interested in his ministry. He is interested only in officers’ transfers,” he said.

Army Chief refers to Gandhi, says accepting injustice wrong

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ANYBODY who does injustice is wrong. But whoever accepts injustice is also wrong, said Army Chief General V K Singh referring to Mahatma Gandhi, and perhaps indirectly justifying the stand he has taken in the recent past.

“My address to the cadets was about the path I have taken myself,” he added. Singh was addressing the media after reviewing the Passing out Parade of the 122nd course of the National Defence Academy (NDA). This is Singh’s last press conference in uniform given that the general will be exiting the office of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on Thursday.

On a generic note, commenting on ongoing issues, the chief said, “There is no misunderstanding between the Army and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Whatever we say is listened to. There are procedures. The Defence Minister is clear-headed in supporting the



Army chief General V K Singh (right) and NDA commandant Lt General Jatinder Singh at the National Defence Academy’s Passing Out Parade for the 122nd course.

EXPRESS

armed forces.”

Reiterating his post-retirement plans, Singh said,

“The decision would be taken on July 1. But the PhD on Afghanistan will remain a priority. Afghanistan is an important regional neighbour. We are concerned with peace in Afghanistan and are bound to ensure that peace in and progress of

Afghanistan are not disturbed as they matter to us. India will continue to assist to improve lives of people in Afghanistan.”

Singh, visibly nostalgic about visiting the academy he had joined as a cadet 46 years ago in the 36th course, Hunter Squadron, said, “I want to be remembered as a soldier and as someone who

No Su-30 aerobatic show, 2nd time in row

GROUND IAF official cites December 13 crash as reason

PRANAV KULKARNI
PUNE, MAY 30

THREE Sukhoi-30 MKIs flew past the parade when the cadets marched past the quarterdeck. But those who were expecting more manoeuvres from in the form of aerobatics after the Passing out Parade (PoP), were in for disappointment for the second time.

The Sukhoi aerobatics or Sarang helicopter team shows were replaced by aerobatics performed by NDA’s in-house Super Dimona trainer aircraft.

While an IAF official cited the recent mishaps with the Su-30 fighter jet as the reason behind this, a retired officer said it would be inappropriate to jump the gun.

Interestingly, the Sukhoi association with the NDA



PoP dates back to about eight years — two years after it was inducted into the IAF in 2002.

The Jaguars and later Sukhois doing the flypast has been a common feature of the PoP of the NDA.

The flypast would be followed by an air show or the IAF Sarang helicopter team/ Suryakiran team performing breathtaking stunts. While the show has not been mandatory, it has been con-

“It would be inappropriate to uprightly link this to the crash or the mishap. But yes, during low-level aerobatic displays, excessive loads are generated on certain parts of the aircraft. It is fine to do so when needed, for instance, for operational reasons”

A retired IAF officer

tinuing with occasional breaks in between. For instance, in 2009 the Sarang team performed. In May 2010, when Defence Minister A K Antony reviewed the parade, a Su-30 aircraft performed aerobatics. At a review by Air Chief Marshal P V Naik, the pomp was unmatched. A Su-30 and a team of Sarang helicopters performed to the tune of *Jaanbaz Hum Chalein*. Last year, in May, chief of Naval

has tried to uphold values he believed in. I wanted to reach a rank higher than my father. When I took over office of the COAS, I had set targets of making the Army a more relevant, fit-for-future and agile force. We have started the journey...There cannot be a greater moment of nostalgia and emotion than today to take salute from cadets on almost the last day of my military career. The Armed Forces of India are the best. Being in the Army I can say that we in the Army believe that the nation comes first. There is nothing better than the profession we are in.”

Earlier, addressing the 2000-plus cadets of the NDA, Singh referred to *If*, a poem by Rudyard Kipling, and said, “If you can dream and not make dreams your master...If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you; If all men count with you, but none too much; Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it, And, which is more, you’ll be a Man my son!”

Staff Admiral Nirmal Verma reviewed the parade, which was followed by a Su-30 air show with Wing Commander Sajjan displaying breathtaking stunts of the air dominance fighter.

In the last two parades, the Su-30 airshow has been called off. “It is because of the December crash of the Su-30 aircraft near Pune,” said an IAF official. On December 13 last year, a Sukhoi-30 MKI fighter crashed near the city. This was followed by a Su-30 aircraft skidding off the runway while landing.

A retired IAF official said, “It would be inappropriate to uprightly link this to the crash or the mishap. But yes, during low-level aerobatic displays, excessive loads are generated on certain parts of the aircraft. It is fine to do so when needed, for instance, for operational reasons.”

Availability of spares could be yet another reason behind the no-show. “The moving nozzle, which gives the aircraft extra manoeuvrability, is adding to the exchequer,” he said

Suspended police inspector gets life term for killing neighbour

PUNE: A suspended police inspector was sentenced to life imprisonment on Wednesday for shooting a lawyer following a land dispute in 2004. Additional sessions judge D R Mahajan passed the order. The deceased lawyer, identified as Anand Baubrao Dank (57) of Anand Nagar, Sinhgad Road, was inspector Sadanand Kadam’s (86) neighbour. There was a dispute between the duo over the common boundary wall of their houses. Police said Kadam had shot at Dank with a revolver around 9.30 am on February

10, 2004, that led to his death. Danke’s son Vishwajit had lodged the complaint of murder and trespassing against Kadam and his daughter Shobhana at the Haveli police station. Kadam too had registered a cross complaint, claiming that he had opened fire in self defence as the Dankes were beating him badly. Vishwajit was booked on charges of attempt to murder. While Vishwajit was acquitted, Kadam’s daughter too was discharged from the murder case by the Bombay High Court. **ENS**

Court frames charges against Mane

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, MAY 30

THE court of Additional Sessions Judge V K Shewale on Wednesday framed charges against Santosh Maruti Mane, the driver of Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) bus that mowed down eight persons and injured many others in the morning of January 25 this year. The crime branch of Pune police filed the chargesheet.

Meanwhile, Mane’s lawyer Dhananjay Mane has filed an application seeking the footage of the incident from two regional news channels. The court directed the police to give the footage to Mane’s lawyer. The court also ordered that the prosecution file all evidence in the case by June 21.

Mane, who was then attached to the Swargate bus depot, had taken an MSRTC bus from the parking lot of the depot around 8 am on January 25 and had driven it at high speed for about 45 minutes for about 15 kilometres, hitting vehicles and knocking down people killing eight of them. About 30 persons were injured in the incident. Mane’s family had claimed he was mentally unstable and was under psychiatric care of a doctor in Solapur.

CHANDAN HAYGUNDE
(KHUDUPDEWADI) SATARA, MAY 30

SEVEN roads allegedly constructed illegally under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) by government agencies in villages in Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) are being probed by the state forest department. Besides, the forest department recently (May 16) booked a businessman, Nitin Menon of the Menon Pistons Limited, for alleged illegal construction on his private land and destruction of wildlife habitat in Khudupdewadi village in Koyna WLS, part of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve.

The office of assistant conservator forest (ACF) in Koyna Nagar registered an offence against Menon under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. According to the forest department, a Bombay High Court (HC) order dated October 18, 2010 has banned construction of roads and RCC structures in the sanctuary area. Also, as per a Supreme Court order dated February 14, 2000, such construction is not permitted even on private land in the sanctuary area. “We found cement constructions on Menon’s pri-



The private construction and (right) an alleged illegal road under NREGS in Khudupdewadi in sanctuary area

ate land in Koyna WLS in Khudupdewadi village. The work has been stopped. We would take up the case before judicial magistrate (first class) in Patan court legal aspects and taking opinion of government lawyers,” said ACF M M Panditrao of Koyna. Menon was not available for comment. His estate manager Pradeep More said, “We have not made any new construction. The said land was purchased from villagers a few years ago. There are a few old houses here. We are just doing renovation work after seeking all permissions from government agencies.”

“It is not a commercial work. We are doing a lot of tree plantation at the spot. The rooms would be used as godowns for keeping saplings and material needed for plan-

tation. We stopped the construction on receiving the forest department notice,” said More.

When *The Indian Express* visited the spot, a group of labourers, most of them residents of nearby villages, was working at the site close to the water body in the forest area of Khudupdewadi. There is no access to the site by roadways. A labourer said construction material was brought by motor boats.

Interestingly, the forest department had registered the offence against Menon after nature activist Nana Khamkar of Karad filed a complaint on May 11 with the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Wild Life, Nagpur.

“The state government, in an affidavit filed through the

chief secretary, had assured the Bombay HC that there are no constructions in Koyna WLS but despite the HC ban, seven illegal roads were constructed besides a private RCC structure. It certainly disturbs wildlife. We requested the PCCF to instruct the director of the Sahyadri Tiger Project to take action against the authorities who sanctioned these works inside the Koyna WLS,” said Khamkar. ACF Panditrao said, “An inquiry has been initiated and notices have been issued to Gram Sevaks to know how the permissions were granted for the seven roads under NREGS in Koyna WLS. The sarpanchs of the villages would also be questioned.”

Sources said permission for NREGS works were ob-

tained from offices of the BDO and Tahsildar of Patan taluka, Satara. Prahlad Hiramani, the Tahsildar of Patan, said he was aware of the roads and the inquiry initiated by the forest department. “Only the small pathways used by villagers that already existed were widened under NREGS. No new tar road is under construction,” he said.

A Khudupdewadi villager said, “The forest department recently stopped the road work. The government should either give us roads and facilities or rehabilitate us at a good place out of the forest area as early as possible. We have to walk long distances even for basic needs. We get our ration by boat once a month.”

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