

Srivilliputhur Megamalai- Tamil Nadu's new Tiger Reserve

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In news : Recently, the Central Government has given its approval for the creation of Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve as a fifth tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu

About the Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve and its significance

- **Area covered:** An area of 1,01,657.13 hectares or 1016.5713 sq.km in Srivilliputhur Grizzled Giant Squirrel Sanctuary and Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary have been combined to create the tiger reserve.
- As per NTCA of the total 1.01lakh hectares, 64,186.21 hectare will be the core area and 37,470.92 hectare will fall under the buffer zone.
- Location: The new tiger reserve has Madurai territorial forest division in the north, Virudhunagar and Madurai district revenue areas on its east, Tirunelveli forest division and Periyar tiger reserve (Kerala) in south and Theni revenue district, Theni territorial forest division and partly Periyar reserve on its west as boundaries.
- Srivilliputhur, is a town and a Municipality in Virudhunagar district in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu
- According to the concept note, tiger disperses in large areas and such dispersals are important for the exchange of genes. This process is essential for long term growth of a population.
- In Tamil Nadu, Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) provides one of the largest habitats
- for the tigers and other co-predators. However,

environmental stress factors

- such as availability of prey, availability of potential males, and absence of human
- caused disturbances could make the tigers move and give rise to metapopulation that could generate more genetic resources for populations to grow further.
- Now, tigers from the neighboring Periyar Tiger Reserve and the Anamalai Tiger Reserve regions can find significant habitats and breeding and home ranges in the highly undulating terrains of Srivilliputhur and Megamalai hilly tracts.
- In fact, the forested habitats of the Srivilliputhur regions, which are largely uninhabited and undisturbed, could provide excellent buffering grounds to the tigers of Periyar Tiger Reserve as much as they can offer excellent genetic exchange grounds for the tigers of Anamalai region.
- As per the local wildlife association, the creation of Periyar and Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserves, the water needs of several southern districts have mostly been taken care of.
- With the new Srivilliputhur – Megamalai Tiger Reserve, the forests will be better protected and the Vaigai river, its tributaries will start flowing again

Other Tiger Reserves in Tamilnadu

1. Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve
2. Anamalai Tiger Reserve
3. Mudumalai Tiger Reserve
4. Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve

Giant Squirrel Sanctuary

- Also known as Srivilliputhur Wildlife Sanctuary, it was established in 1988 to protect the Near threatened grizzled giant squirrel (*Ratufa macroura*).
- It is bordered on the southwest by the Periyar Tiger

Reserve and is one of the best preserved forests south of the Palghat Gap

- **IUCN Status of grizzled giant squirrel:** Near Threatened (NT)

Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary

- As this wildlife sanctuary is located at the border of Tamilnadu and Kerala, hence it acts as the buffer zone for Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala.
- It shares boundaries with Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Sanctuary and Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala