

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **LAUNCHING OF "PROJECT NILGIRI TAHR"**

In a historic move, the Government of Tamil Nadu launched its ambitious flagship project "The Nilgiri Tahr" for conservation of Tamil Nadu's State Animal. Hon'ble Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Thiru M.K.Stalin launched "The Project Nilgiri Tahr" at a ceremony today (12.10.2023) at the Secretariat by unveiling a plaque and distributing books to school students to create awareness about Nilgiri Tahr among them.

Locally known as "Varai Aadu", the "Nilgiri Tahr" is an endangered species endemic to the Western Ghats known for their gravity defying skills in climbing steep cliff. These mountain goats are aptly called "Mountain Monarch".

There are multiple references to Nilgiri Tahr in the Sangam Tamil literature written over 2000 years ago. Two of the five great epics of the Sangam period, Silappatikaram and Sivakasindamani, include descriptions of the Nilgiri Tahr and its habitat. Moreover, in books such as Natrinai, Aingurunooru, Paripadal, Pathitruppathuu and Patinapalai from Pathinen Melkanakku Noolgal the Nilgiri Tahr is mentioned. The play, Courtallar Kuravanji, written by Trikoodarasappak Kavirayar in 1600-1700 A.D. describes Nilgiri Tahr in a song "Kurathi malai valam kooral" is one of animal that indicates the biodiversity richness of the region.

As a testimony to its ecological and cultural significance in Tamil Nadu, Nilgiri Tahr has been declared as a State Animal of Tamil Nadu.

A Government Order about the project was issued in the month of December, 2022 indicating following objectives of the project.

- i. Developing a better understanding of Nilgiri Tahr population, distribution and ecology
- ii. Re-introduction of Nilgiri Tahr to their historic habitats
- iii. Addressing proximate threat to Nilgiri Tahr
- iv. Increasing awareness among public about the "Nilgiri Tahr" species
- v. October 7th will be celebrated as the Nilgiri Tahr Day in honour of Dr.E.R.C.Davidar whose Birthday falls on this day. Dr. Davidar pioneered one of the first studies on Nilgiri Tahr in 1975.

- vi. Developing "Nilgiri Tahr" based eco-tourism activities at selected sites
- vii. Develop educational material for school children

The project will focus on the following important activities at an outlay of Rs.25 Crore.

- a) Bi-annual Synchronized surveys across the divisions
- b) Tranquilization, collaring and monitoring of Tahr Individuals
- c) Re-introduction and monitoring of Nilgiri Tahr
- d) Diagnosis and treatment for affected individuals
- e) Field gear and training support to staff
- f) Shola Grassland restoration pilot in Upper Bhavani.
- g) Implementation of eco-tourism programmes
- h) Communication and outreach.

The Project Office has been set up by the Forest Department at Coimbatore to steer project activities. Government of Tamil Nadu has also appointed a full time Project Director for the project. Government has also appointed a Senior Scientist assisted by 4 Senior Research Fellows to undertake various project activities.

Dr.M.Mathiventhan, Hon'ble Minister for Forest, Thiru.Shiv Das Meena,IAS., Chief Secretary to Government, Tmt.Supriya Sahu,IAS., Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Environment, Climate Change and Forests Department, Thiru.Srinivas R. Reddy,IFS., Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wildlife Warden, Thiru. V. Naganathan, IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Thiru.S.Ramasubramanian,IFS., Field Director and Conservator of Forest, Anamalai Tiger Reserve, Thiru.N.Jayaraj,IFS., District Forest Officer, Coimbatore, Thiru.Praveen Shanmuganandam and Thiru.Dhanubaran Film Makers who made the Nilgiri Tahr film were also present on the occasion.

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