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PRESS RELEASE

TAMIL NADU SETS UP INDIA'S FIRST "THE NILGIRI TAHR" PROJECT

The Government of Tamil Nadu on Wednesday, 28th December 2022 issued orders for setting up India's first Project "The Nilgiri Tahr", a conservation initiative to protect and conserve Nilgiri Tahr, the state animal of Tamil Nadu. The Government order detailed that the project shall be setup at a cost of Rs.25.14 Crore to be implemented during a 5 year period from 2022-2027.

There are several references to the Nilgiri Tahr in 2,000-year-old Tamil Sangam literature. Two of the five great epics of the Sangam period, Cilappatikāram (சிலப்பதிகாரம்) and Cīvaka Cintāmaṇi (சீவகசிந்தாமணி), include descriptions of the Nilgiri Tahr and its habitat.

“வரையாடு வருடையும் மடமான் மறியும் (சிலம்பு. வஞ்சி. காட்சிக் காதை :51)

ஓங்கு மால்வரை வரையாடு உழக்கலின் உடைந்துகு பெருந்தேன் (சீவக.1559:1)

Moreover, in post Sangam period literature like Patīṇṇkīkaṇakku (பதினெண்கீழ்க்கணக்கு) Nilgiri Tahr is mentioned. The play, Thirukutrala kuravanji, (திருக்குற்றாலகுறவஞ்சி) written by Thirigudarasapa Kavirayar also describes "Nilgiri Tahr in a song "Kurathi malaivalam kooral" (குறத்தி மலைவளம் கூறல்) as one of animal that indicates the biodiversity richness of a region.

The project "The Nilgiri Tahr" will follow a multipronged strategy including synchronized surveys to estimate numbers of "Nilgiri Tahr" individuals through the use

of Radio Telemetry including Radio collaring etc. The project will also have a major component to restore the fragmented habitats of the Tahr. Restoration of shola grasslands which is the major habitat for the animal will be taken up as a priority activity Government order said. The order also highlighted that October 7th every year shall be celebrated as the Nilgiri Tahr day to enhance awareness about the need for conservation of Nilgiri Tahr.

Nilgiri Tahr locally known as “Varaiaadu” has been classified as a critically endangered species in the IUCN red list of threatened species and is protected under schedule-I of the Wildlife (protection) Act of India, 1972. It is estimated that there are 3,122 Nilgiri Tahr as per an World Wide Fund for Nature Report 2015. Nilgiri Tahr is endemic to Western Ghats which are internationally recognized as a region of immense global importance due to its incredible Bio-diversity. Nilgiri Tahr used to inhabit a large portion of Western Ghats, but it is now restricted to a few fragmented pockets due to severe habitat loss, biotic pressure, invasive and exotic species and adverse impact of climate change. The project Nilgiri Tahr aims to restore the original habitat of Nilgiri Tahr and also attempt to re-introduce the species in some of those areas where Nilgiri Tahr originally lived.

**ADDITIONAL CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT
Environment, Climate Change and Forest Department**

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