'Tree surgery' to save over 500 girdled trees in Chhattisgarh's Udanti–Sitanadi Tiger Reserve

Environment · 21 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/21



News

In the Karka village area of Chhattisgarh's Udanti–Sitanadi Tiger Reserve (USTR), the Forest Department is launching 'tree surgery' to save over 500 trees damaged by girdling (removal of a ring of bark) by encroachers (reports of 18–21 Oct 2026). A DGPS drone survey (22 Sep – 10 Oct) found about 2,500 girdled trees (sal, bija, tendu). The main method is 'bridge grafting'. 'Tree Doctor' Vijay Nishanth (Project Vruksha Foundation) will visit to assess the trees and train staff. Note: this is not road widening; it is damage from encroachment inside the reserve.

Key facts

Place	Karka, Udanti–Sitanadi Tiger Reserve – Gariaband & Dhamtari districts, Chhattisgarh
Damage	500+ trees freshly girdled; about 2,500 in all; encroachment 22 ha (2016) → 102.47 ha (2026)
Species	Sal, bija, tendu
Method	Bridge grafting – a healthy twig joined across the wound to restore food flow; at present cow-dung–soil paste wrapped in gunny
People	Varun Kumar Jain – USTR Deputy Director; Vijay Nishanth – 'Tree Doctor'

Earlier try	Bridge grafting in 2022 – only about 10% success

Background

- Reserve: formed by merging Udanti and Sitanadi wildlife sanctuaries, notified as a tiger reserve in 2009; area 1,842.54 sq km (core 851.09). It is a key habitat of the endangered Asiatic wild buffalo – Chhattisgarh's State animal. Other Chhattisgarh tiger reserves include Indravati (Bijapur) and Achanakmar.
- Science: girdling cuts the phloem just beneath the bark; food made in the leaves can no longer reach the roots, so the roots starve and the tree slowly dies. The xylem carries water upward.
- Geography: the Pairi river rises in Udanti sanctuary and the Sondur in Sitanadi; they meet the Mahanadi near Rajim (Gariaband). The Mahanadi rises in the Sihawa hills of Dhamtari district. Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh on 1 Nov 2000.
- Tree-protection movements: Chipko (1973, Uttarakhand – Gaura Devi, Sunderlal Bahuguna); Appiko (1983, Karnataka – Uttara Kannada, Panduranga Hegde) – the 'Chipko of the South'.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's State tree is the palmyra palm (Borassus flabellifer). Tree felling in hill areas is regulated by the Tamil Nadu Hill Areas (Preservation of Trees) Act, 1955.

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