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Tiger saviours

Young 'uns get lessons in saving big cats

SAWAI MADHOPUR (RAJASTHAN): Miles away from their classrooms, playstations and social networking sites, a group of teenaged students from eight cities got a hands-on experience of how to save India's national animal, the tiger, from the manifold evils that threaten its existence today.

Awakened and determined, the group vowed to spread the message.

"I always thought that humans are afraid of tigers but now I have realised it's the other way round. It's we who are

a threat to them," said Bhoomika S, a student of Sindhi Public School, Bangalore.

"This workshop was an eye-opener for all of us. I'll make sure to pass on the information and educate my friends and families back home," she said.

The three-day knowledge workshop-cum-national camp, titled Kids for Tigers, was organised by mobile telephony provider Aircel.

An annual event, it is a part of the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initia-

tive — Save Our Tigers — at the Ranthambore National Park.

It operates in conjunction with Kids for Tigers, an environmentally inclined education programme run by Sanctuary Asia magazine in schools across India to sensitise children on the plight of the tiger and the environment as a whole.

The annual camps began four years ago after Aircel came on board and the eight participants are selected by Sanctuary Asia on the basis of competitions and other events

in the eight cities.

For Shimanshu Agrawal, 16, the experience was "unforgettable" as he realised how the whole ecosystem depends on the tiger's survival.

"The tiger is on top of the food chain, if we don't save him, the whole ecosystem will be destroyed," he said.

"Poaching, deforestation and human settlements are just some of the issues threatening the tiger. I live near the national park and I believe I can educate the people who really matter," he added.

The children came from

Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi and Bangalore to participate in the camp.

Bittu Sehgal, environmentalist and chief of Sanctuary Asia, said it was importance that the youngsters are educated about the issue as it is the generation of tomorrow that will lead the nation.

India is home to the world's largest tiger population, with 1,706 living in the wild across 42 tiger reserves.

But the figure is almost a 10th of what it was, say, half a century ago.

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