

# Tiger falls prey to poachers at Pench park

■ Live wiremesh trap snuffs the life out of the big cat

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
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A TIGER from Pench National Park was electrocuted last week due to the electrically charged wiremesh trap laid by poachers two-kms away from the Karmazari guest house in Madhya Pradesh.

This was recently discovered by *Jungles*, a group dedicated to wildlife protection recently, when its members were on a wildlife excursion tour to the Pench National Park, 116 kms from here.

The group not only learnt about the callous attitude of

the forest officials in taking the issue seriously, but also found that a senior bureaucrat camping there, too, did not take cognizance of the matter.

According to Raja Chatterjee, secretary, *Jungles*, similar incidents of electrocution had previously occurred in the vicinity of the same spot where the tiger was killed, but Pench National Park authorities from Madhya Pradesh did not take the poaching issue seriously.

A tiger was similarly electrocuted in 1995, a bison in 1996, a sloth bear in March this year and the recent electrocution of tiger in the first week of this month. A suspected poacher too was electrocuted in January this year when he himself got trapped in the electric mesh, the *Jungles* claimed.

On their return from Pench

National Park, *Jungles*, on Monday, held a press conference in which they urged authorities to check the activities of poachers, who were taking advantage of the callousness of MP forest authorities.

Chatterjee and four other youths from the *Jungles* reached the park on April 10, when they were informed of the electrocution by a beat officer. The group immediately swung into action and decided to probe into the matter.

They met Sub-Divisional Officer Jagdish Chandra and Range Officer Akhilesh Agrawal who told that the tiger's body was first noticed near the trap on April 6 by a beat officer who later informed Agrawal.

The forest officials found that the poachers had dug wooden pegs in the forest to which galvanised wires were

hooked. The wooden pegs and wires attached to them ran at length to approximate 300 metres in the jungle.

The poachers then connect the wires by hooking to overhead electric lines passing through the jungle.

The *Jungles* were told that these types of traps were generally laid by poachers to hunt deers, but the tiger got accidentally trapped in it.

The group was further told by the localities that poachers charged the net in the night and returned to take the kill before dawn.

This time too, when poachers realised that the tiger was killed, they removed part of the wire mesh and disconnected power supply before forest officials reached the spot.

The forest officials informed this development to Field Direc-

tor S K Chauhan, who is stationed at Seoni. Chauhan visited the spot and the carcass of the tiger was burnt in his presence on April 7 after a postmortem examination was performed, the *Jungles* came to know.

For reasons best known to the Pench forest officials, a complaint of this incident was lodged on April 8, well after the carcass was burnt, Chatterjee alleged.

The policemen from the Kurai police station also failed to visit the spot till the *Jungles* were present at Pench on April 12.

Meanwhile, S N Mishra, Principal Secretary (Environment and Forests), Madhya Pradesh Government who is also Chief Wildlife Warden, had visited Pench National Park on April 11 and 12 and had put up at Karmazari Guest House which is barely two kms away from the

electrocution spot, Chatterjee told.

Neither could the *Jungles* contact Mishra, nor did Mishra visit the spot, Chatterjee informed.

The *Jungles* later returned to Nagpur today to take up the matter to local press. Chatterjee has already faxed details of the issue to Valmik Thapar of Ranthambore Foundation, New Delhi and are likely to contact P K Sen, Director, Project Tiger, SPCA chief Maneka Gandhi and the Union Minister for Environment.

Members of the *Jungles* who visited Pench were Arvindam Chakravorty, Gagan Gehlot, Sunil Pramanik and Raja Chatterjee from Calcutta, Uday Patel from Jabalpur and Areedram, a researcher of Wildlife Institute of India, stationed at Pench.