

# Pench Tiger Project a damp squib

BY LEMUEL LALL

**JABALPUR, Apr. 16:-** The Pench tiger project launched in 1992 with wide publicity in an area of about 757 square kilometres covering a National Park, a sanctuary besides the protected forest is turning out to be a damp squib.

This project launched at Seoni and Chhindwara districts to protect wild life including, tigers, panthers, bisons and many endangered species besides flora and fauna have reportedly failed to deliver the good.

Astonishingly, a tiger was killed hardly 2 kilo metres away from the Kaimaghari Rest House where the offices of forest department are located. The tiger was subsequently buried at the same spot and after completing the basic formalities the incident was suppressed in the files.

The Forest official are sitting tight lipped about the incident. They are reportedly fearing for their lives. It is surprising that so far, no substantial information about the poachers is available with the Forest Department.

It is worth mentioning here that a poacher

was killed in the sanctuary in January while laying the wires and two of his accomplices were imprisoned. But they were shortly released after the incident and are said to be roaming freely now.

Recently "Jabalpur Nature Society" and "The Jungles" from Calcutta, visited the reserve. They were bewildered at the grim scenario prevailing there. They informed that since a long time the animals are being freely and mercilessly poached by resident tribals.

In last three years two tigers, one sloth bear and a bison have been poached with the aid of naked electric wires connected to 1100 KW line running through the reserve. The teams were reportedly surprised to learn that the poaching have taken place near the spot where the offices of forest departments are located.

Presence of higher authorities in the reserve is much needed. Most of the valuable time of the management is spent on serving the dignitaries and higher-up officials. And the lower staff is kept busy fulfilling every demands made by the high-ups.

Sources say that the poaching was becoming

a regular affair here due to the laxity prevailing in the vigilance and the poachers are taking full advantage of this lacuna.

Meanwhile, a responsible officer of the Pench project stationed at Seoni, who did not want to be identified admitted that a tiger was killed in the first week of April. He, however, could not give the exact date of the killing of tiger. He said that the post-mortem reports of the tiger clearly revealed that it was killed by electrocution.

He admitted that some animals of endangered species have been killed in the past by poachers by means of electric wires which they connect to the fencing of the park or the sanctuary.

When asked whether any arrest has been made in connection with the recent killing of tiger, he said that no one has been rounded up. He, however, said that a hawk eye is being kept on the suspects who will be arrested at the appropriate time.

It is said that day-by-day the reserve is heading toward darkness and if proper steps are not taken in the direction we will lose this valuable natural wealth of forest.