



D.O. No. 1-23/93-PT (Part)/50

2nd June, 2010

My dear Shivraj Singhji -

This is regarding the recent death of a tigress at Bandhavgarh. In this context, I had directed the Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority for a site visit to ascertain the factual status. I am enclosing a copy of his Inspection Report alongwith some mails containing photographs of forest officers taunting tiger cubs in Bandhavgarh.

There is a strong indication that the recent tigress mortality was due to a fatal vehicular hit which was inside the core area after sunset, while violating the park rules. This is a cause for very serious concern and I strongly advise for an urgent CBI probe into the whole incident which may throw light on several related issues. Further, I also suggest the following urgent actions to strengthen tiger conservation in the State:

- (i) The orphaned tiger cubs at Bandhavgarh should be immediately kept in an in-situ enclosure within the reserve for subsequent release in the wild, after they learn the art of predating a natural kill. Technical advise in this regard may be obtained from the NTCA / Wildlife Institute of India.
- (ii) The tourism in tiger reserves should be strictly regulated vis-à-vis the advisories issued by this Ministry/NTCA for adhering to the reserve specific carrying capacity.
- (iii) The notification of buffer zones around the core/critical tiger habitats needs to be expedited while providing statutory protection to such areas under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. These should be placed under the unified control of the tiger reserve management.
- (iv) The District Collectors of tiger districts should be advised to examine the corridor value of an area before granting permission for a change in its land use, vis-à-vis the corridor connectivity identified in the recent all India tiger estimation.
- (v) The frontline staff vacancies at Bandhavgarh should be filled up, besides posting motivated Deputy Director, Assistant Director and Range Officers with good track record.

I would very much appreciate your kind intervention on the above urgent issues.

Warm personal
With regards,
h

Yours sincerely,

Jairam Ramesh
(Jairam Ramesh)

Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan,
Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Government of Madhya Pradesh

Encl: as above

Field Visit to Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve regarding recent tigress mortality

Report of the Member Secretary, NTCA

As directed, the undersigned visited the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (MP) on 31st May and 1st June, 2010 to ascertain the factual status regarding the recent mortality of a tigress. The factual status/ observations based on interactions with the CCF and Field Director, staff and wildlife enthusiasts/ tour operators, besides site visit are as below:

1. The tigress was a resident, breeding animal at 'Jhurjhura' (Tala Range) which forms part of the core/ critical tiger habitat.
2. The tigress, alongwith its 3 cubs (around 6 months old) has been intensively photographed/ seen/ monitored by the park management and visitors. The said tigress has also been captured by the research team from the Wildlife Institute of India in its data collection process using camera traps.
3. The tigress was last seen by visitors and photographed on 17-05-2010 during the forenoon, besides sighting by tourists in the evening till 5 PM (Jhurjhura dam)
4. On 18-05-2010 the tigress was not seen in its usual area (Jhurjhura dam).
5. The tigress was used to viewing by visitors and there are no reports of the animal showing any aggressive behavior.
6. The day-to-day record of vehicular entry (tourist vehicles) is maintained by the park management at the main entry point (Tala).
7. It is learnt that 3 Govt. vehicles (2 belonging to the park management and 1 outsourced by the CEO, Zila Panchayat, Umaria) entered the park in the late afternoon on 18-05-2010. Besides, 2 park vehicles also went inside for the routine patrolling works from Tala to Kallwah which did not pass through the tiger spot. These 2 vehicles did not return back to Tala and stayed at Kallwah.
8. Of the other 3 vehicles, one park vehicle returned back to Tala with the staff from the main gate around 9.30 PM on the same night.
9. The other 2 vehicles indicated at serial no. 7 included the vehicle of Range Officer, Magdhi and an outsourced vehicle used by the CEO, Zila Panchayat,

Umaria, who was on an inspection visit relating to works being carried out under NREGA for water impounding at the Magdhi Range.

10. It is reliably learnt from various people that the above 2 vehicles indicated at serial no. 9 stayed beyond the permitted park timings and visited the in-situ enclosure at Baheraha (Magdhi Range) for viewing the tiger cubs housed in the same (which is not permitted). Further, the vehicles also went to the tigress spot at Tala and returned back via Bhadrashila barrier instead of the main gate, which is also a cause of suspicion.

There is a strong indication (emerging out of the detailed interaction with the local people and the Field Director) that the tigress was fatally hit by one of these vehicles. The occupants in both these vehicles included the following persons:

- a) Shri Akshay Kumar Singh, CEO Zila Panchayat, Umaria
- b) Lalit Kumar Pandey, Range Officer, Magdhi
- c) Dr. K.K. Pandey, Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, Tala
- d) A relative of Shri Akshay Kumar Singh and 3 children
- e) Shri Man Singh, Driver of Range Officer, Magdhi
- f) A driver of the vehicle used by the CEO, Umaria.

(It is also learnt that Dr. KK Pandey owns a lodge named 'Tiger Heaven' and wields considerable influence in the area. He was also present in the PM subsequently, and has provided his vehicle to the CEO, Umaria office on a contractual basis/ arrangement. He volunteered for bringing the post mortem report from Jabalpur, while using the same vehicle provided to the CEO, Zila Panchayat, Umaria.)

11. On 19.05.2010, the tigress was seen in an abnormal/ injured condition by several tourist vehicles and the park staff. The Field Director and the Deputy Director were away on tour to Bhopal during the period for participating in the State Wildlife Advisory Board and other meetings. On learning about the condition of the tigress, the Field Director telephonically instructed for cordoning of the area.
12. The tigress was found dead in the Jhurjhura dam on 19.05.2010 at around 9.20 AM. The PM was carried out the next day after preserving the carcass in a

deep freeze by a team of veterinary experts which included Dr. AB Shrivastava, Associate Professor, veterinary college, Jabalpur. The Field Director telephonically apprised the undersigned about the incident. Shri Satyendra Tiwari, wildlife enthusiast and tour operator was suggested from the NTCA to be present alongwith Dr. AB Shrivastava during the PM.


13. The PM has revealed that the tigress has succumbed on account of severe impact by due to a hard/ blunt object. There were no signs of external injury or bullet wounds. There are enough arguments/ evidences which strongly indicate that the 2 vehicles carrying the CEO, Zila Panchayat Umaria, Range Officer, Magdhi and others as indicated at serial no. 10 was involved in this accident.
14. Since then the State Forest Department has suspended the Asstt. Director, and two Range Officers (RO Magdhi and RO Tala).

In this context, the following urgent actions are suggested:

- I. Advising the State for an urgent **CBI** probe into the whole incident which would, interalia, address the related issues (violation of rules, corruption, nexus, if any, between the lower functionaries of the park and tourist operators etc.)
- II. Advising the State for immediately housing the orphaned tiger cubs in an in-situ enclosure within the park, with the technical advice of the Wildlife Institute of India and the NTCA, with Central Assistance.
- III. Advising the State for strict regulation of tourism in Tiger Reserves vis-à-vis the advisories issued by the MoEF for adhering to the carrying capacity.
- IV. Urging the State Govt. to expedite the notification of buffer zones around the core areas of Tiger Reserves, and according them further statutory protection under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and placing the same under the unified control of respective Field Directors.
- V. Advising the State to address the District Collectors to examine the corridor value of an area before granting permission for a change in its landuse vis-à-vis the State level corridor connectivity identified in the recent all India Tiger estimation.

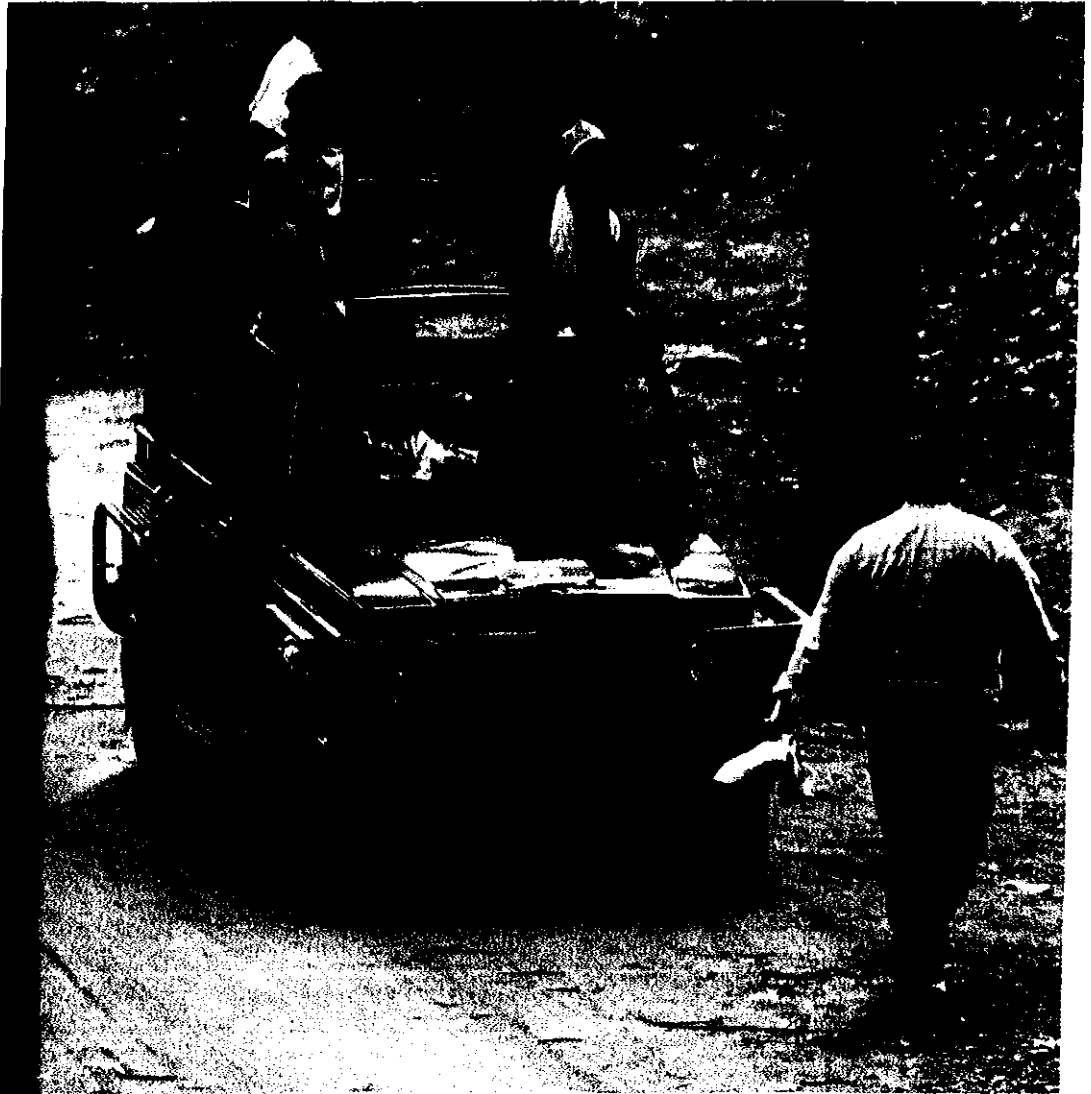
- VI. Strengthening the hands of the Field Director (who is a dedicated, trained officer with good track record) by posting motivated Deputy Director, Assistant Director and Range Officers, besides filling up the frontline staff vacancies.

Date: 01.06.2010


Dr. Rajesh Gopal
Member Secretary
NTCA, Camp Bandhavgarh







On 2 Jun 2010, at 10:53, Bittu Sahgal wrote:

Hashim do send the images as separate attachments.

Shit heads. Really.

Bittu

On 2 June 2010 15:18, Hashim Tyabji <htyabji@yahoo.com> wrote:

Barring a few officers the FD across the country is patently unfit for the purpose of wildlife conservation. What's to be done except try and reform of the wildlife wing and perhaps the creation of a properly sensise and trained wildlife and conservation department?

H

On 2 Jun 2010, at 10:31, Julian Matthews - TOFT wrote:

The list continues

-----Original Message-----

From: Sarath Champali [mailto:qsatarisman@gmail.com]

Sent: 02 June 2010 09:12

To: Julian Matthews

Subject: Fwd: FD Officers taunting Tiger cubs in Bandhavgarh!

Hi Jules!

I got no response for this email of mine from the CWLV.

Also please check out my blog on the same subject and circulate it:

<http://sarathe.blogspot.com>

We need to put up the pressure.

It's a pity what NTCA is recommending about the Cubs!

Regards,

Sarath

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Sarath Champali <qsatarisman@gmail.com>

Date: Tue, 1 Jun 2010 07:57:56 +0530

Subject: FD Officers taunting Tiger cubs in Bandhavgarh!

To: pcvwlg@satish

Cc: patilck63 <patilck63@yahoo.com>, Neel Gogate

<neel.gogate@tajsafaris.com>

Dear Sir,

This is a shocking incident i wanted to bring to your notice..which happened in Bandhavgarh NP on the evening of 30th May 2010. About ten vehicles were there at a place called Andheri Jhiria (on route B-D)..we were all waiting to catch a glimpse of some Tiger sub-adults,which were seen in the morning at the same spot. There was one official FD vehicle..and in view of all the tourists including me..the officer along with a guard..walked right into the bushes (about 20 metres) to get a closer look at the Tigers!! The Cubs were were very nervous looking at people on foot and one of them charged at them..we all heard the roar!
I am shocked at this irresponsible behaviour of this officer..how can he walk up to Tigers on foot?? What sort of an example is he setting to all the visitors?? All this when in B'garh itself there was this shocking incident of the death of the Tigress recently. We hope you will take serious disciplinary action against him. I am attaching all the pictures which will provide you with evidence including the Tiger cub..which we could see deep inside.

Thanking you Sir.

sincerely,

Sarath Champati

Chief Naturalist,

Taj Safaris

<B'garh-30th may-3.jpg><B'garh-30th may-1.jpg><B'garh-30 may-4.jpg><B'garh-30 may-5.jpg><B'garh-30 may-6.jpg>

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from **Jairam Ramesh** <jairam54@gmail.com>
to **Rajesh Gopal** <rajeshgopal8155@gmail.com>
date Wed, Jun 2, 2010 at 3:35 PM
subject **Fwd: FD Officers taunting Tiger cubs in Bandhavgarh - any better?**
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signed-by [gmail.com](mailto:)

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