

Sunderbans tigers' prey 'die of shock'

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KOLKATA: Six spotted deer from a herd of 25 that was being moved from the Bibhuti Bhushan Wildlife Sanctuary in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district to supplement the prey base of the Sunderbans tiger died early on Thursday morning.

A "post-mortem" will be carried out and it seems they died of "shock" experienced during transportation, Sunderbans Tiger Reserve field director Subrat Mukherjee told *The Hindu* over telephone.

The herd was being brought to the Deer Acclimatisation Centre in Dobaki. Here they would be constantly monitored before being released in the wild — over a distance of about 200 km, Mr. Mukherjee said.

"There was a delay at a place where the road was severely damaged. The deer had

to be shifted from the trucks onto tractors, and then moved back onto the trucks, which took considerable time. It is possible they experienced some trauma then."

"While three were found dead on arrival, three others were alive. But we could not do much."

Such occurrences are not uncommon, as spotted deer were delicate animals, Sunderban Biosphere Reserve director Pradeep Vyas said.

Transferring the deer into the wild was essential as several facilities where the animals were being kept were overcrowded. "The Bibhuti Bhushan Wildlife Sanctuary has nearly 450 spotted deer, whereas it has a capacity to accommodate only 150 deer."

The Alipore Zoological Garden in the city is facing similar problems. It had decided to relocate about 60 deer to the Sunderbans.