

NAME OF PUBLICATION

INDIAN EXPRESS

PLACE OF PUBLICATION

NEW DELHI

DATE OF PUBLICATION

- 2 JUN 2010

Officials present when tigress run over

NEHA SINHA

NEW DELHI, JUNE 1

ST
WS
CMT-1

ON THE night of May 18, a vehicle ran over a tigress in the Bandhavgarh National Park after tourist timings and within a restricted area. Now, a Central team sent by the Ministry of Environment and Forests has found that the incident happened in the presence of Bandhavgarh forest officials who were probably present in the vehicle.

So far, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department has claimed that the tigress died after being hit by a tourist vehicle.

However, the Central team, which has submitted its report, concluded that the tigress died after it was hit by one of the two vehicles allowed inside the park at night to give a local leader an off-limits Bandhavgarh experience. While one of those vehi-



In her last photo, the injured tigress is seen limping.

COURTESY NGO UDAI

cles belonged to the Forest Department, the other had Zilla Panchayat leader Akshay Kumar Singh and his relatives.

The state government also ordered a CID inquiry into the matter on Tuesday.

According to the Central team's report, the vehicles had Range Officer L Pandey, a

Forest Department driver and veterinary assistant surgeon K K Pandey, apart from Singh and four of his relatives.

"We have recommended a CBI inquiry... The incident took place after visitation hours. There is also evidence that they visited off-limit areas," NTCA Member Secretary Rajesh Gopal told *The Indian Express*.

Singh and his relatives (including three children) had reportedly been taken by the forest staff to see three orphaned cubs being raised inside a "naturalised" enclosure, as part of an experiment. No one is allowed in the area. Singh reportedly went inside the Park on the pretext of viewing work on a water impounding project.

As they left, one of the vehicles hit the tigress in the Jhurjhura area of the park. The tigress, who had three cubs nearby, died the day after.