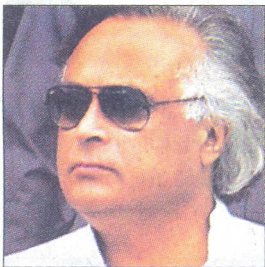


short stories

BID TO SAVE THE TIGER



BEIJING: 2010 is the year of the tiger. This will be the thrust of India's request to China for increased enforcement in curbing illegal trade in tiger/leopard skins and bones. Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh arrived here armed with photos of dead tigers in China's captive tiger farms. He will argue that "poaching in India is linked to international trade through Nepal and Myanmar border into China".

Jairam in China, seeks a break for Indian tigers

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BEIJING: The fate of India's last big cats is now being linked to the Chinese zodiac and China's Year of the Tiger in 2010.

On Sunday, Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh — the new government's first minister to visit China — landed in Beijing for bilateral climate change talks.

He also brought a thick dossier stuffed with enlarged photographs of China's captive tiger farms with dead tigers piled in cold storage, and tiger skins sold in Tibet.

Poaching has reduced India's wild tiger population to about 1,300.

China has hardly 20 wild tigers but about 4,000 captive tigers on farms that are supposedly a tourist attraction.

Activists claim that farmed tiger parts illegally end up in Chinese traditional medicine and as sex drugs.

Officially, domestic trade in tiger and leopard parts is illegal in China.

"We need to intensify efforts with the Chinese so that international tiger trade networks are smashed," Ramesh told *Hindustan Times*.

"Poaching in India is directly linked to international trade through Nepal and Myanmar border into China."

India will strategically refer

We need to intensify efforts with the Chinese so that international tiger trade networks are smashed.

JAIRAM RAMESH
Minister for Environment

to the zodiac and ask China to 'assure increased enforcement to curb the tiger/leopard skin and bone trade considering the Year of the Tiger in 2010'.

India will also nudge Chinese officials to send a message to consumers that the government is against this trade.

It's difficult for enforcement officials to distinguish between parts from a farmed and poached tiger.

Poaching is cheaper than breeding tigers and consumers prefer wild tiger parts.

India will again request China for 'active liaisoning' with Nepal to control tiger trafficking along the Indian border, a phasing-out of tiger farms and the destruction of stockpiles of tiger parts.

Ramesh will also propose setting up a ministerial-level joint working group on environment and forests.

In India, so far (as on August 15, 2009) 68 tigers have been killed.

NEIGHBOUR TROUBLE



Sino-India illegal trade

- Myanmar and Nepal are new routes for smuggling tiger body parts into China, suggest studies
- This was after the Tibetan route was closed when Dalai Lama asked Tibetans to shun tiger skins after Wildlife Protection Society of India expose showed tiger skins being sold in Tibet.

Prize catch

- In India, a local poacher may sell tiger body parts for anything from Rs 8,000 to Rs 15,000
- The same in the international market can fetch up to \$20,000

Dwindling numbers

- Till August 15 this year, 68 tigers have been killed of them, about 35 p.c. have either been poached or died because of unnatural causes
- In 2006, India had 1,411 tigers from 3,500 four years ago, since then 130 tiger deaths have been reported