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'Royal Bengal tiger population impressive'

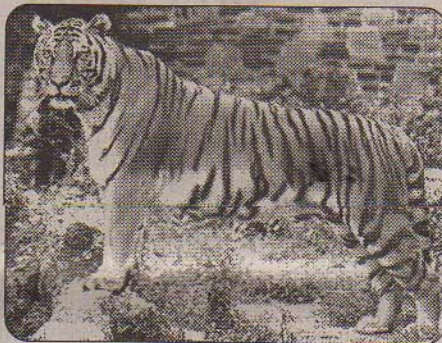
A Correspondent

JORHAT, April 17: Authorities of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) and officials of the State Forest Department are upbeat about the high population density of Royal Bengal tigers as revealed by the census conducted jointly by Wildlife Institute of India, Dehra Dun and Statebased NGO Aaranyak recently.

According to the figures, there are 32 tigers per 100 square kilometre of area which is even greater than the 20 per 100 sq km area found in the Corbett National Tiger Park. Assistant Conservator of Forests LN Baruah said that though the Forest Department had not conducted the census but had only been associated with the exercise said that the Project Tiger implemented in the Park in 2007 had borne excellent results.

"The Forest Department is proposing a separate census all over the State but these figures have surpassed expectations," he said. Baruah further said that the increase did not signify an decrease of habitat as the Park area had almost been doubled with five additions from the former 430 sq kms and there was additional jungle area in the Karbi hills.

The declining tiger population which had been pegged at 1,141 in the country had put the tiger on the endangered list of Wildlife Act. Former Director of Kaziranga National Park had earlier informed that the census be-



ing conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India and Aaranyak was scientifically sound compared to previous countings which were based on pug marks.

This time cameras with infra red sensors had been fixed all over the forest area covered by the Park and captured images of the cat at night when it broke a ray. "This prevents duplication as the stripe of each tiger varies just like human finger prints. If a photograph of the same tiger is taken twice the stripe can be matched by the computer and if it matches then one photograph can be discarded - something which cannot be done with pug marks," Vasu explained.