

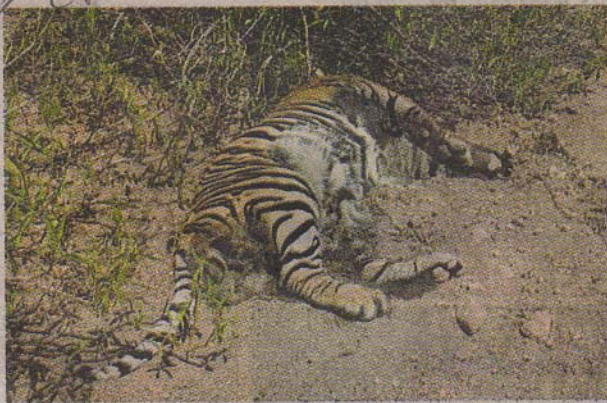
Ranthambhor tigers in danger'

Sunny Sebastian

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JAIPUR: Seasoned conservationist Harsh Vardhan has cautioned the Rajasthan authorities against more tiger deaths on account of man-animal conflict in the environs of the world famous Ranthambhor tiger reserve. About a dozen tigers in Ranthambhor National Park stand the danger of meeting the same fate as the two young tigers that were poisoned to death three days back by villagers after they had strayed out of protected territory, he warned.

"Only a drastic change in the style in conservation strategies at Ranthambhor, which should include soliciting the support of stakeholders in the neighbourhood, would prevent such a disaster," Mr. Vardhan said in a



One of the young male tigers found dead outside the Ranthambhor National Park over the past weekend.

letter to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. Man-animal conflict had been on in and around the Project Tiger area in Ranthambhor for years, he added.

The State Government in these years had confirmed in-

formation about tigers, tigresses and cubs straying out of the park and devouring the domestic cattle of villagers but it did precious nothing to resolve the conflict, Mr. Vardhan said. "What could be the

reason that the issue was not settled in the mutual interest of the project and the villagers inhibiting its vicinity when the Government could very well do it?" he wondered.

The letter pointed to acute shortage of staff in the prestigious park. "The upkeep and monitoring of the park have been left to the forest guard level staff whose number too is not adequate and who are not provided even with basic facilities. This is when they are expected to work 24 hours a day. The condition of senior employees among them is well known," he pointed out.

"In the Project Tiger area more attention is paid to the tourists reaching there than the conservation of tiger, India's national animal for which the project is there in the first place," Mr. Vardhan said.