

Cops zero in on Goa tribal youth who killed tiger

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ST-1 / WS

Two tribal youth from hunting Majik community poached a tiger by trapping the big cat into a snare in February last year, investigations by the State Forest department has revealed.

The accused have been identified as Naguesh and Ganesh Majik, both tribal residing at Sattari in north Goa, which is home to the Mhadei wildlife sanctuary, 65 km from the capital.

"I heard gunshots and saw



Naguesh firing the first shot. We were at a distance of about 50 m on a treetop and could see the poacher and his accomplice indulging in the

crime," said Ankush Majik, an eye-witness.

"Naguesh told Ganesh that the tiger was alive and asked him also to shoot at it. After a few seconds Ganesh Majik shot the tiger," Ankush told the investigators.

A copy of Ankush's statement is available with *The Pioneer*. Forest officials said that the tiger had been snared in a steelwire trap, which had cut through its belly, nearly exposing the animal's internal organs. Naguesh and Ganesh later shot the tiger

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dead, before extracted its teeth and claws.

The Majiks are traditional hunters in the region. Gopal Majik, a close relative of the accused, was arrested for poaching and possession of firearms.

Photographs of the tiger taken by Ankush Majik were circulated amongst his friends.

The same photos were later published in a national daily by a local journalist, Rajendra Kerkar.

After the story hit the headlines

in March last year (about a month after the killing), the poachers burnt the animal's carcass and buried it in an effort to destroy evidence.

The Forest department has come under severe criticism for lax investigation and targeting the whistleblower Kerkar, who has been named as an abettor by officials for keeping the source of the photographs a secret.

Chief conservator of forests Dr Shashi Kumar, however, said he did not want to enter into a controversy by commenting on the issue.