

TIGER, TIGER, BURNING BRIGHT...



BURNING THE DEAD: Officials secretly burning a tiger's carcass in Bannerghatta National Park

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Officials of Bannerghatta National Park dispose of the bodies before they announce the deaths



INHUMAN: It was found that nails were removed from a Cheetah's carcass 15 days ago, before it was secretly burnt

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THE death of three-year-old Divya, a young tigress, yesterday has thwarted the forest officials' claim that the recent deaths of big cats in Bannerghatta National Park were due to old age. What also lays this claim to waste is the fact that two other young tigers are battling for life.

Divya's sisters Minchu and Inchara are being treated for a bacterial infection, which the officials suspect could be because of food poisoning. This contradiction in official versions has raised many an eyebrow.

With the death of two lions and a tiger in a span of three days since last Friday, officials had said the animals were aged between 18 to 28 years and were suffering from various ailments. But there is no justified explanation for Divya's death, unlike other animals that died last week.

"We are waiting for the post-mortem report, but the doctors who treated Divya are suspecting a bacterial infection. It could be because of water contamination," said MN Jayakumar, member secretary of Karnataka Zoo Authority. He added that Minchu was critically ill, while Inchara was out of danger.

"The way in which the animals are dying, combined with the official reaction indicates something fishy," said N Manjunath, president, Nature and Wildlife Conservation Committee. "While the doctors are suspecting food poisoning, someone could have poisoned them deliberately."

When Harack, a tiger had died three months ago, post-mortem had revealed that it was because of cyanide poisoning. An investigation is still on. The officials have burnt the dead animals secretly before announcing their death.

"It is a strange practice being followed after Shankare Gowda took charge as Deputy Conservator of Forest. There is no transparency and accountability in the process. There are chances that nails may have been removed from the carcasses before consigning them to fire," said Manjunath.

It was found that nails were removed from a Cheetah's carcass 15 days ago, before it was secretly burnt.

While Gowda was not available for comments, Jayakumar said he would ensure transparency in the process henceforth. "The animals in the rehabilitation are not for public display and hence the officials had not informed the public

before they were cremated. However, now we have instructed the officials to inform the media before taking such steps," he added.



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— N MANJUNATH, PRESIDENT, NATURE AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

ROAD RAGE

A BEAR fractured its leg when a BMC mini bus hit the animal during a safari on Saturday. While there are vehicles specially designed for safaris, officials had hired BMC mini buses to match the festive season rush last weekend. Earlier, a BMC mini bus had turned turtle while negotiating a sharp curve at the same spot.