

# Just six tigers left in Palamau Tiger Reserve

*ST/CM/WS*  
**RANCHI, Nov 2:** The Palamau Tiger Reserve in Jharkhand is a perfect example of official apathy towards India's national animal. The reserve, which boasted of 42 tigers in 2003, has just six left now, as per the 2009 tiger census. In the last 10 years, the tiger population in the reserve has shown a continuous decline. From 42 tigers recorded in the 2003 census, the number declined to 38 in 2005 and to 17 in 2007. The numbers are in stark contrast to the tiger census of 1974, which recorded 50 tigers. According to field director of Palamau Tiger Reserve, P Upadhaya, the 2009 tiger census, which put the tiger population at six, was based on DNA analysis. "We had sent DNA samples of tigers to the Central Molecular Biology Institute of Hyderabad. The Hyderabad report we received this year said that six tigers existed in the reserve," Upadhaya said. He, however, added the DNA samples

were not comprehensive, and this could be the reason for the low number. "We have collected comprehensive samples of the tigers and sent them to the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun for

analysis," he said. "We have collected comprehensive samples of the tigers and sent them to the Wildlife Institute of India in Dehradun for an official said. He also cited forest fires, the Maoist presence, uneven distribution of prey in the reserve and also a few cases of poaching as the other causes. Upadhaya, however, denied accepting poaching as a reason for the falling numbers.



The Palamau Tiger Reserve, spread over 1,014 sq km, is divided into core and buffer areas, of 414 sq km and 600 sq km respectively. According to sources in the forest department, the core area is almost inaccessible, owing to a difficult terrain and Maoist presence. As a result, the tiger census is not conducted there. The reserve also has around 200 elephants, thousands of deer and monkeys, apart from peacocks, hen and rabbits. Activists have been urging the central and state governments to take urgent steps, after the census of 2007 put the total number of tigers in the country at 1,411. (IANS)

analysis," he said.

The 2010 tiger census is currently under way. Forest officials, however, give many reasons for the decline in the population of tigers in the Palamau reserve. "The previous census reports appear inflated. Only DNA samples can give correct figures of the tiger population. Earlier, pug marks were used for the census, which cannot