



CHITTAGONG: Many dwelling houses were damaged by Monday's cyclone at Laldiar char under Patenga thana here. The owner of one such house, Akhter Mia is seen engaged in rebuilding it anew, while his wife and two children look on. - Star photo by AKM Mohsin

Tiger hunting alarmingly increases in Sundarbans

KHULNA. May 24: As many as three hundred and twenty-five persons were killed by man-eater tigers of the Sundarbans during last ten years, according to a reliable source.

Sources said 33 persons were killed in 1987, 52 in 1988, 33 in 1989, 43 in 1990, 42 in 1991, 13 in 1992, 42 in 1993, 32 in 1994, 16 in 1995 and 18 in 1996. Most of the victims were honey collectors, bawali and fishermen. Tigers attack honey collectors and wood cutters in the deep forest.

The sources further said that most of the dead bodies remain untraced because, man-eaters conceal dead bodies in the deep forest. They prefer decomposed flesh for eating.

The sources further said that forty-two man-eaters were also killed during the same period by professional hunters and villagers.

The DFO, when contacted, said that those who were killed by tigers were either poachers or intruders involve in the acts in violation of the wild-life Preservation Act. The intruders or poachers did not follow proper way in getting into the forest.

Meanwhile, there are lot of allegations that the intruders are allegedly killing tigers for collecting skin, head, fat, nails and teeth for smuggling. As a

result, the population of Royal Bengal Tigers has been reduced.

At least twenty-two Royal Bengal Tigers are reported to have been killed by the alleged poachers in last five years, said a Forest Ranger who prefers anonymity. The poachers enter into the forest, bribing a section of forest officials. By constructing make-shift camps they kill deer and tigers. A Forest Guard said that the poachers kill deer for killing tigers. The *modus operandi* is that poison is injected into the dead body of a deer and placed in an open space at least half-a-kilometre from poachers' make-shift camp. The tiger dies after eating poisoned flesh of the deer.

It is learnt from a reliable source, skin, teeth, nail, fat and head of tigers killed are processed in the forest and thereafter sent to the smugglers through their local agents. Skin of a Royal Bengal Tigers is sold at between Taka two and three lakh.

On November 9 of 1989, BDR jawans of Satkhira recovered three pieces of tiger skin from a boat plying in the Ichamati river near India-Bangladesh border. On July 30, 1990 police recovered eight pieces of tiger skin and some teeth of Royal Bengal Tiger (RBT) from Khalpetua river of Satkhira district. On July 9 in 1991, po-

lice recovered four pieces of skin of RBT from a passenger bus bound for Dhaka from Satkhira. On August 17, 1992 members of the customs intelligence recovered three pieces of skin from a first class residential hotel in Dhaka.

On October 12, 1992 police recovered two pieces of skin from a passenger bus bound for Dhaka from Jessore. But fact

remains that no smuggler could be nabbed during these raids. Of course, on July 19 of 1995 police recovered two tails and a piece of eleven-feet long skin from an alleged smuggler named Aziz Master who was going to Satali border on bicycle, a few miles off Satkhira town.

Forest officials said that tigers enter into local villages they become fed up with the disturbance by the poachers. In last one year at least twenty people of Joymorghol and Burhigolani villages under Swarankhola thana were killed by man-eaters. Official sources said at least 15 tigers died in the devastating cyclone and tidal surge that lashed the Sundarbans on November 29 of 1988.

According to official source, a project of one crore and ninety six lakh taka was taken up during 1981-82 fiscal for preservation of wildlife in the Sundarbans.

The ASF gave a patient hearing to confirm the allegations from many persons for about eight hours.

It may be mentioned, immediately after joining of Abdul Matin as the Officer-in-Charge in the said thana law and order situation deteriorated very fast. In view of this 12-union parishad (UP) chairman brought the allegations against him in writing and sent those to Home Ministry and other higher administrative officers concerned.

The inquiry officer called all the chairmen of union parishes and gave a patient hearing. Meanwhile, one advocate Md Rezaul Huq filed a case of defamation against Abdul Matin under Section 501 and 502 in Daulatpur court.

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