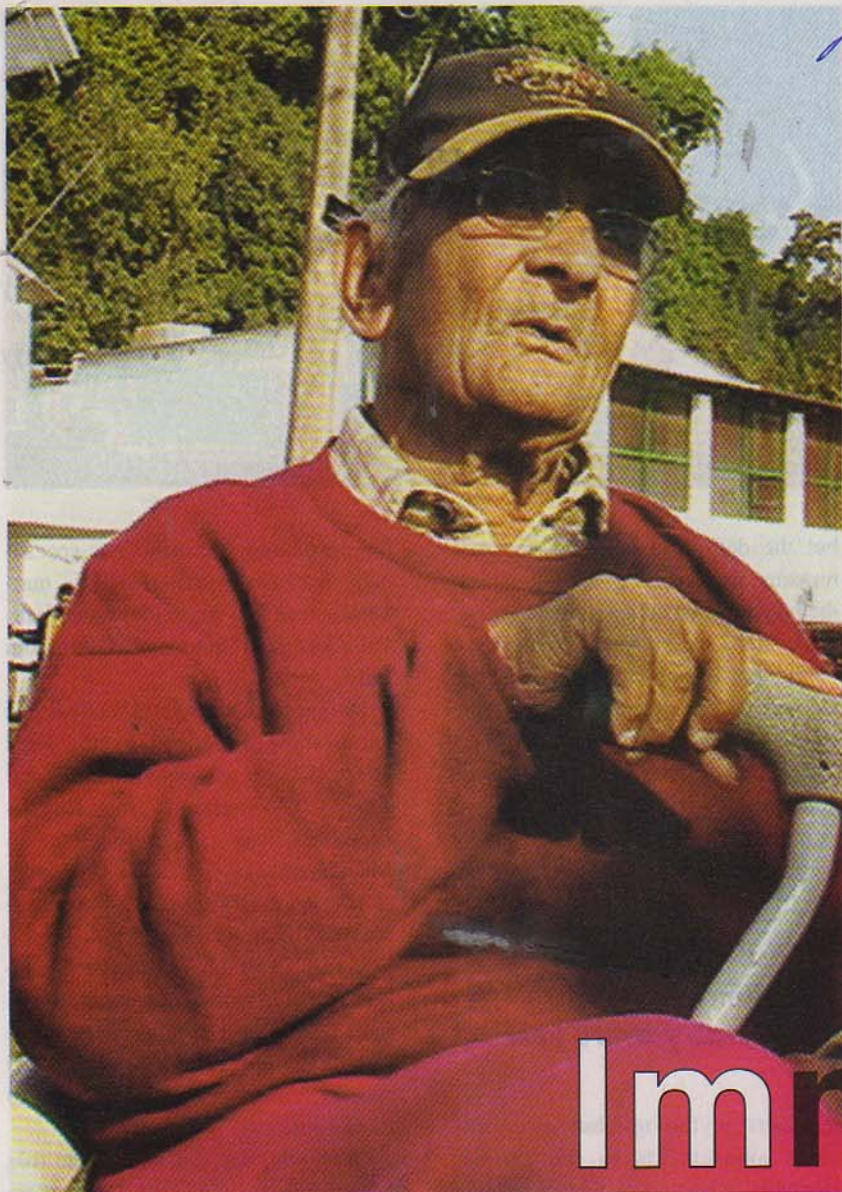


OBITUARY

BILLY ARJAN SINGH



Immortal in wilderness

Biswajeet Banerjee / Lucknow

The living legend of conservation in India, Billy Arjan Singh who was cremated at his Lakhimpur Kheri residence on Sunday morning, is survived by his true legacy – the tigers of Dudhwa National Park.

For, had it not been for the phenomenal spirit of this frail looking man, the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve would not have been what it is

He had named his residence as 'Tiger Haven'. And in fact, he was instrumental in creating one for the striped big cats of Uttar Pradesh.

today. Wildlife activists mourned the death of the man who even at the age of 92, kept writing to Project Tiger officials for the tigers' cause.

Members of the Tiger Haven Society, which he had founded, said that they would urge the UP

Government to name the Dudhwa National Park after him.

Billy, who had gone for a routine medical checkup on Friday evening, became unwell after he returned and died in the midst of a coughing bout. Members of the Tiger Haven

The metal detectors used by Indian Army to detect explosive mines would now be used in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve to detect metal snares used by poachers to catch tigers.

Traffic India, a wing of the WWF, has armed the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve with four sophisticated Deep Search Metal Detectors to catch the poachers. These metal detectors would give additional teeth to the foresters to fight the poachers, V P Singh, a senior forest official, disclosed.

"The DSMD or the deep search metal detectors are generally used by Indian army to detect explosive mines. Their capability to detect iron material would help in detecting iron contraptions and traps used to catch tigers in dense forests," Rahul Dutta, co-ordinator of Traffic India said.

The poachers generally use iron traps called "kudka" or "khatka" to catch big cats. These are placed stealthily at those places frequented by tigers. These are camouflaged with dry leaves and green foliage. Once animal accidentally puts its foot over

it, the trap closes and the animal is caught. Then poachers kill the animal.

"These metal snares are very difficult to locate because these are cleverly camouflaged. The sophisticated DSMD is capable to detect iron traps even if these are buried two feet deep into the ground or even under water. These are effective in catching these traps," Dutta said.

The Traffic India has provided four DSMD to Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and similar contraptions would be provided to Kishanpur wildlife sanctuary and Katarniyaghat Wildlife sanctuary. The Uttar Pradesh forest department has been promised more such devices if needs arise.

The DSMD is already being used in Bandhavgarh and Kanha Tiger Reserves in MP, Corbett and Rajaji National Parks in Uttarakhand, Simli Tiger Reserve in Orissa, Raipur Tiger Reserve in Chhattishgarh and Sariska Tiger reserve in Rajasthan. "The new contraption has given a

positive result in these national parks and expect the same in Dudhwa where poachers are active despite government's best efforts," the Traffic India official said.

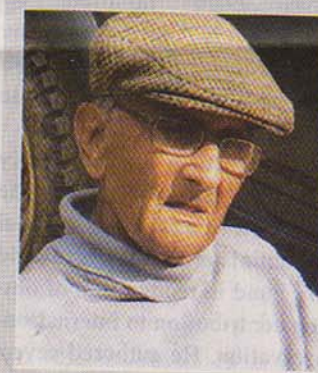
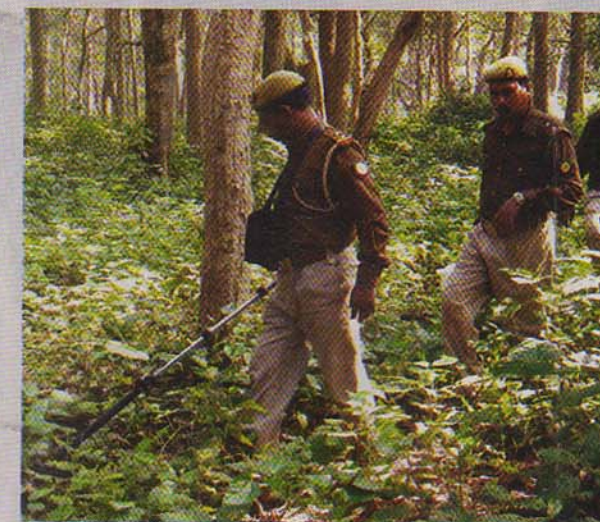
The DSMD in Dudhwa were put to test early this month when 24 metal snares were hidden in the routes frequented by tigers and the foresters detected these snares within three hours.

"This new contraption would strengthen the arms of the forest guards in their fight against poachers. Now, the forest guards would be able to cover much more area in lesser time," forest minister Fateh Bahadur

Singh said.

The DSMD are battery operated and could be charged even with car or tractor batteries. This costs Rs 80,000 which includes training cost. "This is a small price we are ready to pay to protect tigers," the minister said.

Halting steps, at last



Had it not been for the phenomenal spirit of this frail looking man, the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve would not have been what it is today.

Society and several forest officials soon rushed to his residence.

This scion of the royal Kapurthala family, who bagged the highest of awards in wildlife conservation, was not a conservationist originally. Starting out as a hunter, the man was deeply touched by an incident and took to conservation.

It was during one of his hunting forays into the jungles of Balrampur district in the 60's, when he gunned down a female leopard. As the leop-