



Vol. XXV, No. 5

October 2019 (No. 141)

## **LIST OF CONTENTS**

### **EDITORIAL**

**The battle over Aarey in Mumbai**

### **NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES**

#### **Andhra Pradesh**

Training on wildlife crime for foresters in coastal Andhra

#### **Assam**

12 villages in Nagaon set aside 33 ha for plantations for elephants

#### **Assam/Chhattisgarh**

Wild buffaloes to be translocated from Manas NP to Udanti WLS in Chhattisgarh

#### **Bihar**

Tiger reserve proposal for Kaimur WLS, adjoining forests

#### **Goa**

550 wetlands identified for protection in Goa  
Goa FD mulls creation of marine wildlife division

#### **Haryana**

Survey reveals eight sympatric species of amphibians in Aravalli Biodiversity Park

#### **Karnataka**

Bannerghatta NP has 40 leopards: Study  
MM Hills WLS to get tiger reserve status

#### **Karnataka/Kerala**

SC upholds Bandipur TR night traffic ban  
Kerala wants elevated corridor to bypass Bandipur night traffic ban; Karnataka insists on using alternative route

#### **Kerala**

5,706 elephants recorded in Kerala

#### **Maharashtra**

Tigress found dead in cotton field in Chandrapur district; 12th death in state in 2019

Demolition of ashram inside Tungareshwar WLS begins; devotees protest

Tigress Avni's female cub will be released in the wild in November

MoEFCC proposes dissolving Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority

ESZs declared around Tungareshwar and Tansa Wildlife Sanctuaries

BMC looking for consultants and contractors for GMLR tunnels through SGNP

SGNP's caged leopards may be kept in proposed Aarey zoo: BMC

Fight over Aarey land for metro project in the vicinity of SGNP

#### **Maharashtra/Madhya Pradesh**

Two convicted for tiger poaching in Vidarbha in 2012-13

#### **Odisha**

3000 crocodiles born in Bhitarkanika NP in 2019

#### **Rajasthan**

Tourists' number exceeds carrying capacity of Ranthambhore TR: evaluation study

#### **Sikkim**

Lepcha community opposes Centre's move to open Kanchenjunga to foreigners; IMF to not issue permits

#### **Tamil Nadu**

Granite crushing unit approved in area adjoining Sathyamangalam TR

Marginal increase in wildlife numbers in Kodaikanal Forest Division

8

3

3

4

4

5

5

6

6

7

8

12

13

13

13

14

<b>Uttar Pradesh</b>	<b>15</b>	'Canines for Felines' awards for dogs helping in wildlife crime detection	
Tusker electrocuted in Dudhwa TR; third case in 15 months			
<b>Uttar Pradesh/Uttarakhand</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE</b>	<b>20</b>
Grasslands in Hastinapur WLS decrease by 55% in three decades; swamp deer threatened		<b>Assam</b>	
<b>Uttarakhand</b>	<b>15</b>	NGT directs state to declare ESZ for Deepor Beel	
Cabinet approval for Corbett special tiger protection force		<b>Gujarat/Rajasthan</b>	
SC stops road construction in corridor between Rajaji and Corbett TRs; state forest minister seeks PM's intervention		Gujarat may have to send its female GIBs to Rajasthan for breeding	
<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Manipur</b>	
36% elephant attack victims inebriated and chasing the animal: study		Loktak Lake Fishermen Union welcomes court order on conservation of Loktak, other wetlands	
		<b>READERS WRITE</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>FROM THE ARCHIVES</b>	<b>23</b>
WII launches Ganga Data Collector App			
MoEFCC dilutes environment clearance norms for developmental projects in buffer zones of PAs		<b>PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>24</b>
		The battle for Dahanu	

### **Protected Area Update**

Vol. XXV, No. 5, October 2019 (No. 141)

Editor: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**

Editorial Assistance: **Reshma Jathar, Anuradha Arjunwadkar**

Illustrations

**Ashvini Menon (Visual Design Studio), Shruti Kulkarni,  
Madhuvanti Anantharajan & Peeyush Sekhsaria**

Produced by

**Kalpavriksh** and the **Centre for Policy Studies, IIT Bombay**

Editorial Address

**C/o Kalpavriksh**

Apartment 5, Shri Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra, India.

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239; Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com

Website: <http://kalpavriksh.org/index.php/conservation-livelihoods1/protected-area-update>

### **Publication of the PA Update has been supported by**

**Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust**

**C/o Foundation for Ecological Security** <http://fes.org.in/>

**Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies and**

**Donations from a number of individual supporters**

## EDITORIAL

### The battle over Aarey in Mumbai

On the 12th of September, 2019, the Mumbai editions of prominent English dailies, *The Hindu*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Indian Express* included, carried a full page advertisement issued by the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation (MMRC) headlined 'The truth that you should know'. The matter is related to the raging controversy over land being sought by the MMRC in the Aarey Milk Colony in the vicinity of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). The centre piece of the advertisement was a huge two column table highlighting 'myths' being spread by citizen activists opposing the take over of the Aarey land and 'facts' as the corporation would have the citizens believe. One myth is that the 'Aarey Milk Colony is a forest', another that 'There is wildlife in the Car Depot land'.

It is also worthy of notice, and something many pointed out immediately, that the MMRC was forced to buy an entire page in all these news dailies to put across its point of view. It was forced to spend a huge amount of money - running most likely into crores of rupees - to challenge the claims of a motley group of citizens and activists.

At stake on the ground is a patch of land of about 30 ha that the corporation needs to build the metro car depot. This patch of land, the corporation notes in the advertisement, is only 2.5% of the total land area of the Aarey Milk Colony and almost nothing compared to the 11,687 ha of land that comprises SGNP. What is the big deal then? seems to be the implication in the way the 'facts' are placed and argued for. Activists and conservationists, of course, have a different narrative and a different interpretation about the facts - Aarey for them is a forest and wildlife is indeed to be found in the land where the depot will come up. They have even offered documentary evidence of the same - government documents, scientific reports and

many observations and photographs. Here is the construction of an alternate reality based on different stakes and different values. While these claims and counter-claims are central to the issue, what is perhaps more interesting is that there is a controversy at all in the first place.

This creating of a different narrative is not an easy thing to do considering the power asymmetries at play - the MMRC is, after all, a joint venture of the Government of India and the Government of Maharashtra and this is a project where construction contracts would run into 1000s of crores of rupees. One needs also to only look at the situation across the country - something the PA Update has been reporting issue after issue - to note the significance of challenging the dominant narrative. 100s of sq kms of pristine forests, grasslands and wetlands as also tribal and rural communities are being sacrificed at the alter of development in this country on a regular basis and not a word is heard about it. The juggernaut rolls on unquestioned, unchallenged.

The one page advertisement by the MMRC gives hope precisely because it highlights the possibility of creating a counter narrative by uncovering the power dynamics involved. And also because there is no way citizens and activists can buy a full page in a prominent newspaper to present their side of the picture and their version of 'myths' and 'truths'.

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### Training on wildlife crime for foresters in coastal Andhra

A special training on investigative methods for solving wildlife crimes was offered to the field staff in coastal Andhra Pradesh. Titled 'Wildlife Crime and Wildlife Protection', the workshop was organised in the month of August by the state forest department in collaboration with

Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Rajamahendravaram in East Godavari district.

The workshop was aimed at providing critical inputs to the wildlife staff deployed at Kolleru, Krishna and Coringa Wildlife Sanctuaries. A special action plan is also being designed to help the staff at Kolleru to register wildlife offences as per the existing legal procedures, and to act on seizures, illegal possession of wild animals and other materials.

Source: 'WII experts, Forest Dept. team up to strengthen wildlife crime investigation in A.P.', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 24/08/19.

## ASSAM

### 12 villages in Nagaon set aside 33 ha for plantations for elephants

A cluster of 12 villages of the Ronghang-Hatikhuli area in Nagaon district have decided to set aside 203 bighas (roughly 33 ha) of community land for paddy for elephants that often come down the hills of the adjoining Karbi Anglong district. The 'jumbo kheti' has been envisaged as the last line of defence against some 350-400 elephants that have often paid the price themselves for venturing too close to human habitations. Five of them were electrocuted by illegal electric fences in the last 16 months while half a dozen, injured by spears and arrows, died in the jungles up the hills.

About 10 km from the paddy field, toward the hills, is an eight-ha plantation of Napier grass that 35 reformed hunters have grown for the elephants. This plantation is on land belonging to a tea estate. The locals have also planted saplings of 2,000 outenga (elephant apple), 1,500 jackfruit and 25,000 banana plants on barren land between the paddy field and the grass plantation.

The paddy cultivation initiative has been taken up by local environmentalist Binod Dulu Bora and the NGO Hatibondhu that he is associated with. The idea of growing paddy for elephants was proposed by the NGO and once the villagers were convinced of its relevance they decided to donate land and labour for the

same. The forest department (FD) has chipped in to provide solar electric fences around the crop area. The fencing will be removed once the paddy has ripened for the elephants to feed on.

The nearest fields where the villagers have grown crops for themselves and for trade are five km away. It is hoped that by the time the elephants finish the crop grown for them, the villagers will have harvested their own crop and there will be no losses.

Elephants in the area have already been seen feeding on the grasses planted in the hills as part of the initiative. The villagers who have been living in dread of the elephants for years, are hopeful that the experiment will succeed and ensure their co-existence with the animals.

Source: Rahul Karmakar. 'Assam villagers donate land for elephant meal zones', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 13/08/19.

## ASSAM/CHHATTISGARH

### Wild buffaloes to be translocated from Manas NP to Udanti WLS in Chhattisgarh

Five female wild buffaloes will soon be translocated from the Manas National Park (NP) in Assam to Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Chhattisgarh. A protocol for the translocation was recently finalised by scientists and government officials. The effort is in response to the fact that the current wild buffalo population in Udanti is only nine, three of which are females.

The five animals are likely to be brought to Udanti in October and will be kept under observation for a few days before release into the wild. While the government will provide the infrastructure, the Wildlife Trust of India will provide technical support.

The estimated population of the wild buffaloes (*Bubalus arnee*) in the Northeast is around 3,000-4,000, the largest in the country, and accounts for 92% of the world population.

Source: Sidharth Yadav. 'From Assam to Chhattisgarh, a maiden 1,500-km journey for wild buffaloes', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 13/08/19.

## BIHAR

### **Tiger reserve proposal for Kaimur WLS, adjoining forests**

The Bihar government is considering declaring the Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and adjoining forests as a tiger reserve (TR). This will then become the 2nd TR in the state.

The first initiative to develop Kaimur into a TR was made in 2018 by the then Kaimur divisional forest officer, Satyajeet Kumar, who had sent a proposal to the forest department (FD) after he sighted two tigers, their pug marks and carcasses of deer and other animals killed by tigers in 2017.

According to the FD, the forests of Kaimur are spread over 1,134 sq. km including the 986 sq. km of the sanctuary. The Kaimur forests are connected to forests in the neighbouring states of Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Source: Mohd. Imran Khan. 'Bihar plans another tiger reserve in Kaimur', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 29/08/19.

## GOA

### **550 wetlands identified for protection in Goa**

Goa has identified 550 wetlands spread over 213.8 sq. km for protection even as the process continues for identifying more. Around 5.8% of the state's total area of 3792 sq. km is covered by wetlands. The Goa State Wetland Authority (GSA) has relied on the national wetlands atlas, 2011 that was prepared by the Indian Space Research Organization as a baseline document to identify wetlands in the state.

Kashinath Shetye, a social activist, had filed an application before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) seeking to expedite the process of inventorying the wetlands in Goa. The NGT in response directed the state to consider identifying wetlands of less than five ha to be protected under existing wetlands rules or the relevant act of the state, if framed or passed.

GSA had decided to notify four of the important wetlands, as identified in the wetlands atlas - Selaulim reservoir, Anjunem reservoir, Carambolim lake and Chora Wildlife Sanctuary. However, after issuing instructions to the state biodiversity board, it was found out that Selaulim and Anjunem do not fulfill the criteria for being declared as wetlands. While some more wetlands have been identified, GSA has sought more time for the survey to prepare a final list.

NGT has granted GSA three more months to complete the inventory of wetlands and file a report. The next hearing in the matter has been fixed on December 3, 2019.

Source: '550 wetlands identified in Goa, to be protected', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 12/08/19.

### **Goa FD mulls creation of marine wildlife division**

The increasingly frequent instances of injured and dead turtles getting beached on Goa's coastline, and the more recent sperm whale carcass that washed ashore on Bimvel beach, has urged the Goa Forest Department (FD) to contemplate the establishment of a marine wildlife division. Rescue operations and other duties pertaining to aquatic life are currently handled by the department's wildlife section and the two territorial divisions in North and South Goa, respectively.

The FD informed that in the financial year 2018-19, a total of 29 turtles washed ashore on the beaches of North Goa alone. They were released after being treated for their injuries. Doctors from the department of animal husbandry and veterinary services are pressed into service for the treatment of injured marine animals and forest officials have said that a dedicated, specialised team is needed to help manage issues related to marine wildlife.

The FD is now attempting to create two specialised marine divisions, one each in North and South Goa. Each division will have a forest guard, forester and a range forest officer

who will look after the marine life. They will also ensure that animal carcasses washed ashore are disposed of safely and scientifically.

Source: 'Goa: Forest department mulls over marine wildlife division', 30/09/19.  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com)

## **HARYANA**

### **Survey reveals eight sympatric species of amphibians in Aravalli Biodiversity Park**

An amphibian survey conducted during the monsoons by Robin Suyesh, biologist and assistant professor, Sri Venkateswara College in Delhi, has revealed the presence of eight species of sympatric amphibians in the Aravalli Biodiversity Park (ABP). Four species – Bull frog, Indian skipper frog, Narrow-mouthed frog and Pierre's wart frog were reported earlier, while the latest survey has found four more species – Nepal's wart frog, Indian toad, Indus valley toad and Indian burrowing frog.

The report has pointed out that amphibians in urban areas are facing a major crisis of habitat loss. Also, that conservation efforts for amphibians must protect the full range of habitat required by all life history stages. Thus, the waterbodies and adjoining terrestrial habitat in ABP needs to be protected to prevent amphibians from becoming locally extinct.

The National Capital Region has very limited suitable habitat for amphibians and ABP is among its best.

Source: 'DU professor finds new frog species in Aravalis',  
[www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com),  
14/08/19.

## **KARNATAKA**

### **Bannerghatta NP has 40 leopards: Study**

The first ever scientific study on leopards in Bannerghatta National Park (NP) has estimated that there are 40 leopards in the protected area.

Titled 'Leopards of Bannerghatta National Park', the study was carried out by Sanjay Gubbi and his team from the Nature Conservation Foundation in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department using camera traps.

The study attributed the abundance of leopards to two factors: the presence of sambar and chital in good numbers which act as a natural prey for leopards and the absence of a large number of tigers which compete with leopards for food and space.

The study has recommended that the connectivity between Bannerghatta and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary needs to be maintained because it recorded two leopards here that were previously recorded in Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary in 2018. It has also strongly recommended against laying of new roads as many roads exist already and a few leopards have also died in road accidents.

Further, the authors note that the northwestern part of Bannerghatta is connected to 3,250 acres of deemed forests (forests under the ownership of revenue department), Gullalligudda, B.M. Kaaval, U.M. Kaaval Reserved Forests, and Roerich Estate. These forests form a contiguous patch of 5,375 acres of good wildlife habitat and should, hence, be together notified as a Conservation Reserve.

Source: 'Bannerghatta National Park has 40 leopards: Study', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com),  
27/09/19.

### **MM Hills WLS to get tiger reserve status**

The Malai Mahadeshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary (MMHWS), spread over an area of 907 sq km and home to 15 tigers as per the 2018 census, will soon get the status of a tiger reserve (TR). It will become the sixth TR in the state and the 51st in the country. The Centre had sought a few clarifications regarding enclosures in the core area and the concerned authorities have sent a report on the same.

The sanctuary is contiguous with the Biligiri Ranga Temple TR on the western side and the Satyamangalam TR in Tamil Nadu on the southern side.



Source: Meera Bhardwaj, 'MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka to soon get tiger reserve status', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 24/08/19.

## KARNATAKA/KERALA

### SC upholds Bandipur TR night traffic ban

Upholding the nine-hour Bandipur Tiger Reserve (TR) night traffic ban, the Supreme Court (SC) has said that once the National Highway Authority of India completes the upgradation of the alternative alignment, even the existing stretch must be closed for traffic so that wildlife is protected. It also directed the Centre to come up with permanent measures so that highways do not pass through core areas of tiger reserves (TRs).

The Centre had, in May, filed an affidavit in the SC recommending continuation of the night traffic ban on national highway 766 (earlier 212) that traverses Bandipur. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways supported Karnataka and Tamil Nadu's stand to maintain the status quo on restrictions for night travel in Bandipur and dropped its proposal for an elevated corridor in the TR.

The issue has made numerous headlines in the last decade with activists and wildlife groups filing intervening petitions and holding protest movements for continuation of the ban. The ban was overturned after protests from Kerala against the ban. It was, however, restored in 2010 by the Karnataka High Court (HC) due to rising incidents of wildlife being killed in road accidents. The court permitted an equal but restricted number of Karnataka and Kerala Road Transport Corporation buses to ply during the ban hours. Emergency vehicles were permitted from both the states.

In 2010, the HC order was challenged by Kerala, which filed a special leave petition (SLP) in the SC. Many rounds of talks between the chief ministers of the two states followed but failed to resolve the issue as Karnataka was firm in its decision of restrictions on this highway and also built an alternative road at a cost of Rs

75 crore. (Also see PA Updates (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXV, No. 1; Vol. XXIV, No. 6; Vol. XXII, No. 1; Vol. XXI, Nos. 2 & 1; Vol. XVII, No. 6; Vol. XVI, Nos. 3 & 2; Vol. XV, Nos. 5 & 4 and Vol. XIV, No. 6).

Source: Meera Bhardwaj, 'Supreme Court upholds night traffic ban in Bandipur', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 08/08/19.

### Kerala wants elevated corridor to bypass Bandipur night traffic ban; Karnataka insists on using alternative route

The Kerala government is looking to bypass the existing night traffic ban on a 25 km stretch of national highway 212 through the Bandipur Tiger Reserve with the help of an elevated corridor (see accompanying story). The government has reportedly offered to fund half the project and Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan has written to the Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar with the proposal.

However, the principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) - wildlife, Karnataka, Punnati Sridhar, has pointed out that the Centre has not supported such a corridor and the Supreme Court too also directed the use of the alternative Hunsur-Gonikoppa-Kutta-Mananthavady road. The PCCF also said that there is already an alternative route with only a 40 km-detour and the Karnataka government has spent Rs. 75 crore on it.

The Kerala government's suggestion to construct the elevated corridor has been viewed as a disastrous move by Karnataka as well as environmentalists from both the states. A lawyer and environmental activist said that another project by Kerala government to enhance the state's resilience against the impacts of natural disasters and climate change, approved by the World Bank, itself states that no fragmentation of forest by new highways is allowed. Another concerned citizen has pointed out that there are plenty of national highways with a night traffic ban including in the Nagarhole National Park and people are not complaining about it. It has also been pointed out that in most cases Kerala

registration vehicles were involved of roadkills in Karnataka.

Source: Korah Abraham, Soumya Chatterjee. 'Kerala CM's push for Bandipur elevated corridor irks environmentalists in both states', [www.thenewsminute.com](http://www.thenewsminute.com), 29/08/19.

## KERALA

### 5,706 elephants recorded in Kerala

The latest survey of wild elephants in Kerala has recorded a marginal drop in their number from 6,177 in the 2012 census to 5,706 presently. The present number has been arrived at by using the dung count method. The direct count method employed in the past had put the numbers as 3,054 and 2,735 for 2017 and 2012 respectively.

Elephant-range states and union territories had proposed the more regular use of the dung count method, which was then accepted by the government. According to the dung count method, the elephant population in the country in 2017 was reported to be 29,964 in 2017. The direct count method had put the number at 27,312.

Source: Dhinesh Kallungal, 'Survey: Marginal decline seen in Kerala's wild elephant population', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 05/08/19.

## MAHARASHTRA

### Tigress found dead in cotton field in Chandrapur district; 12th death in state in 2019

A young tigress was found dead of suspected poisoning in a cotton field at Gondpimpri in Chandrapur district in the month of August. The post-mortem revealed that, prima facie, the cause of death was poisoning.

A wild boar carcass was also found nearby. A senior forest official said it could not be ascertained if the poisoning was intentional as pesticides sprayed in the cotton fields may

have poisoned the carcass. Meat recovered from the tiger's intestines will be sent to the regional forensic science laboratory at Nagpur for toxicology and histopathology analysis.

The Central Chanda forest division under the Chandrapur territorial circle, where the dead tigress was found, has around 16 tigers. The area lies in proximity to Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) and Brahmapuri forest division, which have around 85-90 and 40 tigers respectively. There is also the possibility that the animal may have migrated from neighbouring Telangana.

The tiger deaths in Maharashtra this year now stands at 12. This includes a female and her two sub-adult cubs that were poisoned at Brahmapuri in Chandrapur and two cases of poaching – one at Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary on March 16, and the other in TATR on April 13.

Year	Tiger Deaths
2019 (till August)	12
2018	20
2017	21
2016	15
2015	12
2014	7
2013	10

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni. 'Maharashtra: Tigress dies of poisoning, wild boar carcass found nearby', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 26/08/19.

### Demolition of ashram inside Tungareshwar WLS begins; devotees protest

Demolition of the Balayogi Shri Sadanand Maharaj Ashram, which is spread over half a hectare within the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), began amid tight police security in the last week of August. The demolition began following Supreme Court (SC) orders of May 7, directing the same. August 31 was set as the deadline for the demolition.

The demolition was strongly opposed by devotees who gathered at the ashram. The six km road leading to the ashram was closed and



heavy police security was deployed right from the entrance of the sanctuary located on the Mumbai- Ahmedabad national highway. The state's plea to grant an extension till November 7 for the demolition was turned down by the SC.

In 2004, the Bombay Environment Action Group, had filed a plea before the SC appointed central empowered committee (CEC) alleging degradation and threat to wildlife in the sanctuary by the ashram's alleged encroachment. The CEC had in 2009 directed that the ashram be relocated to Shahapur taluka of Thane district.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIV, Nos. 4 & 3).

Source: Sandhya Nair. 'Demolition of ashram in Tungareshwar wildlife sanctuary in Vasai begins', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 26/08/19.  
'Highway blocked to protest demolition of illegal ashram in Tungareshwar Hills in Vasai', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 30/08/19.  
Ram Parmar and Badri Chatterjee. 'At Tungareshwar wildlife sanctuary: Ashram trustees demolish part of structure', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 27/08/19.

### **Tigress Avni's female cub will be released in the wild in November**

The female cub (T1C2) of tigress Avni (T1) will be released in the wild in November. According to the state forest department and National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) officials, the cub will be two-year-old by then; old enough to take care of herself. T1C2 was rescued a month after T1 was killed in November 2018 (*PA Update* Vol. XXV, No. 2) for having killed 13 people in Yavatmal district. The cub was then kept in Pench Tiger Reserve and was under constant closed-circuit television surveillance. The location of her release is yet to be decided.

Maharashtra's principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife), Nitin Kakodkar, said that the decision to release the cub was taken after she began hunting and managed to

fend for herself without help. Her dispersal and the territory will be monitored post release.

The FD had launched a massive hunt to capture T1's male and female cubs after the tigress was killed. It had installed 111 camera traps, 54 pug impression pads and deployed 10 teams across a 160 sq. km area in Pandharkawada of Yawatmal district. T1C2 was captured on December 22 last year with the help of the Madhya Pradesh FD. The male cub T1C1 jumped over a 10-foot high chain-link fence at one of the forest divisions in January and has not been seen since. Efforts to trap T1C1 have continued but not successful on account of the monsoons, difficult terrain and the vegetation

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'Tigress Avni's cub to be released in the wild after a year of foster care', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 24/08/19.

### **MoEFCC proposes dissolving Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority**

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has filed an application in the Supreme Court to dissolve the Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority (DTEPA), which was created 23 years ago to protect the ecologically fragile area's horticulture and fishing industries from industrial pollution.

MoEFCC in its application has stated that DTEPA may no longer be necessary as newer regulations and authorities such as the State Coastal Zone Management Authority, Water Quality Assessment Authority, Aquaculture Authority, and Central Ground Water Authority are in place to protect coastal areas. MoEFCC has proposed the formation of a monitoring committee to replace DTEPA, which would be similar to other committees for eco sensitive zones in India and have a fixed tenure of three years. The MoEFCC also informed the court that DTEPA costs it Rs. 50 lakh per annum.

Activists have, however, alleged that DTEPA is being targeted for its refusal to allow the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust to build an

international port at Vadhavan, a fishing village in the region. The DTEPA had in 1998 rejected the proposal to build the port and had in 2017 again reiterated that the project cannot begin without DTEPA's permission.

It has also been pointed out that this was one of the first authorities that worked independent of the state or Centre for the protection of ecologically fragile zones.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'Environment ministry wants Dahanu green panel scrapped, files plea in SC', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 16/08/19.

### **ESZs declared around Tungareshwar and Tansa WLS**

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change recently declared areas around Tungareshwar and Tansa Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLSs) as eco sensitive zones (ESZs). The ESZ will comprise an area of 67.26 sq. km, extending from 100 m to four km around Tungareshwar WLS, while 490.29 sq. km, extending from 250 m to nine km from the boundary of the park, will be the ESZ around Tansa WLS. The ESZ around Tansa will include 150 villages.

In January, earlier this year, Vanashakti, an NGO, had petitioned the Bombay High Court for the creation of a 10-km wide buffer zone around Tungareshwar WLS that would cover an area of 260 sq km. It had said that stone quarrying, construction, land filling and deforestation around the sanctuary is degrading the ecosystem. An expert committee had suggested that fragmented forest patches observed in the map northwest of Tungareshwar WLS be included in the ESZ. The state government had, however, expressed its inability to do so stating that the area is surrounded by densely-populated municipalities.

Vanashakti has expressed disappointment over the watered-down proposal, but noted that it was a start and declaring the ESZs was better than nothing.

Source: 'Maharashtra: Areas around Tansa, Tungareshwar sanctuaries are now eco sensitive zones', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 10/08/19.  
'Mumbai: Centre grants Tungareshwar, Tansa reserves 'eco-sensitive zone' status', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 11/08/19.

### **BMC looking for consultants and contractors for GMLR tunnels through SGNP**

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is looking for contractors and consultants to develop a suitable design for the underground tunnels through the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) as part of the Goregaon Mulund Link Road (GMLR) project. After floating an expression of interest in July, BMC has met prospective stakeholders from Korea, Japan, China, Hong Kong and other places for the purpose.

Parts of the twin tunnels of 4.7 km and 4.6 km will run below SGNP with approach roads on either side. The Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay would conduct a study on the tunnels' environmental impact on aquifers and the Tulsi and Vihar reservoirs.

The BMC plans to carry out compensatory afforestation on 48 acres near Gadchiroli and Chandrapur in lieu of this project. Land for this has already been identified for purchase (*PA Update* Vol. XXV, No. 4).

Activists have, however, expressed concerns over the impact of noise and air pollution since the tunnels will need ventilation shafts, and have pointed out that the vibrations of tunnel boring and the traffic will also harm wildlife in the long run.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXV, Nos. 4 & 1 and Vol. XXIV, Nos. 3 & 2).

Source: Eeshanpriya MS. 'GMLR tunnel at Mumbai's national park: BMC wants experts to address green concerns', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 31/07/19.

## **SGNP's caged leopards may be kept in proposed Aarey zoo: BMC**

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) is planning to move the Sanjay Gandhi National Park's (SGNP)'s caged leopards to the proposed Aarey zoo, which is expected to be built within the next four years at the cost of around Rs 500 crore (*PA Update* Vol. XXV, No. 4). At present, there are 10 to 15 leopards in the rescue centre in SGNP.

BMC commissioner Pravin Pardeshi said that the primary focus of the proposed Aarey zoo will be the breeding centre for endangered and rare animals, but wild cats that are currently at SGNP can also be kept in enclosures in collaboration with the forest department. BMC will execute the plan after securing the permission of the Central Zoo Authority of India. BMC plans to charge a fee for the research, and the revenue would be used for the maintenance of the facility.

BMC is expecting to take over 20-acre land in Aarey for the proposed zoo and will be in charge of designing, building and maintaining the property. The memorandum of understanding has already been signed and the forest and revenue departments are finalising the terms for handing over the land.

Source: Arita Sarkar. 'Sanjay Gandhi National Park's man-eaters may find home in Aarey's zoo', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 08/08/19.

## **Fight over Aarey land for metro project in the vicinity of SGNP**

The Bombay High Court (HC) has admitted four petitions pertaining to the status of Aarey land as forest and directed the authorities not to cut any of the trees till the petitions are heard on September 30. Earlier, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's Tree Authority (TA) had cleared Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. (MMRCL)'s proposal for cutting 2,232 trees for the car shed of Metro III.

Soon after the HC's stay on cutting the trees, the government has sought dismissal of a

petition filed by the NGO, Vanshakti, to declare Aarey area as a forest. The government counsels stated in the court that Aarey area cannot be declared as a forest just because of its greenery. They pointed out that Aarey colony was formed in the past as a milk colony and to keep cattle and horse stables.

In the meantime, Empower Foundation, an NGO, has sent a report titled "Evidences of Wildlife in Aarey Forest Mumbai, India" to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and International Union for Conservation of Nature and United Nations Environment Programme. The report has listed 290 wild species including globally threatened species such as leopard, Rusty-spotted cat, Sambar, Alexandrine Parakeet found in the region.

Earlier in August, members of tribal communities of Aarey colony, along with environmentalists and activists, had gathered at Picnic Point to protest the proposed car shed. At the time, TA members were visiting the proposed car shed site and several women presented them with fruits and vegetables grown locally. Followed by the protests, TA had deferred the proposal to remove trees in Aarey colony and asked for details related to the rehabilitation of tribals and litigation on the issue. Within a week, however the TA gave a go ahead to the MMRCL's proposal for cutting 2,232 trees for the car shed. While Shiv Sena opposed the proposal, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) supported it. Five independent experts and some opposition corporators supported BJP at the meeting, thus, clearing the proposal with a majority.

Arguments over the tree cutting have been going on between the citizens and the government since then. Amidst citizens' protests, MMRCL managing director Ashwini Bhide said that the car shed for the Metro Line III had to come up in Aarey colony, and a delay in acquiring land would delay the project. Bhide and municipal commissioner Praveen Pardeshi presented the government's point of view on the decision to build the Metro depot at Aarey.

Shiv Sena's Yuva Sena chief Aditya Thackeray criticized the government for

haphazard administration regarding the proposed car shed. Nationalist Congress Party leader Supriya Sule also visited Aarey colony to extend support to the protesters while the former union environment minister Jairam Ramesh visited Aarey colony and said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi must intervene.

Source: 'Aarey colony can't get forest tag just because it has greenery: Maharashtra government tells court', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 20/09/19.  
Ranjeet Jadhav. 'Former environment minister jumps into 'Save Aarey' fray', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 18/09/19.  
Abhijit Mulye. 'Don't cut trees on Aarey Colony land till September-end: Bombay HC', *The New Indian Express*, 17/09/19.  
Ranjeet Jadhav. 'NGO: Evidence of 290 wild species inside Aarey Milk Colony', [www.mid-day.com](http://www.mid-day.com), 12/09/19.  
Ajeet Mahale & Bhumika Pruthi. 'Metro car depot will have to be at Aarey: Bhide', *The Hindu*, 10/09/19.  
Laxman Singh. 'Mumbai Metro Line 3 not feasible without Aarey carshed: MMRCL head at heated debate', *The Indian Express*, 10/09/19.  
Abhijit Mulye. 'Aditya Thackeray locks horn with government over Aarey land for Metro depot', [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 10/09/19.  
'NCP leader Supriya Sule joins protesters against cutting of trees in Aarey colony', [mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com](http://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com), 08/09/19.  
Vijay V Singh. 'BMC's Tree Authority approves cutting of 2,700 trees in Mumbai's Aarey Colony', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 29/08/19.  
Tanvi Deshpande. 'Tree Authority defers Aarey cutting, seeks rehab details', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 22/08/2019.  
Shubhangi Dua. 'Tribals, activists protest Metro car shed at Aarey', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 21/08/19.

## MAHARASHTRA/MADHYA PRADESH

### Two convicted for tiger poaching in Vidarbha in 2012-13

Tiger skin and body parts traders, Surajbhan alias Sarju Bagdi and Naresh alias Lala Sharma, were convicted recently by a Central Bureau of Investigation special judge in New Delhi in a poaching case linked to Maharashtra. As per the order passed in August, Sarju was sentenced to five years simple imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 10,000, while Lala was sentenced to three years and a fine of Rs. 10,000. In case of default, the convicts will have to undergo additional jail of one month and 10 days respectively. Both were convicted under Sections 40(2), 48(A) and 49(B) punishable under Section 51 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Sarju and Lala had been arrested by a joint team of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and Maharashtra forest officials in Delhi. Cash worth Rs. 2.5 lakh and 18 kg tiger bones were seized from the duo. They were to sell the material to trader Suraj Pal alias Chacha, from whom cash worth Rs. 50 lakh was seized. Chacha died last year.

Sarju and Lala were wanted for trafficking seven tiger skins that were poached by members of the Baheliya community of Katni in Madhya Pradesh in 2013. These tigers were poached in forest areas of Vidarbha. Sarju had confessed that though he was involved in trafficking seven tiger skins, different gangs of poachers had smuggled out 20 tiger skins and body parts from the region in 2012-2013. Sarju is a repeat offender and has also been convicted in 2014 in another tiger poaching case in Akot.

Both convicted have already spent more time in custody than the sentence awarded, therefore, they might be released immediately despite the conviction. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 1 and Vol. XX, No. 2)

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Tiger skin traders Sarju, Lala convicted', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 29/08/19.

## ODISHA

### 3000 crocodiles born in Bhitarkanika NP in 2019

Around 3,000 crocodiles were born in Bhitarkanika National Park (BNP) in 2019. 103 crocodile nests were reported in the park and a three-month entry ban was imposed during the nesting period (May 1-July 31). Following are the numbers of nests and hatchlings reported from the park in the last five years:

Year	No. of Nests	No. of Hatchlings (approximately)
2019	103	3,000
2018	101	2,900
2017	86	2,500
2016	80	2,400
2015	78	2,300

Source: Ashis Senapati, '3,000 crocodiles born in Bhitarkanika National Park', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 08/08/19.

## RAJASTHAN

### Tourists' number exceeds carrying capacity of Ranthambhore TR: evaluation study

The latest Management Effective Evaluation (MEE) report has noted tourist numbers to the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (TR) have nearly doubled from around 2,47,000 visitors in 2012-13, to over four lakh in 2016-17. Calling this a serious issue, the report claims that the proposal to enhance the carrying capacity and allowing more vehicles as well as visitors into the reserve may prove to be counter-productive.

One of the major flaws found was that tourists are allowed to take full day and half-day safaris apart from the morning and evening ones by paying enormous amounts of money. The Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) prescribes entry of 90 vehicles inside the reserve at a time on the basis of calculated carrying capacity. However, at present 140 vehicles are allowed to enter every day in one shift.

The report has stated that in 2016 the state government had notified two other kinds of trips for six and 12 hours respectively. However, the government order about tourism rules does not mention these additional safaris. The report notes that the practice of allowing tourists for the entire day is against the calculated carrying capacity and the adhoc arrangement defeats the purpose of fixing the carrying capacity, calculations for which are based on factors like road length, proneness to erosion, disturbance to key wildlife species, number of vehicles per kilometre, duration of each trip and temporary closure of areas.

Source: 'Ranthambore Tiger Reserve unable to handle tourist load', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 31/07/19.

## SIKKIM

### Lepcha community opposes Centre's move to open Kanchenjunga to foreigners; IMF to not issue permits

As per a notification issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on August 13, India has opened 137 Himalayan peaks straddling the states of Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim to foreign nationals. The list has 24 peaks in Sikkim, including Kanchenjunga.

The state's Lepcha community has opposed the move to lift the 18-year-old ban on Kanchenjunga as the mountain is the identity of the community and a sacred place they have been worshipping for ages. The prominent rivers of the region, Teesta and Rangeet, also originate from Kanchenjunga. The Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association has appealed to the Centre to roll back the notification and has decided to petition the MHA and Sikkim government in the matter.

The Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) too has opposed the move and also noted that Sikkim is run by Article 371F of the constitution, which protects what people consider as sacred. It noted that the



circular was in violation of the “Places of Worship (Special Provision) Act, 1991”. Local political parties including Hamro Sikkim Party (HSP) launched by celebrated footballer Bhaichung Bhutia, have demanded immediate withdrawal of the notification. The local unit of Vishwa Hindu Parishad too has joined the chorus against the notification.

An official of Sikkim’s Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs said that it is a mistake by the Centre and the department has appealed to the people of Sikkim to remain calm.

Meanwhile, the governing council of Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) has taken a decision that it will not issue any permits to scale the peaks in Sikkim which are under the category of sacred peaks, including Kanchenjunga, despite the notification.

Kanchenjunga was first climbed by British mountaineers in 1955. The first member of the team to complete the ascent, Joe Brown, stopped just short of the top, out of respect for the belief in Sikkim that the summit of the mountain is sacred. Since then, some mountaineers – mainly from the Indian army – who attempted to hike up Kanchenjunga from Sikkim have also respected that practice.

Source: Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty. ‘Sikkim Simmers Over Centre’s Move to Open ‘Sacred’ Peak of Kanchenjunga for Treks’, [www.thewire.in](http://www.thewire.in), 23/08/19; Irani Sonowal Lepcha. ‘Lepcha community resents MHA’s notification on Mt Kanchenjunga’, [www.eastmojo.com](http://www.eastmojo.com), 27/08/19.

## TAMIL NADU

### Granite crushing unit approved in area adjoining Sathyamangalam TR

A nine-unit granite crushing and polishing industries cluster has been approved at Thalavady, near the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (TR). The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has granted the clearance although the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has

noted that the area where the industries are proposed is frequented by elephants. All the nine units will be set-up at Mallakuzhi and Thirunarai villages in 25 acres in Thalavady range.

The fourth cycle of Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of tiger reserves in India documents most of the man-animal conflicts in STR in the border villages, especially Bhavanisagar, followed by Thalavady and Kadambur. A large number of cattle kills are reported from Thalavady range alone. The NTCA has, in fact, banned all industrial and mining activities between sunset and sunrise (6 pm to 8 am) throughout the year as this area is frequented by elephants. No transport of mining or construction materials is to be permitted on roads passing through the eco-sensitive zone, reserve forests or within the tiger reserve.

Forest officials noted that though these projects fall under the ‘orange category’ and will cause disturbance to wildlife, they are coming up in private lands outside the eco-sensitive zone of STR. As a result these lands are outside their administrative control.

Source: SV Krishna Chaitanya. ‘Granite cluster coming up in human-elephant conflict zone near tiger reserve’, [www.newindianexpress.com](http://www.newindianexpress.com), 27/09/19.

### Marginal increase in wildlife numbers in Kodaikanal Forest Division

The wildlife census conducted in Kodaikanal Forest Division (KFD) for 2018-19 reveals a marginal increase in the animal population compared to the population in the last four years. The numbers were made available in response to a right to information (RTI) plea filed by RTI activist K Hakkim seeking details on forest areas and wildlife census for four years from 2015 to 2019.

There are 34 reserve forest areas and one protected area in KFD and the census for the year 2019-20 is currently underway. Following are the numbers for the past four years:



Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Gaur	284	354	No break up given	480
Bonnet macaque	152	*		*
Wild boars	128	*		240
Panther	10	10		*
Tiger	4	4		4
Elephant	72	*		75
Deer	16	16		*
Python	*	*		3
Monitor lizard	*	*		3
Total	1,043	1,129	1428	1,526

\*Numbers not mentioned

Source: 'RTI reveals marginal increase in Kodai's wildlife population', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 03/08/19.

## UTTAR PRADESH

### Tusker electrocuted in Dudhwa TR; third case in 15 months

An adult male elephant was electrocuted near Khairatiya Majhra rail station in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (TR) when it came in contact with a solar electric fence installed by farmers to protect their crops. The rear foot of the tusker was twisted and its trunk was still in contact with the electric fence when its carcass was found. The autopsy report suggested death due to electrocution. A final confirmation is awaited from Bareilly's Indian Veterinary Research Institute about the cause of death.

This is the third wild elephant to be electrocuted in the reserve's buffer area in the past 15 months. The forest department has filed an FIR in the case

A forest official informed that farmers have installed insulators with the solar fencing for protecting their crops from wild elephants and normally pass electric current through them at night. Several stray cattle have died due to the electric fencing in the region and

a man also succumbed recently to injuries due to an electric shock near Nighasan range.

Source: 'Tusker electrocuted in Dudhwa, third case in 15 months', [www.timeofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timeofindia.indiatimes.com), 30/09/19.

## UTTAR PRADESH/UTTARAKHAND

### Grasslands in Hastinapur WLS decrease by 55% in three decades; swamp deer threatened

A study conducted by the Wildlife Institute of India has revealed that Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand lost 240 sq. km of grassland area between 1985 and 2015. The area that was 418 sq km in 1985 was down to 178 sq km in 2015 - a decline of 57%. This, the study says, is having a serious impact on the swamp deer, which could go locally extinct if the trend continues.

The most substantial decrease has been seen in the Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), which spans both the states. The area under grasslands, which was 347 sq km when the sanctuary was created in 1986 is now down to 154 sq km now - a decrease by 55%.

Most of the loss, the study notes, has been due to conversion of the grasslands to agricultural fields.

Source: Shivani Azad. 'U'khand, UP lost 57% grasslands in past 30 yrs: WII Study', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 28/08/19.

## UTTARAKHAND

### Cabinet approval for Corbett special tiger protection force

The Uttarakhand Cabinet recently approved the creation of a special tiger protection force in Corbett Tiger Reserve. A total of 85 posts including one assistant conservator of forests, three forest rangers and 81 special tiger guards have been sanctioned.

Source: Lalmani Verma. 'Soon, special protection force for Corbett National Park', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 29/08/19.

### **SC stops road construction in corridor between Rajaji and Corbett TRs; state forest minister seeks PM's intervention**

The Supreme Court (SC) has ordered the cancellation the road construction project in the corridor between the Rajaji and Corbett Tiger Reserves (TRs). The order was in response to a plea against laying roads and building bridges and culverts on the Laldhang- Chillarkhal Road, passing through the corridor between the two TRs (*PA Update* Vol. XXV, No. 4).

During an earlier hearing, the state government counsel had said that the existing road was not being widened. However, in the latest hearing, a bench of Justices Arun Mishra and Deepak Gupta, which perused a report of the court-mandated central empowered committee (CEC), noted that the report referred to the construction of seven meter wide bridges. The CEC report stated that the Laldhang - Chillarkhal road work must be stopped as it would irreversibly and adversely impact the habitat and the wildlife here.

Citing the report, the amicus curiae said that the action of the state also violated the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act. The amicus also noted that the road falls within the buffer region of Rajaji TR and its construction was cleared without advice from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

The state forest minister, Dr. Harak Singh Rawat, has now sought the intervention of prime minister (PM) Narendra Modi in getting the road cleared. Rawat said that for the Rajaji TR segment, the state government will seek clearances as submitted before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) while for Corbett TR segment, it will build the road along the reserve boundary on Uttar Pradesh land as far as possible. However, for all these issues, including inter-state matters, the state needs the PM's help.

On March 11, earlier this year, the NGT had ordered the state government to follow an

alternative alignment, which avoided cutting through core areas of Corbett TR and was approved by the SC in 2005. In 2005, the Centre and Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh governments had agreed to the alternative alignment for a road between Kotdwar and Ramnagar under the supervision of SC, rather than a highway through Corbett TR. In 2010, the high court of Uttarakhand had also made it clear that it would not permit any part of the forest to be used while dismissing a public interest litigation for the same road.

All this notwithstanding, the Uttarakhand government went ahead and signed a memorandum of understanding last year with the National Buildings Construction Company and Wildlife Institute of India for the construction of the road through Corbett TR. The state also started work on widening the 11 km Laldhang-Chillarkhal segment through Rajaji TR without obtaining statutory clearances. The SC had on June 21, 2019, stayed the work, but the final decision was not given then.

Source: 'Supreme Court: Stop development of road in Rajaji reserve', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 30/07/19. 'Big relief to Rajaji Tiger reserve, Supreme Court scraps road works', [www.dnaindia.com](http://www.dnaindia.com), 30/07/19. Jay Mazoomdaar. 'Uttarakhand minister seeks PM intervention to clear road through tiger reserves', [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com), 31/07/19.

## **WEST BENGAL**

### **36% elephant attack victims inebriated and chasing the animal: study**

One-third of the people killed by elephants in north Bengal between 2006 and 2016 happened to be drunk and chasing the animal, a study published earlier this year in the journal *Plos One*, has revealed. A total of 476 persons were killed and 1,646 injured in elephant attacks in four districts – Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri,

Alipurduar, and Cooch Behar - in the decade starting 2006.

The study analysed the age, profession and identity of the victims and found that 36% were drunk on local rice beer and were chasing away elephants from their fields or the vicinity of their homes. The study suggested that awareness campaigns about the dangers of alcohol and basic behaviour of elephants should be organised regularly to educate marginalised farmers and tea estate workers.

Titled 'Assessment and prediction of spatial patterns of human-elephant conflicts in changing land cover scenarios of a human-dominated landscape in north Bengal', the paper looks at seasonal and temporal variation of elephant attacks, major land uses, hotspots of conflicts and age, and profession and activity/behaviour of victims. Lead authored by Dipanjan Naha and S. Sathyakumar, the study notes that a high seasonal variation has been observed in terms of attacks. 54% of the attacks occurred between May and July and 30% between August and October. The frequency of the conflict increases during the rainy season, which also coincides with the harvest of major agricultural crops such as wheat, maize and paddy.

The study also found major changes in land-use pattern in the region: forest cover increased by 446 sq. km, the area under agriculture reduced by 128 sq. km while tea gardens declined by 307 sq. km. The area under human settlement has also increased by 61 sq. km in the past 10 years.

The study has pointed out that the estimated elephant population in north Bengal is 488, which is only 1.8% of the elephant population of India, but the number of human deaths due to elephant attacks stood at 12% of all such deaths in the country. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXV, Nos. 4 & 3; Vol. XXIII, No. 6; Vol. XXII, Nos. 5 & 1; Vol. XXI, No. 5; Vol. XX, No. 4).

Source: Shiv Sahay Singh. 'One-third killed by elephants in north Bengal were drunk: Study', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 24/08/19.

## NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

### WII launches Ganga Data Collector App

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) has launched a Ganga Data Collector App in collaboration with the National Mission for Clean Ganga, Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ganga Aqualife Conservation Monitoring Centre. The android based app will help the scientists' record real-time data of aquatic life in the river.

It also has provisions for entry of data regarding habitat, hydrology, water quality and other sampling information. To ensure that local communities and enthusiasts also take part in data collection, the app will be open for all to add pictures and geo-tag them. Its data entry interface has interactive data entry forms for population estimation of key aquatic species such as Gangetic dolphins, otters, migratory and resident birds and turtles.

Expert teams will collate all the data in accordance with international scientific standards and parameters. The app will enable scientists to create a baseline on the ecology of aquatic life and thereby, come up with conservation projects for each state where the river flows.

WII plans to launch similar apps for all rivers in the country.

Source: Shivani Azad. 'In a first, WII launches app to keep a tab on aquatic life in Ganga', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 27/08/19.

### MoEFCC dilutes environment clearance norms for developmental projects in buffer zones of PAs

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has changed the procedure for environmental clearances (ECs) for developmental activities in buffer zones of protected areas (PAs). An office memorandum (OM) dated August 8, 2019, published on the

MoEFCC website, states that projects outside the boundary of the notified eco sensitive zone (ESZ) of a sanctuary or national park but within 10 km radius of the park will not need prior clearance from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). Such proposals will now get ECs from MoEFCC's expert appraisal committee.

The latest OM nullifies previous OMs dated February 27, 2007 and December 2, 2009, which made NBWL's approval mandatory for such projects. Projects located within the notified ESZs will require NBWL's approval, which can be applied for along with the initial "terms of reference" application. Mining will be prohibited now within the notified ESZ or within only one km from the boundary of the park, whichever is higher.

In many states, PAs do not have an ESZ of 10 km as specified by the Supreme Court. In cases where the ESZ notification is in the draft stage, NBWL's approval is needed and can be applied for along with EC. Of the 600-odd PAs in the country, 200 have notified ESZs. The Centre for Policy Research has pointed out that the latest OM defeats the purpose of demarcating 10 km around PAs as areas that need to be recognised for their conservation value. It also reads down the importance of ensuring wildlife related scrutiny at the time of ECs.

The SC in its September 2017 order, in the context of reduction of 10 km ESZ to 100m, had strongly observed that an order of this nature is capable of destroying national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in the country and it is, therefore, necessary to examine the validity of this reduction.

NGOs and wildlifers have also expressed a concern that with the current move, ESZs around PAs may not achieve the envisioned goal of acting as shock absorbers and protection of corridors.

Source: Jayashree Nandi. 'Rules eased for clearance of projects near buffer zone', [www.hindustantimes.com](http://www.hindustantimes.com), 17/08/19.

## **'Canines for Felines' awards for dogs helping in wildlife crime detection**

Dogs recruited by forest departments (FD) for helping in wildlife crime detection were recently awarded at the 'Canines for Felines', a special contest for wildlife sniffer dogs trained under a Trade Record Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC) and World Wide Fund for Nature - India programme.

The awards were given during an event to mark Global Tiger Day that was organized recently in the Kohora range of Kaziranga National Park (NP). The competition received 12 entries from across India where the contestants have helped enforcement agencies solve 131 wildlife cases.

The winner was Nirman, a sniffer dog from the Tiger Strike Force in Satna while Myna, his counterpart in Indore took the second spot. Both dogs belong to the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department. Quarmy, a German Shepherd, won a special prize for patrolling the Biswanath Wildlife Division of Kaziranga NP. On December 27, 2017, a week after joining the division, Quarmy helped forest guards catch four rhino poachers. She also played a major part in helping nab 12 more rhino poachers by July 2018.

Source: Rahul Karmakar. 'Quarmy the dog bags honour for taking on hunters', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 30/07/19.

\*\*\*

### **Google-group for the *PA Update***

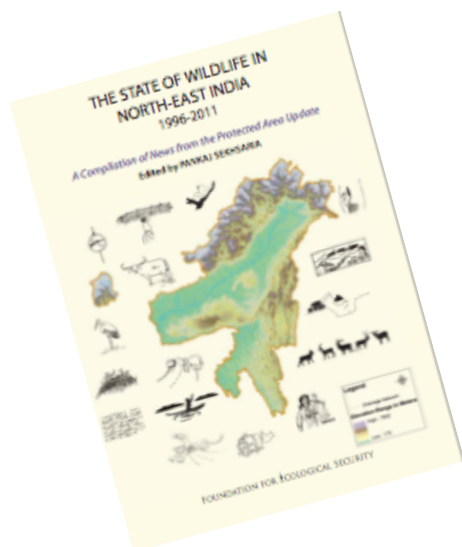
Readers who would like to regularly receive the electronic version of the *PA Update* can do so by to this mailing list by visiting:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/paupdate>

\*\*\*

## THE STATE OF WILDLIFE IN NORTH-EAST INDIA: 1996-2011

### A Compilation of news from the Protected Area Update



- 295 pp, 100 line drawings

- Price: Rs. 250+ postage

To procure a copy write to the editor at

[psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com)

**List of Contents:** North East India Regional News; News from the States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

**Perspective & Opinion:** The Print Media's Kaziranga obsession – An analysis (Mehak Siddiqui & C Rajesh Reddi); A case study of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in western Assam (Sonali Ghosh: Snow leopards in the land of the rising sun (Yash Veer Bhatnagar); Karbi Anglong: A little known wilderness of Assam (Anwaruddin Choudhury); Elephants and other memories of the Garo Hills (Nimesh Ved); Dams in the North East (Neeraj Vagholikar) and Community conservation of wildlife (Neema Pathak)

**Annexures**

COMING SOON....

## WILDLIFE AND PROTECTED AREAS IN MAHARASHTRA

### News and information from the Protected Area Update (1995-2015)

Published by

Rainfed Books, Kalpavriksh and the Duleep Matthai Nature Conservation Trust

- **Editor's Note**

- **Protected Areas in Maharashtra – a brief introduction**

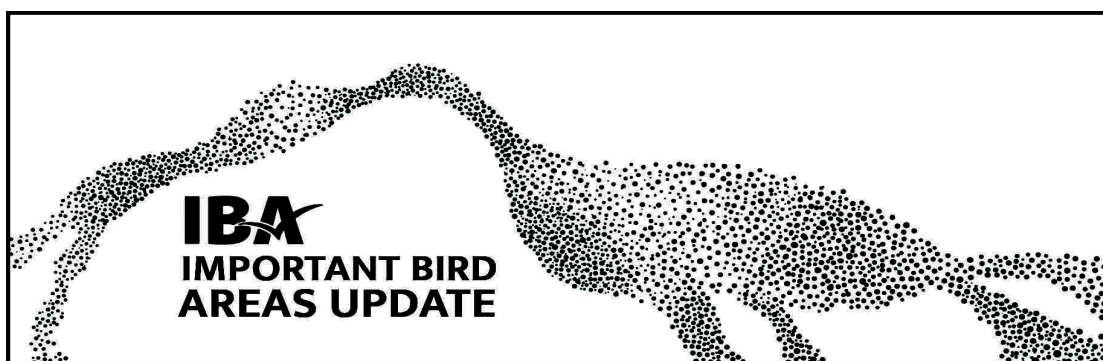
- **Section 1: News and Information from protected areas**

- **Section 2: Analysis and Perspective:**

1) Media reporting on the protected areas in Maharashtra - A thematic analysis (Trupthi Narayan and Pankaj Sekhsaria); 2) Wildlife coverage in the Marathi Print Media – a practitioner's perspective (Reshma Jathar); 3) Dividing lines- tribal rights and tiger reserves (Shiba Desor); 4) Rocky plateaus: Little understood treasures of the Western Ghats (Aparna Watve) and 5) Community Conserved Areas in Maharashtra (Neema Pathak Broome with Sneha Gulgutia, Shruti Mokashi, Kavya Chowdhry, Sarosh Ali and Rupesh Patil)







## ASSAM

### NGT directs state to declare ESZ for Deepor Beel

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Assam government to declare the area around Deepor Beel as an eco sensitive zone (ESZ). Deepor Beel is an Important Bird Area and a Ramsar Site with a reserve forest (RF) nearby.

The NGT, in its order on August 19, also directed the government to remove existing encroachment on the wetland, take steps to prohibit any further encroachment and manage a municipal solid waste dumping ground inside Deepor Beel's system.

The order, was issued in response to a petition by an environmental activist that also sought an end to the land utilisation for a rail track alignment through three elephant corridors – Segunbari, Mikirpara and Matia. The track runs between the southern edge of Deepor Beel and the RF.

Source: 'National Green Tribunal seeks eco-sensitive zone tag for Assam wetland Deepor Beel', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 23/08/19.

## GUJARAT/RAJASTHAN

### Gujarat may have to send its female GIBs to Rajasthan for breeding

Gujarat may have to send its six remaining female Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) to Rajasthan for breeding as the state's lone GIB

male went missing in December 2018. During a recent meeting of the State Board for Wildlife, chief minister, Vijay Rupani, proposed that the state get a male GIB from Rajasthan or that Gujarat's females be sent to Rajasthan for breeding.

The Rajasthan forest and environment minister, Sukhram Vishnoi, said that the state has not received any formal proposal from Gujarat. He also proposed that the Gujarat government should catch all its female GIBs and send them to Rajasthan as they had already set up a breeding centre. In the past too, the Rajasthan government has not responded positively to proposals to send GIB eggs to Gujarat for breeding purposes.

YV Jhala, a Wildlife Institute of India expert associated with the captive breeding centre, said that sending a male GIB to Gujarat may not be fruitful as Gujarat has not addressed the principal issue of the overhead high-tension power lines in the GIB habitat. He said that sending a male to Gujarat will not serve any purpose until all the high-tension lines were moved underground (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXV, Nos. 3 & 1; Vol. XXIV, Nos. 4 & 3; Vol. XXIII, Nos. 4 & 3 and Vol. XXII, No. 6).

Source: 'Gujarat may have to send its females GIBs to Rajasthan', [www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com](http://www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com), 02/08/19.



## KARNATAKA

### Cauvery flood affects Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary

Hundreds of nests and fledglings were washed away in Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary (RBS) in just 24 hours due to swelling of the Cauvery river in the 2nd week of August. Several hundreds of resident and migratory birds at many places along the river course between Ranganathittu and Gaganachukki waterfalls were also affected.

The irrigation department lifted the sluice gates of the Krishnaraja Sagar dam upstream following a significant rise in water inflow and turbulence caused by increased water flow in Cauvery caused damage to the islands at RBS. Entry of tourists into the sanctuary was also restricted as almost all the 34 islands in the sanctuary were submerged. Some trees were also uprooted and swept away.

Source: M.T. Shiva Kumar. 'Karnataka floods: Birds swept away at Ranganathittu sanctuary', [www.thehindu.com](http://www.thehindu.com), 12/08/19.

## MANIPUR

### Loktak Lake Fishermen Union welcomes court order on conservation of Loktak, other wetlands

The Loktak Lake Fishermen Union (LLFU) has welcomed the August 7 order of the Manipur High Court (HC) for the conservation and protection of the state's wetlands. The general secretary of LLFU, Oinam Rajen, said that after Loktak lake was declared a Ramsar site on March 20, 1990, the central government had provided funds to the tune of Rs. 86,696 crores to conserve the lake. No change could, however, be seen in the condition of the lake; instead, he noted, it had worsened with time. The Manipur Loktak Lake Protection Act 2006 exists but it has never been properly implemented. With the coming of Ithai barrage, the lake ecosystem became severely affected. The Loktak Development Authority (LDA) too, he alleged, failed to acknowledge this fact.

The HC has now intervened and ruled that no projects or work can be taken up in the lake without approval from the court.

Further, LLFU has claimed that in the name of cleaning phumdis in the lake, LDA targeted the fishing sites of the Loktak fishermen from 2008 to 2013. They have also alleged that authorities concerned looted huge amounts of money.

On November 11, 2011, LDA issued a notice stating that all encroachers at Loktak lake would be evicted and following the order, 777 huts were destroyed. However, till date, the owners of 258 huts are yet to receive any compensation.

Source: 'LLFU hails HC order', [www.thesangaiexpress.com](http://www.thesangaiexpress.com), 27/08/19.

## ODISHA

### ICG monitors grounded cargo ship in Chilika over oil spill concerns

A Malaysian cargo ship Jin Hwa 32 is being monitored by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in Chilika lake due to fears of there being an oil spill. The vessel ran aground on August 7 at Khirisahi within the lake, while traveling from Malaysia to Bangladesh. All 22 crew members were rescued by ICG. The vessel has around 30,000 litres of diesel, 1,000 litres of lubricant oil and 200 litres of hydraulic oil in its cargo and it is feared that this could leak and pollute the lake waters.

The worst oil spill on the Odisha coast in recent years occurred when the Mongolia-registered ship Black Rose, carrying 60,000 tonnes of iron ore, ran aground near Paradip port on September 9, 2009. Nearly 1,000 tonnes of furnace and diesel oil gushed out of the vessel, contaminating and seriously damaging the coastal areas.

Source: Ashis Senapati. 'Grounded vessel in Chilika lake could spill oil and destroy its marine life', [www.downtoearth.org.in](http://www.downtoearth.org.in), 28/08/19.

## READERS WRITE

### More coverage for Arunachal Pradesh

I would like to thank you for sending me the latest issues of *PA Update*. As I went through the pages of the publication, I have seen that the journal has very well highlighted some of the important matters related to wildlife in the country. In this regard, I would like to mention that there are crucial steps being taken in Arunachal Pradesh, in relation to wildlife and PA issues, which might be of interest to you. To mention a couple of important developments in the recent days, we have firstly sighted the Black-necked crane at a place called Mechuka under Along Forest Division where it has never been reported. A paper in this regard has been published in the *\*Journal of Threatened Taxa\** and I'm sending the link here for your reference. <https://threatenedtaxa.org/index.php/JoTT/article/view/5337>

Further, a wildlife sanctuary called the Yordi Rabe Supse WLS falls under my jurisdiction where we have found signs of tiger presence, which was not reported until now. As a result of this discovery, the sanctuary has been included under the prestigious 'High Altitude Tiger Project' of the GTF and WII. Thus, I would like to request you to kindly include developments, which you deem fit, in your publication. This would help the area in getting the attention of stakeholders at the national level and furthering the cause of conservation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

- **Abhinav Kumar**, IFS,  
Divisional Forest Officer, Along Forest  
Division, Arunachal Pradesh  
Email: [abhinavkumar623@gmail.com](mailto:abhinavkumar623@gmail.com)

## PA Update for PA and forest staff

### Seeking your help and support

One section of readers who have found the *Protected Area Update* most relevant and useful is frontline forest staff and PA managers. The reason is that the newsletter has a simple and straight-forward format and also, importantly, that a print copy version reaches remote areas where online connectivity is still a far-away dream. We get this feedback intermittently but regularly and would like to increase the reach and the spread of the *PA Update*, particularly to people in and around forests and those working there.

We are launching an effort in that direction with a request to readers to help us by contributing towards this as gift subscriptions. The more subscriptions we are able to raise, the more widely we can reach out the *PA Update*. The annual subscription for the PA update is Rs. 150:

- 1) You can gift a subscription to a particular individual/officer/PA and send us the details of the individual/s who want the *PA Update* to be sent to. We will do the rest.
- 2) You can also give us a broad suggestion of whom you want the *PA Update* sent to - could be ground staff of a particular PA, could be PA managers of a particular state or could be region based. We will work with you to then identify the specific recipients.
- 3) At a third level you can indicate to us how many subscriptions you would like to support and we will identify relevant gaps and put those people on the mailing list.

There are multiple possibilities and we would look forward to other concrete suggestions and ideas that you may have.

Pls write to [psekhsaria@gmail.com](mailto:psekhsaria@gmail.com) or to the editorial address of the *PA Update*  
C/o Kalpavriksh.

**FROM THE ARCHIVES - 10 years ago**  
***PA Update 81, October 2009***

**KARNATAKA**

**Night traffic banned through Bandipur NP**

The Karnataka High Court has banned vehicular traffic at night inside the Bandipur National Park. A division bench recently passed the order and no vehicles will be allowed now on the stretch of two roads in the Bandipur forests in Chamarajanagar district from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

The Deputy Commissioner of Chamarajanagar had, in June, passed the order restricting night traffic on NH 212 (Gundlupet-Sulthan Bathery and Gundlupet-Ooty), both passing through the Bandipur forests. This order had evoked significant opposition following which a second order was passed to revoke the ban (see *PA Updates* Vol. XV, No. 4 and Vol. XIV, No. 6).

A public interest litigation (PIL) was filed in the court challenging this move following which the division bench passed an interim injunction, staying the second order.

The Kerala government, meanwhile, has decided to approach the Supreme Court to oppose the ban. Kerala politicians have said that Karnataka should have first tried alternative measures like imposing speed regulations. They also said that an increase in animal populations had aggravated the problem. Traders and vehicle operators have also planned various modes of agitation against traffic regulation.

Source: 'High Court bans night traffic through Bandipur forest', *The Hindu* 28/07/09  
'Rejoice over ban on night traffic in Bandipur sanctuary' (IANS)  
<http://www.headlinesindia.com/environment-news/forestry/rejoice-over-ban-on-night-traffic-in-bandipur-sanctuary-18353.html>  
'Night traffic ban in tiger corridor has Kerala's claws out', *The Indian Express*, 31/08/09.

**MEGHALAYA**

**Land adjoining Balpakram NP reclaimed from illegal miners**

The Garo Students Union (GSU) and the Chitlang Hills Anti Mining Forum (CHAMF) have recently reclaimed the land that had been illegally denuded of forest for constructing a road to the proposed mining spot in Gongrot Aking bordering the Balpakram National Park (see *PA Updates* Vol XV, No. 1 and Vol XIV, No. 6). The land that was reclaimed lies in the Halwa Atong Aking in the South Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.

In a symbolic gesture of returning the land to the forest, an 85 strong contingent of GSU members and other NGOs of South Garo Hills planted saplings on the 1.5 Km of road that has been cut through standing forest. Though a commitment has been taken from the headman of Halwa Atong Aking to not permit any further illegal activities on the land of his village, the anti mining coalition had decided to maintain a constant vigil to ensure that no fresh moves to start road construction are made.

The anti mining coalition has also petitioned the Ministry of Environment and Forest's regional office in Shillong regarding the violation of the Forest Conservation Act. Similarly a complaint has also been filed with the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council for prosecuting the headmen of Gongrot and Halwa Atong Aking for felling of standing forest, that too with malafide intent of illegal mining.

Source: 'Reclaiming Land From Illegal Miners in Halwa Atong Aking, South Garo Hills District, Meghalaya', Press Release by the GSU, 12/08/09.

## PERSPECTIVE

### **The battle for Dahanu**

Dahanu taluka of Maharashtra shot into limelight in 1991 after it was notified as an 'eco fragile area' following a protracted battle in courts by local residents opposing setting up of a 500 MW coal fired power plant. The Supreme Court (SC) granted permission for the coal plant but recognizing the need to preserve this oasis of green between the heavily industrialised areas of Vapi in north and Boisar in South, issued the 'Dahanu notification' imposing restrictions on setting up of industries that have a detrimental effect on its environment.

Unfortunately the then government failed miserably in their duty to implement the notification's directions while vested interests continued to bring forward 'development' projects in Dahanu, ignoring both the eco-fragile notification and the CRZ notification.

In October 1996, based on recommendations of Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), the apex court ordered setting up of the Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority (DTEPA) under the section 3 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The order stated that the 'Authority so constituted by the Central Government shall consider and implement the 'Precautionary Principle' and the 'polluter pays principle'. (Late) Justice Chandrashekhar Dharmadhikari took over the reins of the Authority along with a panel of 11 experts including scientists and state government representatives and held their first meeting on May 6 1997.

From that day until Justice Dharmadhikari's sad demise in January 2019, DTEPA held over 45 meetings to pass progressive orders that have helped protect the predominantly forested coastal taluka of Dahanu from indiscriminate pollution and aggressive industrialization. DTEPA's consultative methods and the scientific expertise of its

members have proven to be a model for enforcing norms and has set many precedents. Notable amongst them include cancellation of permission to set up a mega port in Vadhwan in September 1998, forcing the coal plant to establish a flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) plant and the concept of 'pre-forestation and 'pre-habilitation' before giving permissions for infrastructure projects.

Clearly DTEPA's functioning does not suit the 'development plans' of the present dispensation, which is why instead of appointing a new chairperson, the MoEFCC has applied to the SC to scrap the authority altogether and replace it with a 'Monitoring Committee having a fixed tenure of three years' consisting mainly of government officers and local residents.

The locals, however, are determined to push back and are preparing for another legal battle to protect the Authority and to protect Dahanu from the machinations of the state.

**- Shailendra Yashwant** is a freelance environmental writer and photographer.  
Email: shaiyashwant@gmail.com

For private circulation/Printed Matter

To

From: **Kalpavriksh**, Apt. 5, Sri Dutta Krupa,  
908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 4110