

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

No. 43

June 2003

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EDITORIAL

Celebrating life...

At about the time that this issue of the *Protected Area Update* is going to press, we are also witnessing one of the most important, annual events in the Indian subcontinent. The South West monsoons are sweeping across the dried and parched landscape, bringing with them, water, hope and life (the Brahmaputra is in spate though, causing huge losses of life and property in the North East).

Large parts of the subcontinent have, in the last few months, experienced severe stress and acute water shortages. There have been reports of large scale suffering of human communities, the inevitable migration of entire villages and a large number of deaths due to the severe heat and related problems.

The forests and their wild denizens too have not been spared, a theme that recurs throughout this particular *Update*: in Andhra Pradesh, the complete drying up of Kolleru lake; in Gujarat, water tankers to cater to the lions in Gir; in Orissa, the increased movement of animals from PAs in search of food and water and the resultant escalation in human-wildlife conflicts; and in Rajasthan, a proposal to get water from the Chambal to the Keoladeo Ghana National Park.

In these times of crisis, there appears to be little that one can do. Except, of course, hope that time passes quickly and the rains oblige. Water is too basic a need and therefore, becomes too powerful an emotional issue. This is an emotion that, we all know, is exploited all the time for all kinds of political, financial and personal agendas. The agendas are met, the genuine needs of water, often, are not. Proof of this reality is not really needed, but if it was, what would be a better example than the grandiose scheme of river linking that is being thrust upon the people and the landscape of this country. Few have an idea of what the impacts will be, including those on the protected area network and other many ecologically

sensitive regions. It is doubtful, however, if this will ever be considered.

The PA landscape of the country is already littered with conflicts, which, more often than not, are the subjects of this edit here. For once we'll make a departure. As life pours down in large parts of the country, the conflicts, the fear, and the anger can be hid behind temporary curtains. The rains are here. The multiple hues of the brown, barren landscapes are turning into a multiple of greens. The leaves are beginning to sprout, there is a freshness in the air and in it all, the promise of life.

This is the season that celebrates life, and so be it!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Kolleru lake goes completely dry

A severe drought in Andhra Pradesh, considered the worst in the last four decades, has resulted in the complete drying up of the Kolleru lake. This has adversely affected the flora and fauna here, as also the people who depend on it for survival. Though drought has affected the state from time to time, this is the first time that even the rich and fertile delta area of the Krishna River has been hit so badly.

Villages in the area like Kovvalanka, Kolletikota, Shrunigaravarapadu and Gummalapadu are now being provided water by water tankers.

Source: Omer Farooq. 'Drought takes its toll on Kolleru', *Pioneer*, 12/03/03.

Annual tiger census from April 28

The Annual tiger and leopard census in Andhra Pradesh was to be held from April 28 onwards. The preliminary counting was to have taken place from April 28 to May 4, followed by the final census of May 5 and 6.

As per the last tiger census, AP was ranked eight in the country with a total tiger population of 192 animals. The results of the census are not yet available.

Source: 'Annual tiger census from April 28', *Times News Network*, 12/04/03.

ASSAM

Two rhinos electrocuted by poachers in Pobitara

Two rhinos, a mother and her calf, were killed by poachers in Pobitara Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of May. High tension wires that pass through the grasslands here were used to electrocute the animals. The incident occurred at night near the Kamarpur camp inside the park. This is the second such case in the sanctuary in the last two and a half years (see *PA Update* 36).

Within two days, however, The Assam Forest Department claimed to have arrested three persons, who had allegedly killed the rhinos and decamped with the horns.

Source: Two rhinos killed in Pobitara', *The Assam Tribune*, 24/05/03
'Poacher gang held', *The Assam Tribune*, 26/05/03.

Draft Assam Forest Policy submitted to CM

The draft Assam Forest Policy 2002 was recently submitted to the CM of the state Mr. Tarun Gogoi and the State Forest Minister by the expert committee that had been constituted for its formulation. Constituted in September 2002, the committee was headed by Anil Goswami and had six other members - Anwaruddin Choudhury, Bibhab Talukdar, Padmeshwar Gogoi, SK Sen, PC Bhattacharjee and Probin Kotoky.

The objectives of the policy include the maintenance of environmental stability through preservation and restoration of ecological balance, checking the degradation of the forests and soil erosion in catchment areas, mitigating floods and droughts, and increasing forest cover in forest deficient areas like *chars*, and *chapories* through community participation.

A special emphasis was laid on the issue of encroachment. The committee reported that encroachment was the main cause of forest destruction in the state and that it resulted mainly from inter-state boundary disputes, settlement of flood and erosion affected people in forest areas and the high growth of population. As a solution it has suggested demarcation of forest boundaries, the erection of permanent boundary pillars and the preparation of economic rehabilitation packages by settling these people outside reserved forest land and allowing them to take up forestry activity on

degraded lands. The committee has suggested that these areas should then be considered as people protected areas (PPAs). These would create community assets of forests along with the services derived for their livelihoods.

It also recommended the conversion of forest villages to revenue villages as per the instructions of the Central Government and that no regularisation should be done of encroachments after Oct. 24, 1980.

Source: 'Assam to protect its forests through people's participation', *The Assam Tribune*, 28/04/03.

Contact: **Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhary**, Ho. Chief Executive C/o The Assam Company LTd. G Bordoloi Path, Bamuni Maidan, Guwahati - 781021, Assam.

Rhino is now state animal of Assam

The one -horned rhino has recently been declared the state animal of Assam. The state government has also declared the white-winged wood duck as the state bird, the fox-tailed orchid as the state flower and the *hollong* as the state tree.

Source: 'Rhino gets official recognition in Assam', *The Asian Age*, 06/04/03.

Forest Development Agency, eco-development committees mooted for Kaziranga NP

Authorities of the Kaziranga National Park (KNP) have initiated the process of creation of a number of eco-development committees (EDCs) in villages located on the fringes of the park. A proposal for the creation of a Forest Development Agency (FDA) has also been submitted to the government.

It has been proposed that the EDCs will together constitute the FDA, which will be headed by the KNP Director as the Chairperson. The main objective of the initiative is to motivate and involve the concerned villagers in executing welfare works through employment generating self help schemes.

The state government had in February taken a decision to create 35 FDAs in different parts of the state (see *PA Updates* 41 and 30)

Source: Sanjoy Barkataki. 'Plan to involve locals for Kaziranga development', *The Assam Tribune*, 17/04/03.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga National Park, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam

Illegal earth-cutting in Deepor Beel WLS

Illegal earth -cutting has reportedly been going on in Deepor Beel WLS for the last few months. The earth is being supplied at Rs. 200-300 per truck to the brick kilns located in nearby areas like Dharapur, Azara, Khanamukh and Lankeshwar.

It has been alleged that police stations at Azara and Jalukbari have not taken any action in this regard, inspite of being aware of the situation.

Source: 'Illegal earth-cutting at Deepor Beel on', *The Assam Tribune*, 04/03/03.

Efforts to deal with human-elephant conflict

The Assam State Forest Minister has said that the only method of dealing with the increased human-elephant conflict in the region was to sensitise the people about the need to cohabit with the pachyderms that are straying out of the dwindling forest areas.

He was replying to a question in the state assembly and said that a long term strategy for this was being drawn up. Efforts were being made along with NGOs for increasing awareness among the affected human populations, with a particular focus on Sonitpur district which was among the areas that was worst affected (see *PA Updates* 39, 38, and 33).

The minister also informed that the government was in touch with a few insurance companies with a proposal to provide crop insurance cover to farmers having paddy fields in the fringes of the forest areas inhabited by elephants. The scheme would be aimed at ensuring adequate compensation for the loss of paddy caused by the straying elephants.

Source: 'Strategy to tackle man-elephant conflict drawn up: Bordoloi', *The Assam Tribune*, 14/03/03.

Chief Wildlife Warden – Assam, Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam.

BIHAR

Call to declare sanctuaries for Gangetic Dolphins in Araria district

Dr. Sudan Sahay who is conducting research on the Gangetic Dolphin, has appealed for steps to be taken for their protection in the district of Araria, which borders both, Nepal and the state of West Bengal.

Dolphins are found here in the Panar, Bhalua and Lohandra Rivers and their tributaries. According to Dr. Sahay, their number has increased in the last few years. While there were only nine dolphins in the rivers here in 1993, presently their number is said to be 23 including infants. He has recommended that certain zones of these rivers be notified as Dolphin Sanctuaries.

Source: 'Expert for saving river dolphins in Araria dist. ', *Times News Network*, 12/04/03.

DELHI

Biodiversity park at Wazirabad to be expanded

The Lt. Governor of Delhi has ordered the addition of another 300 acres of land to the biodiversity park at Wazirabad that is presently spread over an area of 200 acres. The park is a joint effort between the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the Delhi University. While the DDA is preparing the landscaping proposal, DU is providing the technical assistance.

The total project proposes to have over 50000 species of flora and fauna spread over 35 different eco-systems. The existing 200 acres of mostly had dry ecosystems, while the addition that is to be made will mostly have aquatic ones, along the banks of the River Yamuna.

This biodiversity park is supposed to be part of a bird sanctuary spread over 800 acres in the area (see *PA Update* 36).

The DDA is also proposing the creation of another biodiversity park in the Vasant Vihar area of the city.

Source: 'Bio-diversity park spreads its wings', *The Statesman*, 05/03/03.

GUJARAT

Prey-predator balance disturbed; human animal conflict increases

The prey predator balance has been disturbed in many parts of Gujarat, leading to a number of problems, particularly those related to human -animal conflicts.

In the Vadodara circle while the leopard numbers have increased, those of ungulates, their main food source, have not. This has resulted in a substantial increase in leopard attacks on cattle and

humans in the districts of Vadodara, Dahod and the Panchmahals. Leopard numbers in the Vadodara Circle have gone up from 170 in 1993 to 322 in 2002, accounting for more than 30% of the present leopard population in the state. Since 1995, leopards have killed 37 people, injured 652 and killed nearly 1700 heads of livestock. The year 2001-02 was the worst with leopards killing four humans and 379 cattle (see *PA Update* 39).

The problem of plenty, but in reverse is also being experienced in other parts in the case of certain other animals; blackbucks in the Kadi region and the wild ass in the Rann of Kutch. The absence of their natural predators has led to a substantial increase in their populations as well. While the blackbuck population in the state is presently 26000; that of the wild ass has increased from 700 at one point to nearly 3000 today. The Neelgai population in the state too has doubled from 40000 in 1995 to 80000 in 2003. A direct impact of these increases has been felt by the farming community with an increasing number of cases of crop depredation by the animals.

Commenting on the situation, HS Singh, the Conservator of Forests, Vadodara Circle has said that, 'the sanctuaries of Gir and Velavadar are the only two places where the prey-predator relationship has not been affected'.

Source: Robin David. 'State's prey - predator balance disturbed; animal attacks rise', *Times News Network*, 21/05/03.

Contact: **GEER Foundation**, Indroda Park, Sector 9, Gandhinagar – 382009, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-21385. Fax: 41128. Email: geerindia@sify.com

Water tankers for wildlife in Gir

Scanty rainfall for the last four years in the region has led to a severe water crisis in the forests of Gir National Park. All the natural water bodies in the park- about a dozen odd rivers and a similar number of small and large reservoirs have dried up early, creating severe problems for the wildlife here. The biggest reservoir in the area, the Kamleshwar Dam, dubbed 'the lifeline of Gir' has also dried up completely.

Water is now being provided to the animals by the dozen odd tankers that have been put into service by the Forest Department. Water is being provided at over 350 water points all across the forest area and the FD has said that they feel the supply was adequate for the moment.

The water scarcity has also resulted in the increased incidences of animals straying from the forests, resulting in increased human-animal conflict. This problem has been larger in the case of leopards, particularly in the forests of Panchmahals and Baria. The situation has been further compounded by the fact that there are thousands of heads of cattle, belonging to the 'maldharis' inside the forests. Additionally there are a number of villages in the region that share the limited water resources with the wildlife.

The State FD has asked the Centre to provide special financial assistance to deal with the recurring water problem, and a sum of Rs. 20 lakhs had reportedly been promised.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Central aid likely for water crisis in forests', *The Times of India*, 21/04/03.

Contact: **Bharat Pathak**, CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/ 630051. Fax: 631211

Lions die after transfer from Porbandar to Gir

A pair of lions captured in Porbandar in February and brought to Gir was recently found dead in the sanctuary. The pair had been sighted in the coastal region in Porbandar in the month of January after having reportedly moved there from Gir itself (see *PA Update* 41). They had caused a lot of fear and panic in the region, particularly after two cows and two buffaloes and a horse were found dead on the outskirts of the town, presumably killed by the wild cats.

The animals were captured on February 15 from Maktupur village, some 20 kms from Mangrol town in Junagadh district. They were released into the wild in Gir after one of them was fitted with a radio collar. According to the FD, they died a natural death due to factors related to the change in territory.

Source: SH Bukhari. 'Lions found dead after shift from Porbandar to Gir park', *Indian Express*, 09/05/03.

Rs. 2000 crore forest land scam unearthed in state

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has unearthed the biggest land scam in the state, estimated at over Rs. 2000 crores. It involves encroachment of over 60,000 acres of land belonging to sanctuaries,

reserved forests and protected forests in the districts of Vadodara, Bharuch and Panchmahals.

This is believed to be the tip of the iceberg as larger forest areas have reportedly been encroached upon in Surat, Junagadh, Kutch and other forest circles. Confidential reports having complete details about the encroachments in the three districts in Vadodara Circle, have been handed over to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests in the state, the forests and environment secretary and the State Forest Minister.

All conservators in the state had been asked by the government last year to submit reports on encroachments. All the reports except from the Vadodara circle noted that there had been no encroachment in their areas. In Vadodara it was found that a large number of people were given certificates for regularisation without verification. Further, as lands were not demarcated even after regularisation, farmers kept expanding the area under cultivation.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Rs. 2000 cr worth forest land scam rocks Gujarat', *Times News Network*, 12/02/03.

Chief Wildlife Warden - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-30007. Fax: 21097

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Proposal for HP-Haryana inter state Tiger Reserve to include Simbalbara and Kalesar WLSs

A proposal for the creation of a Himachal Pradesh - Haryana inter state Tiger Reserve has been sent to Director - Project Tiger. The reserve will include the 20 sq. kms. Simbalbara WLS in HP and the 100 sq. kms Kalesar WLS in Haryana. The proposal was made by Dr. AJT Johnsingh of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) after a recent survey of the sanctuaries under the Terai Arc Tiger Conservation Project.

The proposal coincides with recent reports of tiger pugmarks at Langadiwala nullah in Kalesar and at Katudeo Khala in Simbalbara near Paonta Sahib. Locals too have confirmed sightings of the animal in the forests here. This is the first sighting of the tiger in HP in the last five decades. It was last seen in the 1940s near Bakloh in Chamba district.

The HP FD is reported to have already given its consent for the project and the same has also been communicated to the Forest Secretary of the state.

Source: Suresh Khatta. 'Simbalbara sanctuary may play host to tigers', *Indian Express*, 01/04/03.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Encroachments cleared from Wular lake

A large number of encroachments have been removed from the catchment area of the Wular lake in the Baramulla district. A vast piece of land was cleared in Magnipora village as part of the eviction drive. The authorities claim that encroachers had grabbed more than 250 hectares of land straddling this Ramsar site and that the encroachers had even begun cultivating paddy here (see *PA Updates* 41 and 40 and 39).

Government sources have said that the 13 year insurgency period has seen encroachment activity booming. People had been advised to shift out, and when this did not happen it was decided to use force for the purpose. Those evicted however say that they had been betrayed. They claimed that they had been cultivating the land for many years and neither were they served any kind of eviction notice.

The State Forest Department has now submitted a proposal to the Union Government to erect a barbed wire fence around the reclaimed land.

Source: Ishfaq-ul-Hassan. 'Cleared up', *Down to Earth*, 30/0403

KARNATAKA

Lokayukta finds serious irregularities in Bannerghata National Park.

The Karnataka *Lokayukta*, Justice N. Venkatachala and his officers recently raided the Bannerghatta National Park and uncovered irregularities to the tune of Rs 30 crore.

Major misappropriations in civil works related to laying of roads, veterinary hospitals and elephant trenches showed that officials had received enormous amounts of money. Another major flaw found was that the park was essentially being run by 'temporary' forest guards, many of who had been employed for 10 years on paltry salaries. Guards who did not cooperate with the money-making racket were harassed or summarily dismissed.

Gross neglect has also, reportedly, resulted in the death of around 250 animals in just five years. They include 10 lions, two tigers, one leopard, four bears, a chital, 13 *sambars*, four black bucks, two barking deer, four snakes, a peacock and four jackals. Enquiries were also made to know what happened to the valuable skin and nails of the lions and tigers.

The feeding registers too reflected neglect. While officials maintained healthy statistics, employees told the *Lokayukta* that there had been a severe case of under feeding everywhere. Even the little that was supplied was found to be sub-standard. There was no cold storage facility, so food was purchased regularly, and the animals were fed rotten food. There was a marked difference in the actual number of animals and the number for which the feed was coming in.

Guards and staffers agreed that small birds, snakes, tortoises, caymans, crocodiles, monitor lizards and bears had been grossly underfed. Collections made at the entry gates had not been honestly remitted. Enquiries were also made into the 500 pigeons, many exotic that were seized a few years ago. The pigeon haul alone would have been worth over Rs 5 lakh. Around 4,000 star tortoises seized in raids and handed over to the department too were reported missing.

Source: 'Lok Ayukta digs out money from park', *Times News Network*, 09/05/03.

NGOs oppose mining in vicinity of Bhadra TR

The Nature Conservation Guild and Wildlife Conservation Action Team - Chikmagalur (WildCAT-C) has urged the Karnataka Government to stop mining in Kemmannugundi in the Kudremukh area of Chikmagalur district. In a press statement issued recently, they said that the law prevented mining within a five km. boundary of a protected area, but the mining area in question was just a few meters from the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary.

The area is also supposed to be the source of the Hebbe rivulet, a tributary of the Bhadra River and it is feared that the continued mining threatens the very existence of this rivulet. The Standing Committee of the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL) too had visited this area in April 2002 and reportedly asked the concerned to stop mining here.

Source: 'Mining scarring Kemmannugundi forests, cry Greens', *The New Indian Express*, 09/04/03.

Concern over road laying in Kudremukh NP

Environmental groups have expressed concern over the state government's proposal to lay a network of roads in some parts of the Kudremukh National Park. The roads are being laid by the Forest Department to access areas deep inside the park.

Wildlife First and other NGOs have appealed to the government to stop the project immediately and preserve the sanctity of the natural landscape by declaring KNP as India's first roadless wilderness area.

They have pointed out that roads in hilly grasslands and the 'shola' forests have damaged hundreds of trees and resulted in the removal of grass cover from the slopes, making the terrain susceptible to heavy soil erosion. They fear that the laying of new roads or even the reviving of the old ones, which are now covered with undergrowth will cause damage to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and have requested that a detailed plan should be drafted to restore the road to their natural rainforest ecosystem.

In the letter to the government, the NGOs further provided several examples of wildlife reserves with similar terrain and habitat like Brahmagiri, WLS, and Ervikulam and Silent Valley NPs where effective protection was being provided by the FD without the laying of roads.

Source: 'Concern over laying of roads in Kudremukh National Park', *The Hindu*, 13/04/03.

Contact: **Praveen Bhargav**, Wildlife First, No. 1235, 1st Floor, 26th A Main, 4th T Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore - 560041. Tel: 080 - 26535763. Fax: 26535811. Email: pbsolus@vsnl.com

Concern expressed over tourism development project in Kokrebellur

Several NGOs like the Mysore Amateur Naturalists (MAN) and concerned individuals have raised concerns over the proposed project of the Karnataka Government to put the village of Kokrebellur on the tourism map of the state. Rs. 75 lakhs have been earmarked for tourism development in the village that has become famous for its efforts to conserve and protect the painted storks and pelicans that nest on trees here (see *PA Update* 41).

The proposal includes the construction of approach roads, setting up of a canteen with service counter, an information centre, twin cottages for the

tourists, landscaping, seating arrangements for the bird watchers, display boards, and toilets. It is feared the creation of this infrastructure and the commercialisation of the place will have a hugely adverse impact on the area in general and the birds in particular.

Source: Amitha AV. 'Kokkare Bellur as tourist spot may spell doom for birds', *Deccan Herald*, 09/03/03.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka**, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 / 3345846. Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

KERALA

Women's groups volunteer help for the protection of Periyar TR

A women's group comprising of people living on the fringes of the Periyar Tiger Reserve is rendering help and service to the project authorities without taking anything in return. All that the Forest Department has provided to them are a pair of uniforms.

The groups are called 'Harita Sree', and have a total a strength of about 50 members. The members are mostly married women with children and are also members of the eco-development committees. There are six member groups, each headed by a leader. They work for six hours, once a week from 10 am to 5 pm after discharging their domestic duties at home. They go about 15-20 kms into the forests and at the end of the day report and the day's happenings and what they saw to the reserve authorities.

There was initially resistance that the women faced from their family members, but they reportedly agreed after stiff persuasion. A key role in making the initiative a success was also played by the Assistant Field Director of the park, Mr Sivasdas.

Source: PT Mohanan Pillai. 'Women help to conserve Thekkady forest', *The New Indian Express*, 22/04/03.

Contact: **Director**, Periyar TR.

Parambikulam to be declared Tiger Reserve

Parambikulam WLS is to be soon brought under the Project Tiger. A declaration to this effect is to be issued soon. Parambikulam will then become part of an inter-state tiger reserve comprising Ervikulam NP

and Chinnar WLS (Kerala) and the Indira Gandhi WLS in Tamil Nadu.

Source: 'Parambikulam to become tiger reserve soon', *The New Indian Express*, 24/04/03.

KTDC introduces eco-certification for tourism sector

The Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) has introduced an eco-certification scheme as part of its efforts to promote eco-friendly tourism in the state. The scheme called 'Eco-Kerala', attempts to evolve a set of practices to help each sub-sector with the tourism sector to be more eco-friendly. It has been introduced keeping in mind the importance of environmental management in the tourism related organisations as the state is being projected as a high quality destination. The scheme involves grading of hotels and resorts based on their compliance with three sets of conditions that have been classified as essential, necessary and desirable.

Source: 'KTDC introduces eco-certification for tourism sector', *The Hindu Business Line*, 05/05/03.

Island in Vembanad lake given for tourism resort

The Kerala High Court has recently vacated a stay on the handing over of the Pathiramanal Island in the Vembanad lake for a tourism development project. Vembanad is one of the two Ramsar sites in Kerala.

Pathiramanal is a 68 hectare island in Vembanad lake and lies between Muhamma and Kumarakom. The island was in the possession of a private person and was taken over by the government in 1979, following the Land Reforms Acts. Later families residing on the island were rehabilitated and it was handed over to the Tourism Department. The island over the years has become an important roosting place for a number of birds like cormorants, herons, bitterns and egrets and is also a favoured breeding ground of the Indian Otter.

In 2000, the island was leased out to a joint venture company formed by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) and the Oberoi Group of Hotels, but a stay order had been issued against this handing over. This stay order was vacated during a hearing held in March and construction work on the project is reported to have already started.

Source: Dr. B Sreekumar. Email dated 19/03/03.
Contact: **Dr. B Sreekumar**, President, Kottayam Nature Society, Srinilayam, Near Union Club, Kottayam - 686 001, Kerala. Email: ktm_bskumar@sancharnet.in
Equations, 198, II nd Cross, Church Rd., New Thippasandra, Bangalore 560 075 Karnataka. Tel: 080 - 25282313 / 25292905. Fax: 25282313. Email: liyakhat@equitabletourism.org
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-322217 / 204896. Fax: 325804.

MADHYA PRADESH

Stricter entry rules for MP national parks

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department is contemplating stricter rules for the entry and movement of tourists in the national parks in the state. This follows the recent incident where a group of French tourists was attacked by a tiger in the Bandavgarh National Park.

The state forest officials say that there is too much tourist pressure on the national parks and that most of them receive more tourists during the peak season than recommended by the state wildlife board. There is, therefore, likely to be a review of the carrying capacity of these parks as well.

Source: Abhilash Khandekar. 'Stricter entry rules for MP national parks soon', *Hindustan Times*, 10/04/03.

Census reports increase in tiger, leopard numbers

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister recently released the figures of the 2002 wild animal census in the state. The number of tigers counted was 711, one up from that counted in 2001; while the leopards counted were 1086 as against 1066 the earlier year.

Following are the number of tigers counted in the respective tiger reserves in the state: Kanha TR, 130; Bandavgarh TR, 66; Pench TR, 55; Panna TR, 35 and Satpura TR 40.

Source: 'More tigers, leopards in MP', *The Times of India*, 18/05/03.

Contact: **CWLW**, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-557371/ 550391. Fax: 011- 761102.

MAHARASHTRA

TDR transferred for project for rehabilitation of those displaced by Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) recently released 11690 sq. mtrs of transfer of development rights (TDR) worth about Rs. 10 crore to Sumer Developers (SD) for the project to rehabilitate those displaced from the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). The rehabilitation project is coming up on land belonging to SD and will be taken up by the *Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti* (NHSS) (see *PA Updates* 39 and 41).

The 11690 sq. mtrs TDR was given to the developer as the first installment after the developer conveyed the title of 60000 sq. mtrs of the land to the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) for the project. The developer is expected to earn at least Rs. 600 crore in the form of TDR for the project that will rehabilitate 16000 families from the park on an 85 acre quarry in Chandivli.

The TDR certificate was issued by the SRA which is headed by the Chief Minister of the state. There has however been further controversy. It was reported that the TDR was issued just two days after the CM, Mr. Sushil Kumar Shinde had himself ordered against its release. He said he wanted to study the matter before making a final decision.

The latest is not known.

Source: 'TDR given to builder after CM's stay order', *Times News Network*, 24/03/03.

Contact: **DFO**, SGNP, Borivili (E), Mumbai - 400066, Maharashtra
NHSS, Sankalp Bldg., 5th Floor, Plot 1040, Off Sayani Rd. Prabhadevi, Mumbai - 400025. Tel: 020-24227690.

Chief Wildlife Warden – Maharashtra, Jaika Building, Civil Lines, Nagpur – 440001, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712 – 526758 / 530126.

MANIPUR

PIL filed to save Loktak lake

A Public Interest Litigation, (PIL) to save the Loktak lake and Keibul Lamjao National Park was recently filed before the Imphal Bench of the Guwahati High Court by the Imphal based Environment Protection Committee.

It has been pleaded in the PIL that the gates of Ithai barrage be lifted for a period of five years so that the *phumdi* and silt can be removed from the lake. It has also asked for forming a ring bund on the periphery areas of the national park. In response to the petition, a division bench of the HC had issued show cause notices returnable within two months to the respondents.

Source: 'Keibul PIL', *The Imphal Free Press*, 08/05/03.

Contact: **Salaam Rajesh**, Sagolband Salam, Leikai. PO: Imphal-1, Manipur. Tel: 0385-222395, Email: salamrajesh@rediffmail.com; salraj_imp@yahoo.com;
Mr. Manihar, Project Director, LDA, Email: lda@neline.com
Chief Wildlife Warden - Manipur, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795001, Manipur. Tel: 03852 - 220854 / 285385.

ORISSA

Symposium on 'Conservation of Wild Tigers in Orissa'

A National Symposium on 'Conservation of Wild Tigers in Orissa' was organised in Bhubaneswar in February by the NGO, Wild Orissa.

The recommendations made by the symposium include the following: Satkosia-Baisiapalli be immediately notified as a Tiger Reserve; a proposal be submitted by the State government for the inclusion of the Sunabeda forests under Project Tiger; forests of Narayanpatna, Gupteshwar, Gandhamardhan, Kapilash, Malayagiri and Chandrapur be notified as wildlife sanctuaries; villages from the core area of the Simlipal Tiger Reserve be removed within a specified time frame along with creating livelihood programmes for the relocated families; forces of the Central Reserve Police Force / Central Industrial Security Force be immediately deployed for the protection of Simlipal; efforts be made towards the motivation and welfare of field staff working in remote areas of PAs; well conceived eco-development plans be initiated in villages around protected areas; present and potential tiger habitats be clearly delineated in every division; eco-tourism particularly with the involvement of local communities be encouraged; field officers be given immunity for using firearms for wildlife protection; and people residing inside and around

PAs be provided with ID cards to prevent encroachments.

Contact: **Monalisa Bhujbal**, Wild Orissa, Plot 3A, Janpath, Satyanagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-512044. Email: wildorissa@hotmail.com

Severe water crisis grips PAs, forest areas

Prolonged drought conditions have led to a severe water crisis in Orissa, adversely impacting forests and wildlife. There have been such reports from the forest areas of Keonjhar, Koraput, Nowrangpur, Dhenkanal, Athmalik, Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Rairakhol, Kalahandi. Daspalla, Kondhmal, Khariar and Ghumsur. In many places animals have moved out of the forests in search of food and water and there are also reports of increased hunting and poaching.

Animals like *sambar*, barking deer and even elephants are reported to have moved out of protected areas like Satkosia and Simlipal. The situation in Simlipal, which is endowed with good water resources, is however reported to be better than in other parts of the state.

Cases of the hunting of wild animals who may have come out of the forests in search of water have been reported from the sanctuaries of Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, Chandka, Sunabeda, Kotgarh and Hadgarh.

Source: 'Water crisis grips forest areas', *The Statesman*, 28/05/03.

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack - 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671-334625. Fax: 610980. Email: biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in

Demand to denotify Bhitarkanika opposed

The Kolkota based NGO 'The Jungles' has opposed the demand for a review of the decision to declare Bhitarkanika a national park and Gahirmatha a marine sanctuary. Unchecked population growth (also see following story) in the fringe areas of the forest and the park is supposed to be the main problem.

Forest officials say that lack of alternate means of livelihoods drives the people into the forests. Illegal activities like poaching, fishing and tree felling too have reportedly increased manifold in the last couple of years. In 2002-03, 511 such cases,

the highest in any forest range in the state, were reported here.

Political leaders including the Member of Parliament from the area, have justified their demand for a review of the protected area status by pointing out that the decision to declare the national park was made by the centre based on some defective maps. An area with a population of 40,000 people cannot be declared a national park, they have argued.

Source: Aditya Ghosh. 'NGO opposed denotification of Bhitarkanika' *Times News Network*, 21/04/03.

Bangladeshi immigrants threaten Bhitarkanika WLS

It has been alleged by NGOs working in Orissa that the large number of Bangladeshi immigrants living and operating around the Bhitarkanika WLS is adversely affecting the park and could threaten the survival of the estuarine crocodiles. While the government puts the figure of illegal immigrants in the area at about 2000 people, the Wildlife Society of Orissa has said that there are at least 15000 in and around Bhitarkanika. 200 mechanised boats are reportedly fishing illegally in the creeks here, which are the main home for the crocodiles as well. Large scale mangrove depletion too is attributed to this large immigrant population.

Senior forest officials have said that the attempts for the evacuation of these immigrants regularly face hurdles as local politicians come to their rescue in an attempt to secure their vote banks.

Source: 'Immigrants a threat to estuarine crocodiles', *The Asian Age*, 10/03/03.

Chital poached in Bhitarkanika for VIP feast

Four *chital* were killed in April inside Bhitarkanika National Park to be served at the wedding feast of the son of a local *sarpanch*.

A group of people from Dosinga near Dhamnagar had entered the park in a trawler, camped at Dangmal and caught the deer before coming back to the village. Some forest officials, acting on a tip off, reached the village and seized the cooked meat. Another 16 kgs of raw deer meat was also recovered from a nallah behind the sarpanch's house. When contacted, the FD said that they were enquiring into the incident.

Source: 'Venison served at VIP wedding, probe sought', *The Times of India*, 29/04/03.

Domestic dogs threaten *dhole* in Simlipal

The uncontrolled entry of domestic dogs into the forests of Simlipal Tiger Reserve is reportedly threatening the survival of the small population of the wild dog here. Researchers studying the issue here have observed that the increase in the population of the village dogs forms one of the many reasons for the relocation of the villages from the protected area.

In the mid 70s, however, wild dogs were considered a big threat to the tiger and the first Field Director of the tiger reserve had instructed his staff to beat them to death whenever one was encountered.

Source: 'Wild dog face threat of extinction in Simlipal biosphere', *The New Indian Express*, 22/04/03.

Patrolling using elephants successful in Simlipal

The attempt of the Orissa Forest Department to patrol the forests of Simlipal by using elephants brought from Karnataka (see *PA Update* 34) is, reportedly, turning out to be a success.

Over the last one year, the elephants along with their mahouts have detected around 40 cases of timber smuggling and have also helped in catching many poachers. They are supposed to have also driven fear into the heart of the tribal communities here who enter the forests for the ritual of '*akhand shikar*', in April every year (also see *PA Update* 41)

The FD is reported to be spending Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 15,000 on the elephants every month.

Source: Jatindra Dash. 'Elephants drive fear into poachers' hearts', *Indo-Asian News Service*, 22/04/03.

No non-veg for visitors to PAs in Orissa

Concerned with rampant poaching in the state, the Orissa Government has banned the cooking and eating of non-vegetarian food in all the protected areas in the state. The order that was issued by the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) and is reportedly being imposed strictly.

More than 125 tourist vehicles were refused entry to Simlipal TR in a single day as they were found carrying meat and chicken for consumption. Visitors to the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary too

were given the option to either dump their non-veg food or to return without entering the park. A 'no meat zone' notice has also been served on the hundreds of picnic parties visiting the casuarina covered Puri-Konark marine drive area.

Source: Rajaram Satapathy. 'When in Orissa's wild, stay away from meat', *Times News Network*, 02/02/03.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden – Orissa**, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Orissa. Tel: 0674-513134 / 515840. Fax: 512502

RAJASTHAN

SC gives conditional approval to ONGC's oil exploration project through Desert National Park

The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has proposed a mega oil exploration project in Desert National Park in Rajasthan. In response to an affidavit filed by the Deputy Inspector-General (Wildlife), the Supreme Court has recently stipulated two clauses before commencement of the work:

a) ONGC should deposit Rs. 5 crore in a special fund for the conservation and management of the Desert National Park. This amount is an initial compensation for exploratory phase and, b) In case oil/gas is struck in the region, the State Government would declare adequate additional area to the National Park for providing suitable habitat, especially to the Great Indian Bustard that is critically endangered."

Seeking permission to carry out oil and gas exploration, Additional Solicitor-General Mr. Mukul Rohtagi on behalf on ONGC submitted before the Bench comprising Justice Y.K. Sabharwal and Justice H.K. Sema that the deposit of five crore rupees was too high and petitioned that it would be "just and proper" if ONGC deposited one crore rupees. He added that ONGC has already accepted the court's recommendations for certain diversions.

Source: SC gives conditional approval to ONGC's oil exploration project through Desert National Park', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 26/05/03.

HC stay on construction of nature interpretation centre in Keoladeo Ghana NP

The Rajasthan High Court has extended its stay on the construction of a nature interpretation centre inside the Keoladeo Ghana National Park in

Bharatpur. It has also issued notices to the Worldwide Fund for the Nature (WWF), the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and the former Deputy Wildlife Warden of the Park. During a recent hearing the judges observed that there was no ground to allow construction work to restart as has been requested by the Advocate General representing the state government.

A petition challenging the construction of the building in the park had been filed by a retired zoology professor, Samudra Singh and a local resident Om Prakash Choudhary on the grounds that it was in violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act - 1972. They have charged that the Austrian multinational DeSorovski had a vested interest in opening the centre as it intended to promote their binoculars, cameras and visual aids.

They also alleged that the permission for the construction was granted soon after some senior forest officials of the state went on a sponsored trip to Austria in 2000. (Also see *PA Update* 39).

Source: 'Stay on construction inside Ghana national park extended', *Indian Express*, 09/05/03.

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo Ghana NP**, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321001, Rajasthan

Chambal water for Keoladeo Ghana NP

The Keoladeo Ghana National Park in Bharatpur is likely to receive water from the ambitious River Chambal project to deal with the recurring problem of water scarcity in the wetland. The water will be brought through a pipeline from a reservoir near the Malah headwork. The state government has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 166.50 crores for the first phase of the project that is to be completed by 2005. The project will also ensure supply of adequate drinking water to 212 villages near Bharatpur. (Also see *PA Update* 40)

Source: *The Hindu*, 22/05/03.

TAMIL NADU

Exotic marine algae threatens Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park

Fears have been expressed over the introduction by Pepsi foods of an exotic marine algae near the Gulf of Mannar National Park near Rameshwaram. The alga in question is *Eucheama cottoniim* which is the best source of carrageenan, a tasteless gelatin like

pure vegetarian substance that is added to deserts as a stabiliser. Carrageenan sells for over a lakh of rupees a ton and at present India imports lots of it.

Scientists feel that this could pose a very serious threat to the ecosystem of the park, as has been experienced with the introduction of exotics in the environment in different parts of the world. Those working on the project have however said that vegetative propagation of the plant, as is being proposed, is not very dangerous as it does not allow proliferation on a large scale.

Source: Pallava Bagla. 'Pepsi algae seen as threat to marine park', *Indian Express*, 12/04/03.

Publication on orchids of Indira Gandhi WLS

The Tamil Forest Department is soon coming out with a publication of the orchids of the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary. More than 30 species of orchids have been photo-documented here and it has also been proposed to create an orchidarium at Top Slip. A new bamboo orchid (*Arundina graminifolia*) too was recently discovered here.

Source: 'Photo-documented publication of orchids soon', *Times News Network*, 04/04/03.

NatureQuest launched in Chennai

NatureQuest, an initiative to promote the appreciation and conservation of nature was recently launched in Chennai. The programme has been put together by the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust (MCBT), the Trust for Environmental Education (TREE) and Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd. (OL). The first programme of the initiative which was held on June 14 also saw the release of the 'Sea Turtle Manual' & 'Herpenstance' – the Crocodile Bank newsletter. A Friends of the Croc Bank Club has also been launched.

Contact: **MCBT**, Post Bag No. 4, Mamallapuram - Tamil Nadu. Email: mcbtindia@vsnl.com; naturequest2003@yahoo.co.in

TRIPURA

Thermal power plant to come up near Trishna WLS

A 500 MW thermal power plant is likely to be set up near the Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary by the Northeast Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO).

The foundation stone for the Rs. 2500 crore power plant that is to come up at Morakchak in Tripura West District was laid in March 2002. NEEPCO had approached the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) for a commitment to provide uninterrupted natural gas for 15 years. A Supreme Court order preventing drilling or construction within or near wildlife sanctuaries, however, disallowed ONGC from committing to such an undertaking. NEEPCO had allegedly begun drilling operations on a site adjacent to the sanctuary, but the SC order led to a suspension of work. NEEPCO has reportedly approached foreign agencies for funding now.

The State Minister for Power and Finance, Mr. Badal Chaudhari had meanwhile stated that the state will go ahead with the power plant and has requested the Union Petroleum Minister to urgently convene a meeting, ascertain the natural gas resources in Tripura and finalise its timely supply for the project.

Source: 'Tripura government pushes for thermal power plant in Trisna Wildlife Sanctuary', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 13/04/03.

UTTARANCHAL

Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve to be reopened for eco-tourism

The Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve is being reopened partially for eco-tourism. The Uttarakhand government and the Union Ministry of Forests and Environment, have both, agreed to the proposal. A nine kilometre-long area in the Chamoli district, till Dibrageetha via Dharashi, has been earmarked for the same. Another report has said that tourists will have to take local guides and they will be allowed to go upto the Gharsoo area. Night halts will be allowed in Lathi, Gharsoo, Bhelta and Kharak.

The state government will start constructing 'eco-huts' in the area by the end of this year. Local people from nearby villages have demanded the restoration of their traditional rights such as grazing and the Gram Pradhan of Lata Village, Dhan Singh Rana has also asked for the involvement of villagers in any tourism-related activities. It has been proposed that the local people be provided special training to act as guides.

The Centre had banned all human activities in the reserve in 1982 following concern expressed by environmentalists that the fragile ecology of the

region was being destroyed. (Also see *PA Update* 34).

Source: Swati Sharma. 'Nanda Devi Biosphere to be reopened', *The Statesman*, 20/04/03.
Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve to be reopened for eco-tourism', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 25/04/03

Fire in Rajaji National Park

Large areas of forests and trees worth lakhs of rupees were gutted by fires in and around Dehradun in April.

Fires were also reported from the Ramgarh range of Rajaji National Park. They were reportedly brought into control quickly and not much damage was reported.

More details are however not available.

Source: 'Trees worth lakhs gutted in Dehra Dun', *The Times of India*, 14/04/03.

Corbett Heritage trail to be developed

Several areas in Kumaon, associated with the life and times of Jim Corbett are being now developed into a 'heritage trail' as part of the Uttarakhand government's effort as promoting eco-tourism in the state.

Choti Haldwani along with five villages in the Ramnagar Division are among those selected to be part of this trail.

Source: 'Heritage train in Corbett country', *The Hindu Business Line*, 04/05/03.

Contact: **Rajiv Bhartari**, Conservator (Eco-Tourism) Office of the PCCF, Forest Department, 87 Rajpur Road, Dehradun-248001. Tel: 0135-2746934. Fax: 2743964. Email: rajivbhartari@hotmail.com

UTTAR PRADESH

No birds; Nawabganj WLS to be made picnic spot

The Uttar Pradesh Tourism Corporation (UPTC) has decided to promote the Nawabganj Wildlife Sanctuary as a tourist spot, saying that migratory birds have stopped visiting the wetland. The wetland has been drying up and the Irrigation Department too has not helped by providing water. This is reported to have adversely affected the arrival of migratory birds.

The UPTC is targeting schools and has sent out letters to 25-30 schools inviting them to visit the sanctuary. They are planning to offer lunch packs for the children and other promotional activities such as painting competitions to attract them and the schools.

Source: Devanshi Seth. 'Sanctuary in a spot as birds take wing', *Times News Network*, 12/03/03.
Shirin Khan. 'Bird watchers grounded', *Times News Network*, 10/04/03.

Contact: **CWLW-UP**, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow – 226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-283864. Fax: 283868

Speeding train kills three elephants in Dudhwa

Three elephants were run over by the speeding Gonda-Malani passenger train in the Dudhwa National Park recently. The herd had strayed on to the tracks. Three elephants died on the spot while another injured pachyderm escaped into the forest.

Source: 'Train rams 3 elephants', *The Hindu*, 02/06/03

WEST BENGAL

Dolphin survey in Sunderbans denied permission

A three week dolphin survey in the Sunderbans that was to be coordinated by the NGO Pugmarks from February 27, 2003 onwards could not be initiated because permission was denied. The FD cancelled the project after the Union Ministry of Defence refused to allow the researchers to use global positioning systems (GPS) for monitoring purposes.

The other groups to be involved in the survey were the US based Wildlife Conservation Society, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

(Eds. Note: In the last issue of the PA Update (No. 41&42, April 2003), it had been erroneously reported that the survey had already been completed. The error is regretted)

Source: 'Sunk for security reasons', *Down to Earth*, 31/05/03.

Contact: **Pugmarks**, 10, Meherali Road, (Near Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner's Office), Circus Avenue, Kolkata - 700017, West Bengal. Tel: 033-22873307. Website: www.pugmarks.org

Director, Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve, Bikash Bhavan, 3rd Floor, North Block, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700091, West Bengal.
Tel: 033-3211750. Fax: 3211529 Email: atanu_raha@hotmail.com

FD elephants from Jaldapara, Gorumara and Buxa to be sold

The West Bengal Forest Department has decided to sell off 26 of its elephants from the North Bengal region. 20 elephants from Jaldapara WLS, and three apiece from Gorumara NP and Buxa TR, all within the age group of one-and-half to five-and-half years, have been short listed for the same. The decision for the sale was approved in the State Wildlife Advisory Board meeting held in Chaparamari in March. The reason is to reduce expenditure of the department.

The rearing of one elephant calf, including the maintenance of a daily labourer costs Rs. 50,000 annually. The calves become suitable for duty only on reaching an age of 14, adding a heavy financial burden on the department. The sale of each animal is expected to fetch between Rs. 2 and 3 lakhs. The elephants will be sold to different state zoos and state forest departments after permission from the Centre.

Source: Sudipta Chanda. 'Elephants on sale to minimise expenditure', *The Statesman*, 13/03/03.

Animal rescue centre in Ballavpur WLS denied permission

The West Bengal State Environment Department has shelved the plan to set up an animal rescue centre in the Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary. The decision to create this centre had been taken in 2000, after the Supreme Court had imposed restrictions on possessing and displaying wild animals, including in circuses. The project was to be undertaken by the state wildlife department under the supervision of the Central Zoo Authority. Ballavpur was considered appropriate as an area 150 acres was available for use and its proximity to Kolkata meant that it could also be promoted as a tourist spot.

Objections to the project apparently cropped up recently after the area was included in the East Kolkata wetlands, and following that the project has now been shelved completely.

Source: Kaushik Ghosh. 'Environment dept. shelves sanctuary', *The Statesman*, 13/02/03.

Financial crunch leads to less food for deer in the 'Deer Park' at Ballavpur WLS

150 odd deer in the Deer Park in the Ballavpur Wildlife Sanctuary are not being provided their stipulated quantity of food because of a financial crunch being faced by the Forest Department. The crunch has reportedly occurred because of the state government's decision to curtail the budget in this regard by 20%.

75 deer from the park have already been shifted to other parts of the state to deal with the crunch and the inability to adequately feed the animals here. Some department officials have suggested that the financial crisis can be averted by promoting the deer park as a tourist destination and imposing an entry fee.

Source: Pranesh Sarkar. 'Deer too dear for Forest Department', *The Statesman*, 13/02/03

Safari at Jaldapara WLS

The Forest Department and the Tourism Department of West Bengal Government have agreed in principle to jointly set up a wildlife safari in Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary in conjunction with tour operators in the region (see *PA Update* 29). The safari is expected to start when the park reopens after the monsoons in September.

A three day - two night package is to be offered to the tourists that will include elephant rides, a vehicle safari, nature trails and a taste of local culture and folklore.

Jaldapara was chosen keeping in mind the sanctuary's popularity with domestic as well as foreign tourists and there are plans to spread the concept to other forests of North Bengal as well.

Source: 'Safari waits at your doorstep', *The Statesman*, 12/04/03.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)**, North Bengal, West Bengal Forest Dept., Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-25627(O) 25596 (R)

State Wildlife Board concern over widening of gauge Alipurduar -NJP railway and NH 31

The West Bengal State Wildlife Board has expressed grave concern over the ongoing project of conversion to broad gauge of the Alipurduar - NJP railway line and the widening of the National Highway 31.

During a meeting of the board that was held in March in Chapramari, it was decided that they would write to the Centre and the railways expressing their concerns. The railway line passes through a number of protected areas in North Bengal region besides cutting across three main elephant movement corridors. The project has been challenged in the Calcutta High Court by local environmental NGOs led by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The new threat that has arisen is the widening of NH 31 as part of the Golden Quadrilateral project. The road runs parallel to the rail route and once work starts, the threats to wildlife will be multiplied.

(Also see *PA Updates* 39, 36, 34, 32 & 29)

Source: Niraj Lama. 'Worries over Alipurduar-NJP upgradation', *The Statesman*, 10/03/03.

Contact: **WWF- I**, West Bengal State Office, 5th Floor, Tata Centre, 43, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700071, West Bengal. Tel: 033 - 2889530. Fax: 2883761,

CWLW, Government of West Bengal, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta 700 091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Experts say, 'Tiger monitoring in India has failed'

A report in the latest issue of *Animal Conservation*, a publication of the Zoological Society of London, has stated that 'three decades of tiger monitoring has basically failed in India'. The report has been prepared by a team of top Indian and American scientists, including Dr. K. Ullas Karanth of the Wildlife Conservation Society, New York, Dr. AJT. Johnsingh from the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Dr. John Seidensticker of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park, Washington DC, Dr. Charles McDougal of Tiger Tops, Nepal and Mr. Valmik Thapar.

The tiger population estimates declared by Project Tiger and the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) are, according to the report, woefully unscientific and inaccurate. The report suggests that sampling-based approaches should be adopted, rather than the misleadingly 'exact' numbers arrived at

through the three-decade-old pugmark census method. The report states, that the pugmark method intensively surveys only a fraction of India's 300,000 sq. km. tiger habitat; and that pugmarks are difficult to locate in hard, rocky areas and also in wet areas such as the Sundarbans. The use of camera traps in addition to extrapolating tiger populations from available prey numbers is what has been suggested.

According to Dr. K. Ullas Karanth, he has evidence from blind tests conducted on pugmarks of captive tigers on varying terrain that even experienced personnel are unable to segregate individual animals correctly. The report concludes that "the present census-based paradigm does not work since ecological data on tigers from field studies do not support results generated from pugmark census".

Rajesh Gopal, Director, Project Tiger, however, believes that the pugmark census method is in tune with local conditions and will continue, adding that a panel of scientists is working on refining the technique. India's latest official estimate places the countrywide tiger count at 3,642, of which 1,500 are in India's 27 Project Tiger Reserves. This is less than the 3,836 tigers that were counted in 1997.

Source: 'Tiger monitoring in India has failed, say experts', *www.sanctuaryasia.com*, 27/05/03.

Contact: Ullas Karanth, Wildlife Conservation Society, India Programme, 403 Seebo Apts, 26/2 Aga Abbas Ali Road, Bangalore - 560042, Karnataka. Tel: 080-5591747 / 5591990. Email: ukaranth@vsnl.com

New rules for tourist vehicles in Tiger Reserves

A new set of guidelines have been issued by Project Tiger Authorities for tourist vehicles visiting tiger reserves. These vehicles must now have sliding windows with iron grills and must stay 30 metres away from the wildlife they spot. Vehicles entering the reserves will have to maintain a minimum distance of 500 meters between them.

Tourists will now have to sign an 'indemnity bond' before entering the reserves, particularly to protect the authorities from any accident related litigation. The Director, Project Tiger has also urged all the 27 tiger reserves in the country to introduce the guidelines at the earliest, failing which their recognition or funding could be withdrawn.

The guidelines were issued following an incident in the Bandavgarh NP in Madhya Pradesh

where a tiger recently jumped onto and injured some tourists who were moving around in an open vehicle.

Source: Saurabh Sinha. 'Ban on open vehicles in tiger reserves', *The Times of India*, 14/04/03.

Contact: Rajesh Gopal, Director, Project Tiger.
E-mail: dirpt@envfor.delhi.nic.in

First Amrita Devi Bishnoi Award presented

The first Amrita Devi Bishnoi National Award for Wildlife Conservation was conferred posthumously on Ganga Ram Bishnoi of Chirai village. He was shot dead on August 12, 2000, when chasing some hunters who had killed a chinkara.

The award was recently presented to his wife, Kishni Devi Bishnoi, in Jodhpur by the Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr. TR Baalu.

Source: 'Award for wildlife conservation', *The Hindu*, 30/05/03.

Carl Zeiss Conservation Awards presented

Advocate Mahendra Vyas was recently presented the Carl Zeiss Conservation Award 2003 for his contribution to protecting India's wilderness over the past two decades. The award was presented to him by Former Chief Justice of India, BN Kirpal.

Four wildlife 'foot soldiers' were also presented 'Rolls of Honour' for their contribution to protecting wild tigers and their forest homes. These were: AN Tikhe, RFO, Tadoba Andhari TR; Mohan Singh and Ranjit Singh Jadon, both forest guards in Ranthambhore TR and Motilal Pathak, forest guard in Panna Tiger Reserve.

Source: 'Wildlifers recognised', *Sanctuary Asia*, June 2003.

Wildlife census figures

Following are some figures for wildlife in the country that have been released recently. The leopard population has increased from 6,828 in 1993 to 7,273 in the 1997 census. Rhinos have increased from 1,496 in 1993 to 1,817 in 1999. The number of lions has gone up from 304 in 1995 to over 322 in 2001. However, the elephant population has marginally declined from 29,010 in 1997 to 28,274 in 2001.

The number of tigers has also come down from 3,836 in 1997 to 3,642 in 2001-02. The maximum number of 710 tigers were found in

Madhya Pradesh, followed by 401 in Karnataka, 354 in Assam, 349 in West Bengal, 284 in Uttar Pradesh, 238 in Maharashtra, 227 in Chattisgarh and 192 in Andhra Pradesh.

Karnataka tops in elephant population with 6,088 animals, followed by Kerala (5737), Assam (5,312), Tamil Nadu (2,971), Arunachal Pradesh (2102), Uttar Pradesh (1,984), Meghalaya (1,840) and Orissa (1,827).

Undivided Madhya Pradesh accounted for the highest number of 1,851 leopards, followed by the undivided Uttar Pradesh with 1,412, Gujarat (832), Himachal Pradesh (821), Karnataka (620), Rajasthan (474), Orissa (422), and Assam (246). Assam accounts for the maximum number of 1,684 rhinos, followed by West Bengal (120) and Uttar Pradesh (30).

During 1999-2002, poaching of 404 leopards, 181 elephants, 129 tigers, 51 rhinos and 3 lions was reported. Maximum poaching of 47 tigers was reported from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Maharashtra (27), Madhya Pradesh (17), West Bengal (15) and Andhra Pradesh (7). Elephant poaching was maximum in Karnataka (55 cases), followed by Orissa (29), West Bengal (25), Tamil Nadu (23), Kerala (14) and Uttaranchal (8). Uttar Pradesh has reported the maximum of 250 cases of poaching of leopards, followed by Tamil Nadu (28), Madhya Pradesh (26), Himachal Pradesh (24), Maharashtra (14), Uttaranchal (12), Rajasthan (9) and Punjab (8). Assam accounted for 48 of the 51 cases of poaching of rhinos, with West Bengal reporting the rest.

Source: 'Increase in number of lions, rhinos: Census', *Deccan Herald*, 07/04/03.

Wildlife law workshop held for CBI

The Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) organised a one-day law enforcement workshop for members of the Central Bureau of Investigation in April in Delhi. Thirty members of the CBI attended the workshop, which was designed to collectively overview poaching, illegal wildlife trade, and wildlife protection laws in the country.

Although much of the time was taken up examining the recent Amendment to The Wild Life (Protection) Act, recurring difficulties in investigation procedures were also discussed in detail. Avoiding technical errors, at the time of filing complaints with the courts, which provide loopholes

for the defence to exploit, was another area of intense discussion during the legal session.

Contact: **WPSI**, M-52, Greater Kailash Part I, New Delhi 110 048. Tel: 011- 26213864 / 26292492 . Fax: 011- 26464918 Email: wpsi@vsnl.com. Website: www.wpsi-india.org

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL

Khaptad NP, lakes in restricted areas to be opened to tourists

Lakes and protected areas in the restricted areas on the Nepal - China border are being opened by the Government for tourism. These include Khaptad National Park, the Tilicho lake (the highest lake in the world located at 5119 m above sea level) and Rara Lake (the largest in Nepal).

The opening of these picturesque places coincides with the 'Festival of Life' that is being celebrated in Nepal from May to July.

Source: 'Showcasing nature', *Down to Earth*, 15/04/03.

Anti cattle drive in Koshi Tappu

A massive drive has been launched by forest officials for the removal of cattle, particularly domestic buffaloes from the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. The 176 sq. km reserve is home to 150 of the highly threatened wild water buffaloes and the drive is directed mainly at protecting this population. The authorities claim that 90% of the nearly 6000 heads of cattle have been removed from the reserve now.

There has however been controversy over the method of removal of cattle which was initiated by killing 88 animals. This has sparked off a hue and cry among farmers who are demanding compensation for the loss of their only sources of livelihood. Forest officials have however said that there was no question of compensation as their actions were to stop illegal activities inside the prohibited zone of the reserve and that enough notice had been served on the people to remove their cattle.

In 2000 too there was a similar drive for the removal of cattle, where a number of animals were

killed. That drive had to be abandoned as it got embroiled in a controversy related to the killings.

Source: 'Reserve officers claim success in anti-cattle drive', *The Kathmandu Post*, 08/05/03.

28 rhinos counted in area adjoining Chitwan NP

28 rhinos were counted in the Barandabhar region which acts as a corridor between the Royal Chitwan National Park and the Mahabharat range. The animals were counted during a census that was conducted in May by the King Mahendra Trust for Conservation. The population here has almost doubled from the 15 rhinos that were counted during the 2001 census. On previous occasions the rhinos were found only from Bishajari tal and Badrani, but now they are being uniformly recorded from other parts of the range as well.

Source: '28 rhinoceros reported in Barandabhar region', *The Kathmandu Post*, 30/05/03.

New wetland policy approved

The Nepalese Government has recently approved its National Wetland Policy in a bid to conserve the wetlands of national and international importance. The policy has laid a special emphasis on people's participation, conservation of genetic resources of species dependant on wetlands, preparation of a national inventory of wetlands, and sustainable use of resources. It has also suggested the inclusion of more wetlands on to the Ramsar list and the formulation of an act, with regulations and directives for wetland conservation. The government has already proposed the inclusion of three sites, Ghodaghodi Tal, Beeshazar Tal and the Jagdishpur reservoir on the Ramsar list.

The policy has demarcated wetlands in the country into three categories: wetlands inside protected areas and buffer zones, public wetlands outside protected areas and wetlands on private property. Separate management practices have been suggested for each of the categories. The policy has also underscored the need for controlling invasive species, raising adequate funds at the level of the community, and internal and international assistance, formulating of separate laws for wetlands, management of wetlands in the mountain regions, control of ground water use and water pollution.

Most wetlands in the Terai region of Nepal are facing threats due to siltation, eutrophication,

over exploitation, over fishing, hunting and poaching, development activities in adjoining areas, drainage, floods and the introduction of invasive species.

Source: Govt. approves national wetland policy', *The Himalayan Times*, 17/04/03.

Wetlands adjoining Chitwan NP drying up

A number of wetlands adjoining the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) are reported to be drying up due to increased encroachment and other activities like channeling of water for irrigation purposes. These include wetlands at Pithauli, Kabasoti, Agyauli, Kumarkhati and Kolhuba VDCs in the inner Terai and also at the southern edge of the Kolhuba VDC.

Migratory waterfowl, and species of fish like the *anahi* and *razbam* which were found in abundance here in the past have now declined drastically.

Source: 'Aquatic lives disappear as wetlands dry up', *Space Time Today*, 04/03/03.

Hog deer population in Shukla Phanta TR declines

A recent count of hog deer in the Shukla Phanta TR conducted with the support of the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) has found that the population of the hog deer in the reserve has fallen drastically. The population of the deer has declined from about 2500 a few years to 1800 five years ago and further to 1600 today.

The main reasons cited for this decline are increased poaching and habitat loss.

Source: 'Shukla tigers prey base on the decline', *The Kathmandu Post*, 16/04/03.

Large-scale illegal activities in Shivapuri WLS

A large number of illegal activities are threatening the Shivapuri Wildlife and Watershed Reserve, the newest protected area in Nepal that was created in 2002. The main problem has been the absence of military guards for protection as forces have been deployed to deal with the insurgency problem in the country. This is a problem that has been faced with all protected areas in Nepal resulting in a spurt in poaching of animals like the rhino, 100 of whom

have been killed in the last couple of years (see *PA Update* 40).

The nearly two dozen military outposts inside and at key entry points of Shivapuri have been long deserted allowing small time poachers and loggers to increase their activities. The army is now present at only four points - Tokha, Panchpani, Panimuhan and Sundarijal and though they do go for patrolling, local people say that is not enough.

Meanwhile the locals have also complained that they are being harassed by the army personnel when they go into the park for grazing their cattle and collecting fodder and other such produce.

Source: Surendra Phuyal. 'Deserted Shivapuri mirrors the sorry state of conservation', *The Kathmandu Post*, 15/04/03.

Wild animals from PAs being smuggled to Bangladesh via India

Gangs that have been involved with smuggling cattle from Nepal to Bangladesh via India have now shifted their attention to wild animals as well. There are reports that leopard and wild boar are being hunted in Nepal in Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP), Barga Wildlife Sanctuary and other areas connected to Makwanpur district. The animals are then loaded on to trucks that are transporting cattle and taken across the border into India and eventually into Bangladesh.

Indian police recently nabbed two Indians and a Nepalese in this context in the border area of Parsa district and Bindabasini. This was the first arrest of its kind, and the police have reportedly intensified their search operations now. Wildlife officials in Nepal agree that smuggling of cattle does take place, but denied that wild animals are also taken across the border in this fashion.

Source: 'Leopards new target for smugglers', *Space Time Today*, 03/04/03.

Four rhino carcasses found in Bardia

Four rhino carcasses were found in Royal Bardia National Park (RBNP) in the first week of April. Their horns were missing and wildlife officials were of the opinion that they had been killed by poachers. These killings were uncovered at around the same time that the authorities were moving another ten rhinos from Chitwan to the grasslands here (see *PA Update* 41).

Rhino poaching has reportedly gone up drastically in Nepal in the last couple of years. The trend started in 2001 when the government withdrew protection to many of the protected areas as troops were deployed to deal with the insurgency problem in the country.

48 rhinos have died since April 2002. Most of them were killed by poachers, while others were electrocuted by local farmers. According to another study of the 54 rhinos that died in Royal Chitwan National Park last year, 37 were killed for their horns. 20 secret anti-poaching camps (APOs) are supposed to be working in the Terai region; seven of which are operational in RCNP and five are based in Bardia. These however, don't seem to have been very successful in dealing with the poaching problem.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) has requested the army to re-man the many outposts in and around the parks that have been deserted. The army has however expressed its inability to do so until the domestic situation in the country improves.

Source: Surendra Phuyal. 'Alarming rise in rhino poaching could undo much vaunted success story', *The Kathmandu Post*, 09/04/03.

'Two more rhinoceros of RCNP shifted to Bardia', *The Kathmandu Post*, 02/04/03.

'Four rhino carcasses found in Bardia', *The Kathmandu Post*, 04/04/03.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE ?

- *Conservation & Society*

This is a new journal that is being published by SAGE Publications. The Chief Editor is Dr. Kamal Bawa of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) and the Executive editor is Vasant Saberwal. The primary mandate of the journal, as explained in the editorial of the first issue, 'is to bring interdisciplinary perspectives to bear upon the problem of environmental impoverishment'

The first issue has a number of well researched and thought provoking papers by some well known researchers in this field: Michael Lewis, Sanghamitra Mahanty, MD Madhusudan, TR Shankar Raman, Ullas Karanth, Alan Rodgers, Mahesh Rangarajan and Ashwini Chhatre.

Contact: **Dr. Kamal Bawa**, ATREE, No. 659, 5th A Main, Hebbal, Bangalore 560 024, India.
Telephone: 080-23533942 Fax: 23530070
Vasant Sabharwal, Moving Images, D III / 3425, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110 070.
Email: moving@vsnl.com

OPPORTUNITIES

Field based vacancy in Madhya Pradesh

The NGO, Samrakshan is looking for a person for a field based vacancy in the vicinity of a wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh for a period of six months. The job involves working in the villages to assess the threats to wild fauna emanating from the livelihood needs of local people. The candidate would also collaborate with the communities to devise alternative sources of livelihood that are not environmentally damaging, and eventually oversee the implementation of the activities in collaboration with the field-based team of Samrakshan.

The ideal candidate would combine an interest in wildlife conservation with an ability to work with people. Very good knowledge of Hindi is essential.

Contact: **Arpan Sharma**, E-314, Anand Lok Apartments, Mayur Vihar Phase I, New Delhi 110091. Tel: 011-22795088. Fax: 011- 22751907. Email: arpan@samarakshan.org

BP Conservation Programme Awards 2004

The BP Conservation Programme Awards 2004, an initiative of BirdLife International, BP p.l.c., Fauna & Flora International (FFI), Conservation International (CI) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) has been announced. It aims at helping young conservationists and has, over the last 13 years supported 205 projects in 64 countries.

In 2004 the programme will be granting around 20 first year awards and six follow-up awards. Awards for first time projects range from £5,000 to £12,000 (US\$7,500 - 17,500) and follow-up awards average around £25,000 (US\$35,000).

All projects applying for awards must fulfill the following criteria: address a wildlife conservation priority of global importance (preferably linking with established work-plans e.g. national biodiversity

action plan); have a strong link with the country where the project will take place (local people participating in all parts of project planning and implementation); have a majority of team members in full- or part-time University education (under- or post-graduate, and of any age).

Last date for the entries in October 31.

Contact: E-mail: bp-conservation-programme@birdlife.org.uk
Website : <http://conservation.bp.com>

UPCOMING

Consultation on 'Relocation of People from PAs

The Environmental Studies Group (ESG) of the Council for Social Development (CSD) is organizing a one-day seminar-cum-consultation on 'Relocation of People from Protected Areas (PAs) in India: Policy and Process'.

To be held in New Delhi on September 19, 2003, the seminar is intended to initiate a dialogue across different sectors concerned with the issue of relocation from PAs such as state forest departments, NGOs and people's groups. The objective of the seminar is to attempt to explore the issues surrounding the policy and process of relocation including: Government of India's policy on relocation of people as part of the process of settlement of rights after declaration of national parks and sanctuaries; Government of India's policy on the relocation package offered to oustees and its implementation; information currently available on the extent of success of relocation efforts in the past including their impacts on livelihood security of the oustees and improvements in the R&R package offered to oustees and in the process of relocation

Detailed case studies from various PAs in India have been invited for the seminar. For further details and in order to participate the following person should be contacted.

Contact : **Dr. Ghazala Shahabuddin**, ESG, CSD, 53, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi – 110003 Tel: 011 – 24615383/ 24611700/ 24616061/ 24693065/ 24692965. Email: ghazalafarzin@yahoo.com Web address: www.csdindia.org

National wildlife and environment film festival

Vatavaran 2003, a wildlife and environment film festival is being held from November 18-20, 2003 in New Delhi. The festival is being organised for the second year by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), with support from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Entries have been invited in the following categories: 1) Documentaries on Wildlife Conservation and Natural Resource Conservation; 2) Documentaries on the Special Theme of the Film Festival-Water for Life; 3) Documentaries/Animated Films produced by children; and 4) TV programmes, i.e. features, serials, etc.

The last date for the entries is July 30.

Contact: **CMS**, Research House, Saket, Community Centre, New Delhi 110 017. Tel: 011-26522244/55, 26851660, Fax: 26898282.

Email: vatavaran2003@cmsindia.org

Website:

(http://www.cmsindia.org/vatavaran2003/awards/ima/ge/Registration_form.doc)

National Environment and Wildlife Photography competition

The Centre for Media Studies (CMS), in association with the National Museum of Natural History and British Gas has launched a National Environment and Wildlife Photography Competition, *Prakriti Ke Chayachitra*. Entries have been invited in the following categories: 1) Wild Images; 2) Nature in Motion; 3) Lucid Images; 4) Water world; 5) Jungle Life - Rare moments; 6) Facets of Development

The last date for entries is October 15.

Contact: **Centre for Media Studies**, see above

Symposium On Human-Elephant Relationships And Conflicts

The International Elephant Foundation, in association with the Biodiversity and Elephant Conservation Trust of Sri Lanka is organising the Eighth Annual Elephant Research and Conservation Symposium from September 18-20, 2003 in Sri Lanka. The theme of this year's meeting will be "Human-Elephant Relationships and Conflicts". Submissions have been invited for oral presentations and posters on all aspects of elephant conservation and research.

Registration fees will be US\$100 for western participants and US\$ 35 for range state (African or Asian) participants. A field trip to the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage will be arranged after the Symposium.

Contact: **Jayantha Jayewardene**, 615/32 Rajagiriya Gardens, Nawala Road, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka. Phone 94 1 867902. Email: romalijj@eureka.lk

Deborah Olson, Program Officer, The International Elephant Foundation. Email: dolson@indyzo.com

Website: www.elephantconservation.org

Conference of Indian Society for Ecological Economics

The 3rd Biennial Conference of the Indian Society for Ecological Economics (INSEE) is being held in Kolkata from December 18 to 20, 2003 at the Indian Institute for Management (IIM).

The main theme of the conference is 'Biodiversity and Quality of Life'.

Contact: **Secretary**. INSEE Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi Enclave, Delhi - 110007. Fax: 011-27667410. Email: insee@ieg.ernet.in

READER'S RESPOND

VB Saharia...

Reference: Editorial: How many more Wynads?, *PA Update* 41 & 42, April 2003

My comments are as follows:

I fully agree that the one thing that seems to increasingly characterise the Protected Area network of the country today is conflict, and one that is getting more violent. I also agree that the conflict in PAs does not occur in isolation, and that it is reflective of our larger socio-economic-political reality.

The question which the Editorial has raised i.e., 'if the rights of the tribal communities to their natural resources had been ensured, and if promises made to reverse the historical process of their land alienation had been met, would they still resort to

such extreme and violent measures?', is worth examining.

The question of rights to the natural resources of a country is a basic issue, which has to be viewed in the national perspective. The natural resources of a country belong to the nation as a whole. These include both the tangible, as well as the non-tangible and renewable as well as non-renewable resources. The intangibles *inter alia*, include, conserving the top-soil; maintaining the water regime; regulating stream-flow; maintaining balance of nature and the rich bio-diversity of the country. The whole nation has a stake in these values. Similarly there are the non-renewable natural resources like coal; iron ore; and other minerals; oil (petroleum) and natural gas etc. Can we say that the tribal communities had rights to all these, and that these rights have to be ensured? Do any other group of people, have any such rights to common property resources? Why talk about the rights of tribals, and the alienation of their land? In that sense even princes have been alienated from their princely states and zamindaries abolished.

That there is a conflict between the Protected Area network in the country and the livelihood needs of the tribal people is a reality. The conflict, however results from not ensuring that the tribal is empowered, empowered to choose his livelihood alternatives, outside the ambit of the common property resources of the forests. His agriculture continues to be primitive, without our creating any infrastructure to develop it. His economy still continues to be that of a hunter-gatherer as of yore. What rights we want for the tribals? His basic right, as of all of us, is the right to development; the right to develop his agriculture; the right to have all the infrastructure needed to empower him to chose alternative forms of livelihood. There is a Tribal Development Department existing in all the states. What are the functions and duties of this department? What is the blue-print of tribal development which is being followed? On one hand we have reservations for the tribal people in various government jobs (to bring them in the mainstream of the country), on the other hand we want rights for the tribals to forests and forest land, to continue their 'hunter-gatherer' life style?

We have to think seriously about the development of the tribal people, instead of erecting barriers, by talking about rights of the tribals to their (?) natural resources; and their alienation from the forest lands. We will be helping neither the tribals nor the forests of this country.

Contact: **V.B.Saharia**, Retd. Principal C.C.F. Govt. of M.P., B-29 Shahpura – Bhopal. Email: vsaharia@sancharnet.in

Dr. Satya Priya Sinha ...

Reference: 'Genetic hurdles for Dudhwa rhinos', *PA Update* 41& 42, April 2003.

There are some inaccuracies that I would like to point out: Not a single rhino was translocated from Kaziranga NP. Two male and three female rhinos were brought from Pabitora WLS in 1984 and after that four females were brought from Royal Chitwan NP in Nepal.

All the calves belong to the single male who mated with all the females of the 1st and 2nd generation. One male named Rohit was brought from Kanpur Zoo not from the Lucknow Zoo recently. He died recently.

- Dr Satya Priya Sinha USFWLS RHINO Project

KR Sethna...

Reference: 'Tourism development project in Kokrebellur', *PA Update* 41& 42, April 2003.

I think the government's plan to put the village on the tourism circuit will have disastrous effect on the small village which has been the breeding place for pelicans, painted storks and other birds. Why can't these places be left alone to function as they have been for years. Tourism will ruin the area and disturb the birds. Only a few who are rally interested in ornithology and bird watching will to there to watch and study birds.

I hope there will be sufficient opposition to this plan. The government must learn to leave these natural spots alone and not interfere with them for short term gains.

Contact: **KR Sethna**, Yellikodigi Estate, Aldur PA - 577111, Dist. Chikmaglur, Karnataka. Tel: 0826-250058.

PA UPDATE MATTERS

All issues of the *Protected Area Update*, are now available on CD, priced at Rs. 150 (Please add Rs. 50 for postage and outstation cheque charges. Hard copy versions from Issue No 20 onwards are also available in a hardbound format for Rs. 150.

The *Protected Area Update* is also available in its electronic form and is regularly emailed to recipients who would like to receive it via email.

Further we are always looking for news and information from protected areas from across the subcontinent. There are large regions from very little or no information is available at all, and these are gaps that we are looking to fill.

News reports, press releases, information from the FDs and of the work of NGOs are always welcome.

Contact: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**, at the editorial address

Protected Area (PA) Update is produced every two months as a follow-up to the workshop on **Exploring the Possibilities of Joint Protected Area Management (JPAM)**, organised at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi, in September 1994.

We acknowledge the support of the **Foundation for Ecological Security** in the compiling and production of *PA Update 43*

The issue has been prepared and edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria. Several news items were accessed from the Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) Green Files, and the website of Environment Nepal <<http://www.environmentnepal.com.np/>>, but have been credited to their original sources.

The *PA Update* can be accessed on the following websites as well
www.indianjungles.com & www.sanctuaryasia.com/resources/paupdate

Ideas, comments, news and information may please be sent to the editorial address:

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