

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

No. 50 & 51

October 2004

LIST OF CONTENTS

News Item

EDITORIAL

Forced displacement from Protected Areas

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

Andhra Pradesh

Tourism promotion in protected areas with World Bank aid

Census figures announced

Assam

Flood impacts PAs in Assam

Kaziranga, Manas, & Orang

Rs. 16 crore proposal for restoration of flood affected PAs

ABSU for the protection of Manas NP

Training workshop held on survey and census of golden langur

Wild tusker problem in Army cantonment in Narangi

Army busts ULFA camp in Dibru Saikhowa NP

Three new sanctuaries in Assam

Kaziranga NP to celebrate 100 years

Census in Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary

Bihar

Bihar government files Rs. 1002 crore suit against Railways for damage in Valmiki Tiger Reserve

Chandigarh

FRI to prepare management plan for Sukhna WLS

Delhi

Conservation Education Centre at Asola Bhatti WLS

Goa

CM calls meeting to discuss denotification of Madei and Netravali WLSs

Gujarat

Highways causing high wildlife mortality in Gujarat
Gujarat again refuses to give lions to MP for relocation project

73 fires in Gir in two year period 2002-2004, 20 lion deaths in 2003-04

Pg. No

3

Sanctuary status for Chhari Dandh held up

New protected area in Abdasa taluka in Kutch

State seeks Rs. 40 crore from UNDP for Balaram-
Ambaji and Jessore WLSs

Himachal Pradesh

10

Wildlife census figures from Himachal

Survey reveals good brown bear population in Kugti WLS

Jharkhand

11

Trucks banned from protected areas at night

Annual ritual mass hunt in Dalma WLS

Karnataka

12

Animal deaths due to road accidents continues in Bandipur

CAG report slams state apathy towards conservation

Deer moved to Bhadra WLS from deer parks in Bangalore and Hassan district

Animal Planet - Bannerghatta NP tie up

Kerala

13

Proposal to declare Kakkayam forests in Kozhikode district a protected area

Madhya Pradesh

13

Amusement parks at Kanha and Pench NPs

Officers with wildlife training posted outside PAs

Maharashtra

14

HC bans tree felling in Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani
Symposium on three decades of Melghat TR

Forest Development Corporation seeks modification of order banning tree felling in wildlife corridors and eco-sensitive zones

Forest Development Corporation blocking declaration of Mansingh Deo WLS

Leopard Rescue Centre for leopards of Sanjay Gandhi NP

Gaur from Radhanagari WLS to be shifted to Thane and Raigad districts

Proposal for tourism development in Konkan, Vidarbha; focus on PAs

<u>Mizoram</u>	16	<u>NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA</u>	26
New book on Mizoram's wildlife		Open letter to the MoEF	
<u>Orissa</u>	16	Request for information on Four horned antelope	
Wildlife Crime cell in Orissa		Wildlife Trust of India launches 'Communities for Conservation' programme	
Threat to wildlife from iron ore mining; concern expressed to the Organising Committee of 2008 Beijing Olympics		Taj Hotels to enter wildlife tourism	
Fear of crocodile attacks in villages near Bhitarkanika		Course on health care and management of Asian elephants	
Fishing boats seized in Bhitarkanika		Guidelines for ecotourism in forests and protected areas under preparation	
Rengali Irrigation Project may affect Bhitarkanika		SOUTH ASIA	27
More infrastructure facilities for Kuldiha WLS		Afghanistan	
Demand to tackle forest mafia with help of the National Security Act		Afghanistan approaches WII to help in wildlife conservation	
<u>Punjab</u>	19	OPPORTUNITIES	28
Punjab may allow hunting of <i>neelgai</i> , wild boar		Project co-ordinator needed for Dahanu Taluka Environment Welfare Association (DTEWA)	
<u>Rajasthan</u>	19	RSPB small grants for research on endangered birds	
Bird species adversely affected due to human impact in Sariska Tiger Reserve: study		UPCOMING	28
High Court clears Salim Ali Nature Interpretation Centre in Keoladeo NP		International meeting on Birds and Environment	
Water shortage affects Keoladeo National Park		OPEN LETTER to MoEF for Wildlife Week	29
Tourism promotion in protected areas		IN THE SUPREME COURT	32
<u>Sikkim</u>	21	25 YEARS LATER...	36
Conservation Reserve proposed for the cold desert region of Sikkim			
<u>Tamil Nadu</u>	21		
Ganja plantation near Indira Gandhi WLS destroyed			
Water bodies desilted Greater Moyal Elephant Corridor			
Census in Mudumalai WLS, Mukurthi NP			
Proposal to declare forests surrounding Mudumalai WLS 'eco-sensitive zone'			
Exploitation of coral reefs in Gulf of Mannar NP continues			
<u>Uttaranchal</u>	22		
Tourism to account for 35% of Uttaranchal GDP in five years			
MoU signed for Rs. 512 crore Corbett Country Tourism Destination			
Proposed road through Corbett to be relocated			
2003 census indicates growth in wildlife populations			
<u>West Bengal</u>	24		
Crocodile and dolphin census in Sunderbans			
Satellite based radio collars for Sunderban tigers			
Early migration of elephants from Dalma WLS into West Bengal			
Night safari in forests bordering Gorumara NP			
Firearms factory found in Buxa Tiger Reserve			
Captive bred panda gives birth in wild in Singalila National Park			
100 years of The Bengal Natural History Museum			

EDITORIAL

Forced displacement from PAs The spectre looms large

In 2002, the Government of India amended the Wildlife (Protection) Act and the relevant section in the present context is that on 'Settlement of Rights' (sections 18 to 26-A). One need not go into the nitty-grities, but now, even the initial notification, just the intent to declare a protected area is tantamount to allowing the state to restricting rights of people residing there. Earlier in February 2000, the Supreme Court (SC) had in Interlocutory Application (IA) 548 in the Godavarman (forest) case passed an order restraining the state government and their agencies from ordering the removal of dead, dying or wind-fallen trees and grasses etc. from any national park or sanctuary. The court direction was a response to orders by the governments of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh for the removal of timber from protected areas under the guise of it being dead, dying and diseased.

The MoEF, in turn, has clarified in its recently released Handbook related to forest laws - that "In view of this (the above SC order), rights and concessions

cannot be enjoyed in the protected areas". So while the court wanted to stop the state from extraction of timber and such resources from PAs, the government has used it to issue blanket restrictions on all from extracting any resources or exercising any rights in PAs even by local communities. Some interpretation and opportunism this!

As if this was not enough, the SC appointed Central Empowered Committee in its letter dated July 2, 2004, to senior administrative and forest officials of all states and Union Territories, has stated that, "...A number of instances have come to the notice of the Central Empowered Committee where felling of trees/ bamboo, digging of canals, mining, underground mining, collection of sand/boulders ...cutting of grass, collection of minor forest produce, grazing, construction, widening of roads etc. have been allowed to be undertaken in protected areas without obtaining permission from the Hon'ble Supreme Court...You are requested to ensure strict compliance of the Hon'ble Supreme Courts' order so that none of the above prohibited activities are allowed to be undertaken in protected areas".

So, activities like tree felling, mining, and road constructions have all been put in the same category as grass cutting, grazing and extraction of minor forest produce without giving any caveats or clarifications. A mining project that will blast apart the forests, leaving nothing for wildlife nor for local communities has been equated with the grazing of three (or even 300) cows in the PA or the collection of non timber forest produce (NTFP). While those being denied a mining project will lose a few crores in profit, the poor local person will be denied his / her sole source of sustenance, even survival. So while 'one size fits all' has been the prescription for conservation, 'its one size fits all', all over again to deal with its failure as well.

Lets take an example on the ground, say, Balaram Ambaji Wildlife Sanctuary which has been reported in this issue of the *Update*. There are an estimated 80,000 people living within the boundaries of this sanctuary. Why such a PA was proposed and notified in the first place is a mystery, but that question can be left for another time.

If all the above mentioned orders and circulars are indeed implemented, what will happen to these 80,000 people? What will they do? What will happen to the hundreds of *maldharis* whose livelihood depends on the cattle that graze in the park? An even more basic question - who will take the responsibility for the implementation of these

orders? And if the orders cannot be implemented, what is the point of having them in the first place?

The other option that is suggested and often implemented in such situations is denotification so that the inhabited areas are outside the PA. Then all the mining, and dam construction and road laying is not a problem anyway. The wildlife is damned and so are the communities. Surely, no one would argue that grazing and NTFP collection damages wildlife more than submerging the entire forest in a dam project or blasting it away in mining operations. It's a no win situation. Even the denotification is not going to be so easy. Permissions for this too have to come from the Supreme Court.

Imagine, then, a PA where presently only a 100, or for that matter 1000 people live. They are unlikely to have any clout, political or otherwise, to even suggest, leave alone ensure denotification, so that their rights are not curtailed. Neither is the apex court likely to allow denotification, even if the state approached it with a proposal. The present set of orders will only ensure that these few 100 people can neither graze their cattle, not collect NTFP, nor presumably cultivate their little patch of land inside the park.

There is only one way for them: the way out.

Wildlife conservation is also going to suffer huge losses, and in more ways than one. The Karnataka State Government has, for example, already stated that they will not be declaring any more protected areas. Their reason? Protected areas cause displacement and too much trouble.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Tourism promotion in protected areas with World Bank aid

The Andhra Pradesh FD has decided to take up what it is calling 'community-based eco-tourism projects' with aid from the World Bank. Ten spots in important protected areas have been identified to implement this project. These include Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve, Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary, Sri Venkateswara National Park, Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary, Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary, Katigi village in Viskhapatnam, Kuntala waterfalls in Adilabad and Tatipudi reservoir in Vizianagaram district.

According to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. SK Das, the World Bank would release Rs. 80 lakhs for the project this year. Local people would be actively involved in forest management and would be trained in catering and as tourist guides too.

Source: 'World Bank aid for eco-tourism', *The Hindu*, 23/06/04.

Census figures announced

The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department has released the details of the wildlife census that was conducted in the state from May 21 to 27, 2004.

The number of tigers in the state has gone up to 146 from last year's 140 and that of leopards to 263 from 253. The elephant population has however dipped from 69 to 59 animals.

The figure for the tigers is only from nine protected areas in the state.

Source: Shiva Kumar. Email to nathistory-india@Princeton.edu dated 27/06/04 based on report in *The Hindu Business Line*.

Contact: **PCCF (WL)**, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

ASSAM

Flood impacts PAs in Assam

Kaziranga:

Reports in the first half of July said that nearly 80% of the Kaziranga National Park was inundated by the waters of the swollen Brahmaputra. 79 of the over 100 camps in the park were severely hit, while 13 were completely submerged and had to be evacuated. The range office at Agratoli, the eastern range of the park too was submerged and had to be abandoned.

The animals in the park were seen taking shelter on Burhapahar hill and the artificial highlands within the park. A large number were seen fleeing to the Karbi Anglong hills across the National Highway 37 towards the south of the park. Like in previous years, speeding vehicles on the highway caused a number of animal casualties, with initial reports suggesting that at least five hog deer and two python were killed in accidents. The park authorities and NGOs have made repeated appeals to curb the speed of vehicles while on the stretch of the highway passing through the forest. Drivers have however

continued to remain callous. Seven barricades were installed in the area to keep an eye on the speeding vehicles, but were not much of a deterrent.

The flooding has also resulted in heavy erosion in parts of the park. The strategically important Debeswari camp has already been completely eroded. A similar fate awaits Lohoroni and Arimora where erosion was unabated.

Looking at the gravity of the flood situation in the park, additional staff was also deputed to augment the existing staff strength in the park of around 400.

The third wave of flooding around the 20th of July totally cut off road traffic to the park from Guwahati. The road was under 10 feet of water at Naogaon and an alternate route to KNP through Tezpur was also similarly affected. This level of flooding was supposed to be the highest recorded in the last 20 years.

An initiative was taken by the Wild Aid Program of the Wildlife Trust of India to vaccinate over 1800 heads of livestock that were susceptible to Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) because of the floods. The two-day vaccination camp was organized by veterinarians and volunteers from the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) on 30 and 31 July at Panbari. The camp targeted livestock from the flood affected Panbari ideal village, Panbari Missing Gaon 1, Panbari Missing Gaon 2 and Bokakhat in the district of Golaghat.

The CWRC, which is located near Bokakhat is a rehabilitation centre for wildlife that has been set up by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and the Department of Forest and Environment, Government of Assam, and supported by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

The Assam Minister, Mr. Pradyut Bordoloi also pointed out that at least 30 wooden bridges were either washed away or extensively damaged in the park. Additionally, nearly 26 sq. kms of the park is said to have been eroded and the embankment at Dhansirimukj had been substantially weakened, posing a threat to the future of the park

(Also see *PA Updates* 49, 47, 45, 44, 38, 34 & 29)

Source: Source: Sivasish Thakur. 'Kaziranga in grip of flood', *The Assam Tribune*, 14/07/04.

'Floods cut off Kaziranga National Park', http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2004/040721_knp_floods.htm

'Vaccination camp for livestock in Panbari, Assam', http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2004/040816_vaccination.htm

'Rs. 16 cr. forest scheme for national parks',
The Assam Tribune, 24/08/04.

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

Manas:

Flash floods carrying trees and huge amounts of silt washed away parts of the Manas National Park killing a large number of deer. There were however no immediate reports of human casualties.

A large number of fibre glass and inflatable boats of the Forest Department in the park were also washed away leaving the staff stranded. This is the first major flood after 1985 and there are suggestions that one of its important causes is the dam that is under construction upstream on the Manas river near the Bhutan border.

The road from Barpeta to Kokrajhar was breached completely cutting off access to the park.

Source: 'Flash floods wash away parts of Manas National Park',
http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2004/040714_manas_floods.htm

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, PO Barpeta Rd. Dist. Barpeta – 781315, Assam. Tel: 03666 – 61413. Fax: 60253

Orang:

The rising waters of the Rivers Dhansiri and Panchnoi along with that of the Brahmaputra also submerged about 90% of the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park, the only habitat of the one horned rhino on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra.

The floods resulted in the erosion of about 20 hectares of the park in addition to causing major damage to 15 camps and four buildings, including the washing away of the forest camp at Gaspara. An estimated 150 hog deer and 80 wild pig were also reported to have been killed.

Source: '90% of Orang park area submerged', *The Sentinel*, 18/07/04.

Rs. 16 crore proposal for restoration of flood affected PAs

The Assam State Government has submitted a Rs. 16 crore scheme to the Central Government for the restoration and reconstruction of the infrastructure inside protected areas that were damaged in the recent floods. These include Orang, Pabitora, Dibru-

Saikhowa, and Manas in addition to the Kaziranga National Park. The State Forest Minister, Mr. Pradyut Bordoloi also said that the state government would try and release some funds for immediate restoration work.

Source: 'Rs. 16 cr. forest scheme for national parks',
The Assam Tribune, 24/08/04.

ABSU for the protection of Manas NP

The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) has taken up initiatives for the protection of the Manas National Park. The Kokilabari unit of the student body recently handed over to the Park authorities 50 firearms it had collected from poachers in the area, which falls under the BTAD. Illegal trade in timber is said to have gone down as also the sale of deer meat. ABSU members have reportedly taken to patrolling portions of the park themselves, and are protecting a major part of Bhuyanpara area within the park.

Efforts are also being made to conserve soil and water in areas neighbouring the park.
(Also see *PA Updates* 46 & 54)

Source: 'ABSU goes all out to protect Manas', *The Sentinel*, 30/05/04.

Contact: **Director**, Manas NP, see above

Training workshop held on survey and census of golden langur

A three-day training workshop on survey and census of primates with special reference to golden langur was held in February earlier this year in the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary. It was held under the aegis of Manas Biosphere Conservation Forum (MBCF), and was jointly conducted by conservation NGOs, Green Heart and New Horizon.

The main components of the training included habitat, social behaviour, threats, conservation prospects and scientific methodology for survey and census. Focus was also laid on the role of NGOs as well as the co-ordination and support from government departments and agencies concerned. The participants emphasized the need for the revival of fragmented corridors and the restoration of degraded forests. Stress was also laid on the need to create awareness and for involving the local communities for sustainable uses of natural resources, and wildlife conservation and especially providing space to the golden langur.

The field demonstration and practical training was carried out at Chakrashila WLS and locations

around Nardangiri hills covering a rubber garden in Kokrajhar district. Those participating included representatives of the NGOs that form the MBCF; Green Heart, New Horizon, Natures Foster, Green Forest Conservation and Aaranyak.

Source: 'Training on survey and census of golden langur', *The Assam Tribune*, 01/03/04.

Wild tusker problem in Army cantonment in Narangi

There have been regular reports of deprecation by elephants in the army cantonment at 51 Sub Area at Narangi. The pachyderms are reported to regularly visit the cantonment's ration godown, looking for food. Most of the time it is two or three elephants but occasionally they come in herds of 20-25 as well. Army sources say that on an average, food worth more than Rs. 10,000 is lost on every visit by the elephants, and that this has been happening for the last 10-12 years. The elephants have also killed 17 persons including army jawans in this period.

The main reason for the problem is that parts of the cantonment area actually lie in an elephant movement corridor, between Amchang and South Amchang Reserve Forests. The State government has, in fact, recently declared these forests along with the Khanapara Reserve Forest as the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary.

Army authorities have asked the Forest Department to find a solution to the problem. Some of the options being considered include engaging kunkis (trained elephants) to chase away the wild herds or erecting electric fences around the godown. The FD has however expressed concern that some of these preventive measures, and denying the animals access to the food that they have become accustomed to, could result in the animals retaliating or turning violent and giving vent to their anger on the nearby villages. In any case the army authorities were not too keen to take the help of kunkis to end their predicament because of the cost factor involved.

Source: Sivasish Thakur. 'Wild tuskers creating havoc in Army cantt', *The Assam Tribune*, 01/07/04.

Army busts ULFA camp in Dibru Saikhowa NP

The army is reported to have destroyed an advanced headquarters of the banned United Liberation Front

of Assam (ULFA) located in the Ajukha area of the Dibru-Saikhowa National Park. The army special operations were launched after intelligence sources confirmed the presence of the camp and 40 members of the organisation inside the park.

The rebels, however, managed to flee and relocate the headquarters of the outfit's 28 battalion in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The army found a generator set, some camp materials and documents at the deserted camp.

It is believed that the blast on Independence Day in Dhemaji, which killed 13 people, was co-ordinated from this camp inside the park

Source: Ripunjoy Das. 'Army busts ULFA camp at national park', *The Telegraph*, 14/09/04.

Three new sanctuaries in Assam

The Assam government has recently notified three new wildlife sanctuaries. These are the Amchang WLS (79 sq. kms), Dihing-Patkai WLS (111 sq. kms) and Barail WLS (326 sq. kms)

The Dihing Patkai WLS has been formed out of the famed rain forests of Upper Dihing, Dirak and Joypur reserved forests (RFs) along the Arunachal border in the Dibrugarh and Tinsukia districts and there is the possibility that the area of the sanctuary may be increased in the near future. Amchang WLS is situated on the outskirts of Guwahati City and covers the three reserve forests of Amchang, South Amchang and Khanapara. The Barail WLS, meanwhile is located in the Barak Valley districts of NC Hills and Cachar

The Assam Forest Minister, Mr. Pradyut Bordoloi, while announcing the three new sanctuaries also pointed out that each of the new sanctuaries would impose an additional overhead burden of 30 per cent on the department. He further said that a major part of the required manpower for the new protected areas would be met from the excess staff in the Territorial and Social Forestry divisions of the department. There has been no recruitment of frontline guards since 1992 and at the moment the vacancy stands at 750. (Also see *PA Updates* 46, 45, 43 & 41).

Source: '3 new wildlife sanctuaries notified in state', *The Assam Tribune*, 24/06/04.

Kaziranga NP to celebrate 100 years

A series of activities have been proposed for early 2005 when the Kaziranga NP completes 100 years of

existence. The celebrations will be held from February 11-17, 2005. The focus of the centennial bash will be to project the national park as the site of one of the 'greatest conservation success stories of the last century.

Wildlife experts and conservation activists will be invited when the celebrations will be kicked off with the annual elephant festival held in the park. Author Mark Shand has agreed to be the 'international brand ambassador' for the park.

Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Tarun Gogoi recently launched the website www.kaziranga100.com as a prelude to the centenary celebrations.

Source: 'Rhino abode Kaziranga to celebrate 100 years', *The Statesman*, 11/06/04.

'Kaziranga website launched', *The Assam Tribune*, 27/08/04.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga NP, see above

Census in Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary

The first-ever census of primates was conducted in the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of May. Following are the census figures: 63 Hollock Gibbons in 17 families, 65 capped langurs in eight groups, 45 pig-tailed macaque in two groups, 151 stump-tailed macaque in three groups, 58 Assamese macaque in three groups and 116 Rhesus macaque in three groups.

Source: 'First-ever gibbon census concludes', *The Assam Tribune*, 16/05/04.

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

BIHAR

Bihar government files Rs. 1002 crore suit against Railways for damage in Valmiki Tiger Reserve

The Bihar State Government has filed a Rs. 1002 crore suit against the Indian Railways under the Wildlife Protection Act for damage caused in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve.

The main issue of contention is the railways' construction of the Bagaha-Chittauni rail-rum-road bridge, which the forest officials say, has wreaked havoc in the forest and led to the mass destruction of trees and wildlife.

The suit was filed before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate at Bagaha in April 2004, by the Range Officer of Madanpur forest range, which is part of Valmiki Tiger Reserve. Notices were recently issued to senior administrative officials of the Gorakhpur Division of the East Central Railway seeking a reply in the matter.

The petition states that in 1980, the railways had submitted a proposal for non-forest use of a portion of the Madanpur forest range, which is part of the protected area. Local and state forest officials had objected to the proposal on the grounds that use of the proposed land by the railways would obstruct the flow of water from the Rahua and Kotrahia nullahs.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests however sanctioned the project in 1992 and the bridge was built. The railway embankment that was built obstructed the flow of water leading to water logging in over 1,691 hectares of forest land. The petition alleges that 1000s of trees dried up and wild fauna was also affected. Many accidents involving wild animals while crossing the track were also reported.

The irony is that the case was filed when Nitish Kumar was the Union Railway Minister, but will now have to be dealt with by the present Railway Minister and former Chief Minister of Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav.

Source: Abhay Mohan Jha. 'Rabri gets a suit for Lalu, but will he pay

Times News Network, 07/08/04.

'Laloo vs Rabri: Bihar files Rs 1,002 cr suit against Rly', *Deccan Herald*, 08/08/04

CHANDIGARH

FRI to prepare management plan for Sukhna WLS

The Chandigarh Administration has asked the Dehradun-based Forest Research Institute (FRI) to come up with a 10-year wildlife management plan and a forest-working plan for the Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary. The FRI has been asked to complete the survey by December 31 and submit a report by March 31, 2005. A fee of Rs. 8.50 lakh has already been paid to the FRI which will send its team for a survey shortly.

Source: Ajay Banerjee. 'UTI to develop Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary', *The Tribune*, 16/08/04.

DELHI

Conservation Education Centre at Asola Bhatti WLS

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) in collaboration with the Delhi State Government is setting up a Conservation Education Centre (CEC)- the first of its kind in the Capital -- at the Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary near Tughalakabad in South Delhi. The centre will be modelled on BNHS's existing CECs in Mumbai and will have interactive educational displays, nature trails and educational resources for teachers besides serving as a launch pad for teacher training and outreach programmes in Delhi schools, interaction with non-government organisations and decision makers.

The BNHS had made a presentation to the Delhi CM on its Mumbai project a while ago following which an agreement for the centre was signed between BNHS and the Delhi Government. According to the agreement, the Delhi Government will provide the land as well as grant-in-aid of Rs 38.42 lakhs through the Forest Department to the BNHS. The centre will initially be run by the BNHS for three years.

(Also see *PA Update* 49).

Source: 'Delhi to get its first nature education centre', *The Hindu*, 15/07/04.

Contact: **Director**, BNHS, Hornbill House, Dr. Salim Ali Chowk, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai-400023. Tel: 91-22-22821811.

GOA

CM calls meeting to discuss denotification of Madei and Netravali WLSs

The Goa government had approached the Supreme Court for the denotification of those parts of the Madei and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries that were inhabited by people. The Karapurkar Committee that had been set up by the state government to look into the matter had suggested in 2001 that 81.79 sq km of the 166.86 sq km Madei WLS and 88.98 sq km of a total of 218.09 sq km of forest area from Netravali WLS would need to be denotified (see *PA Updates* 39, 33 & 31).

The Supreme Court, had in March earlier this year, directed the state government to approach the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) for the

purpose of the denotification. The CM, Mr. Manohar Parrikar, while replying to a question in the state assembly in the matter recently, said that he would call for a joint-meeting of the MLAs of Sattari, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona in order to reach a consensus over the denotification issue, before approaching the NBWL.

He said one course of action was to apprise the members of the NBWL about the irrationality of the present condition and get the protected areas renotified so as to free the inhabited areas. He also pointed out that the ownership documents of the farmers in these areas were not in order and a proper study would be needed before more forest settlement officers were appointed. The opinion of the Advocate - General of the state has also been sought.

The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: 'CM hails SC directive on settlement issue', *The Navhind Times*, 14/03/04.

'CM for consensus on denotification of wildlife sanctuaries' *The Navhind Times*, 17/07/04.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Wildlife Wing, Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa. Tel: 0832 - 224747 / 223508 / 278891. Fax: 224747

GUJARAT

Highways causing high wildlife mortality in Gujarat

Recent statistics reveal that the construction of a large number of highways in the state has resulted in high wildlife mortality. As speeds on the roads increase, the number of road kills are also increasing.

Road kill statistics from the Vadodara Forest Circle, including the Panchmahals, Dahod and Vadodara districts, are reported to be alarming, even by national standards. Between 1998 and 2004, 16 leopards and about 50 hyenas were killed in road accidents. Additionally forty-six *neelgai* were also killed between 1999 and 2003. It has been suggested that jackal deaths across Gujarat, especially in Kutch and Saurashtra, may be even higher but exact figures are not available.

According to figures put out by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), 24 leopards were killed between 1997 and 2002 in Maharashtra, Uttaranchal, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam put together, showing that the toll in Vadodara region is abnormally high.

According to the Chief Wildlife Warden of Gujarat, Mr. Pradeep Khanna, road kills have increased because of increase in both density and speed of traffic and a substantial growth in wildlife populations as well. He also pointed out that while no major highways pass through reserved forests in the state they were likely to become barriers for migratory animals.

Concerns have also been expressed that the Golden Quadrilateral and the Narmada canal, passing through Kutch, may affect migration of wild asses from the Little Rann of Kutch to the Bhal region.

Source: Robin David. 'Highways: graveyards for wildlife', *Times News Network*, 20/07/04.

Gujarat again refuses to give lions to MP for relocation project

The Gujarat Government is reported to have once again turned down a request from the Centre to shift two or three prides of lions from the Gir National Park to the Palpur-Kuno Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh (MP). Though the state has not sent a formal reply to the request which came in mid-July, there is consensus in the state that the animals should remain only in Gujarat.

The proposal for the relocation had been mooted by the Central Government some years ago on the recommendation of the Wildlife Institute of India, to create a second habitat for the lions. Gir, with 327 lions, was getting overcrowded. Besides, scientists feared if there was an epidemic, the entire population could be wiped out. After a nationwide survey, the 345 sq km Palpur-Kuno forest near Shivpuri in north MP was identified as a suitable alternative habitat for the lions. A large amount of money has already been spent on developing it and a large number of villages inside the sanctuary have also been moved out.

The State Forest Minister, Mr. Mangubhai Patel is reported to have said that there was no need to shift lions from Gir and that their survival would be ensured here. Congress MP from Junagadh, Mr. Jassu Barad, was of the opinion that the lion was a part of Saurashtra's folklore and that the animal just could not settle in a new environment. The Saurashtra Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti and the Gir Maldhari Samiti have also taken a similar view during discussions with the government. They have pointed out the population of lions has grown from 177 in 1969 to 327 now and this shows that the animal is

thriving in its present environment. It has also been pointed out that the lions themselves have ventured out of Gir through a natural corridor to Mityala, Mangrol, Chhara, Sutrapada and Hipalvadli (see *PA Update* 46), which now have almost 50 lions. thus taking care of the problem of overcrowding.

(Also see *PA Updates* 43, 34, 33, 32, 26, 22, & 20).

Source: 'Gir will be lions' only home: Gujarat' www.timesofindia.com, 02/09/04.

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

73 fires in Gir in two year period 2002-2004; 20 lion deaths in 2003-04

73 fires in a two-year period from 2002 to 2004 were reported to have affected the Gir forests. The total financial loss incurred due to this has been tabulated at a little over Rs. three lakhs. This information was recently provided in the Gujarat Assembly by State Tribal Welfare Minister, Mr. Mangu Patel who is also in charge of environment and forests. He was replying to a question by Amreli MLA, Mr. Paresh Dhanani.

37 fires spread over 2202 hectares were reported in 2002-03 while 827 hectares were affected by 36 fires that occurred in 2003-04. A total of 15 forest ranges were affected by these fires, of which the Sarsia range experienced a maximum of 15 fires. The Dedkadi range witnessed seven fires in this period; the Dalkhania and Hadala ranges, six each; five each in Jamwada, Savarkundla, and Jasadhar ranges; four each in Tulsishyam, Chodwadi, Pania, and Visavadar, ranges, three in the Sasan range; two each in Babaria and Devlia ranges and one in the Talala range.

It was also reported a total of 20 lions including 10 cubs were found dead in the sanctuary during 2003-04. Of these three were said to have died due to accidents while the rest died of natural causes.

Source: '73 fires in Gujarat in just two years', *The Asian Age*, 10/06/04.

'20 asiatic lions die in Gujarat sanctuary', *The Statesman*, 05/06/04.

Sanctuary status for Chhari Dandh held up

The move to declare the Chhari Dandh wetland as a wildlife sanctuary continues to be held up, even though the proposal for the same is a decade old. The State Wildlife Board too gave its okay to the sanctuary

proposal two years ago, but the final go ahead has been help up, because the State Mining Department has not yet given a no-objection certificate (NOC).

There have been a number of meetings between the Mining and Forest Departments, including two recent ones involving the respective Department Secretaries. This too has not helped in breaking the impasse. (Also see *PA Update* 45).

Source: DV Maheshwari. '10 yrs. on, State's largest wetland still waiting for sanctuary status', *Indian Express*, 09/06/04.

New protected area in Abdasa taluka in Kutch

The Gujarat Forest Department has proposed to declare 16 sq. kms of grassland in the Abdasa taluka of Kutch as a protected area to conserve the Great Indian Bustard and the Lesser Florican. The grassland in question is said to be an important breeding ground for the birds.

The CWLW of the state has said that they are trying to acquire the area for the purpose. Once declared protected, all grazing activity will be stopped during the nesting period that extends from June to October. After that, however, grazing and cutting of grass will be allowed or otherwise the habitat will become unsuitable for the birds. Experts have pointed out that this will be mutually beneficial. Stopping grazing in the monsoons will help the birds and also increase the productivity of the grass, which will be eventually harvested by the local people.

Source: Richa Bansal. 'Bustards may soon find a secluded haven of their own', *The Times of India*, 13/08/04.

State seeks Rs. 40 crore from UNDP for Balaram-Ambaji and Jessore WLSs

The Gujarat government has sought Rs. 40 crores from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the protection and management of the Balaram Ambaji and Jessore Wildlife Sanctuaries in North Gujarat. A project report titled 'Conservation and Sustainable Management of Dryland Biodiversity', has been recently submitted to the UNDP for the purpose.

The report lists the various factors and causes that threaten the wild flora and fauna in the two protected areas. These include habitat destruction due to human pressure; growing

encroachment; quarrying and mining activities; extraction of fuel wood, medicinal plants and other non-timber products like gum and honey; and frequent drought. Overgrazing has also been listed as one of the major threats. The region has a large number of maldharis with a estimated livestock population of 1.25 lakh that regularly criss-crosses the sanctuary.

The project is to be implemented over a five year period. The Chief Wildlife Warden, Mr. Pradeep Khanna said that the project will focus on reducing human pressure on the two sanctuaries by developing alternative livelihood resources in surrounding areas, with emphasis to improve the habitat for conservation of vulnerable, endangered and endemic wild flora and fauna. It also aims at enhancing and upgrading institutional and technical capacities of the State FD for conservation of biodiversity in the sanctuaries, besides developing suitable grazing zones for local nomadic livestock herders on adjoining revenue lands. (*Ed. Its important to bear in mind that there is a population of more than 80,000 people (about 18,000 households) that live inside Balaram Ambaji WLS. The villages are spread all over the sanctuary and some, in fact, are revenue villages. There is an extensive road network; most of the villages have government schools and there are dispensaries in some*)

Source: Bashir Pathan. 'Govt. seek UNDP funds for sanctuaries', *Indian Express* 21/07/04.

Contact: **Dr. Ravi Chellam**, UNDP, 55 Lodi Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110003. Tel: 011-24628877. Email: ravi.chellam@undp.org
Chief Wildlife Warden - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-30007. Fax: 21097.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Wildlife census figures from Himachal

The results of the wildlife census conducted in Himachal Pradesh in June have now been released. The population of leopards in the state has increased by 20% from 650 to 783. The authorities have said that the figure of 972 leopards given by the department after the 1997 census had lots of duplication and the actual number was about 650.

The highest number of 222 leopards was reported from Mandi district. In Chamba district too, the number of leopards has gone up from 113 in 1997

to 141. Another area that has registered a high increase in leopard population is the Rajgarh-Renuka-Poanta belt in Sirmour district where their number has risen from 30 to 58. In the Dharamshala forest division, the number of leopards has gone down marginally from 110 to 107.

Snow leopards have registered a marginal increase from 32 to 35, in the Great Himalayan National Park and Pin Valley as per the preliminary analysis of the census.

Senior forest officials have said that the figures were not 100 per cent accurate as the field staff has either recorded the animal on direct sighting or indirect evidence as per the information given by villagers and local inhabitants, and that the chances of duplication could not be ruled out.

The census was undertaken simultaneously in the 37 territorial units, three wildlife divisions and the two national parks on June 16.

Source: 'Number of leopards goes up in Himachal', *The Hindu*, 19/07/04.

Survey reveals good brown bear population in Kugti WLS

A study on the ecology of the Himalayan brown bear has reported a good population of the bears in the 379 sq. kms Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary in the Chamba district. The study was conducted in 2002-03 by Bipin Rathore of the Department of Zoology of the Government Postgraduate College, Solan. The study was recently submitted to the Himachal State Council for Science and Technology. The bear was sighted on 20 occasions at various locations in the sanctuary during the study period and the maximum sightings were recorded at the Kinnaur, Dughdhar, Dharnel, Nanuan and Sami *dhars* (grazing pastures).

The researcher has suggested that a detailed census must be conducted to get a better idea of the bear numbers in the sanctuary.

Source: Vishal Gulati. 'Declare Kugti habitat brown bear sanctuary', *The Tribune*, 29/06/04.

JHARKHAND

Trucks banned from protected areas at night

The Jharkhand High Court has recently passed an order banning bauxite-loaded trucks from driving through the forests of the Palamau Tiger Reserve

comprising the Palamau Wildlife Sanctuary and Betla National Park at night. The order is the fall out of a decision taken in September 2002 by the Chief Conservator of Forests to prohibit trucks loaded with bauxite or any other major mineral from plying in the protected areas at night.

The president of the Palamau Pramandal Khan Mazdoor Sangh (Labour Union) had filed a petition contesting the ban, claiming it had adversely affected their livelihoods and that the ban would only benefit the Peoples War Group and other extremist organisations in the area. During the hearings in the court, the Advocate General of Jharkhand, arguing for the Forest Department, argued that the noisy, smoke spewing trucks were a threat to the local wildlife and environment. He also pointed out that an alternative route for the trucks existed, and proved that there had been a rapid decline in the wildlife population along the disputed route.

The court dismissed the petition and issued the order not allowing trucks into the PAs at night.

Mortality records maintained by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) reveal that from 1997 to 2002, vehicles have killed at least 24 leopards, 5 tigers and 50 other animals in these protected areas. These numbers only represent animals that were recorded. Countless other mortalities go undocumented.

Source: WPSI. Email to nathistory-india@Princeton.EDU, 08/08/04.

Contact: **WPSI**, M-52, Greater Kailash Part I, New Delhi 110 048. Tel: 011-26213864 / 26292492. Fax: 011- 2646.4918. Email: wpsi@vsnl.com Website: www.wpsi-india.org

Annual ritual mass hunt in Dalma WLS

Sendra, the tribal festival, where wild animals are killed to appease the gods was held in the forests of the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of May.

Around 500 tribals participated in the hunt this year and about half a dozen animals including wild boar and deer were reported to have been killed by them during the course of the day.

Armed policemen and forest officials were present, but did not take any action to stop the hunt, though it is in violation of the Wildlife Protection Act.

Source: Nityanand Shukla. 'Jharkhand tribals defy ban, kill animals during fest', *Pioneer*, 06/05/04.

KARNATAKA

Animal deaths due to road accidents continue in Bandipur

Wild animals continue to be killed in accidents on the national and state highways that pass through the Bandipur National Park. The number of accidents is reported to have increased in the recent past. Animals killed in this manner include the tiger, elephant, spotted deer and the peacock. Following the death of a tiger last year, the Forest Department had taken a number of steps to deal with the problem (see *PA Update* 45).

A number of boards have been put up along the roads asking drivers to maintain their speed at 40 kmph. These are, however, often ignored by the drivers. The FD has also launched a campaign to create awareness of the importance of wildlife conservation among the drivers. Pamphlets explaining the importance of wildlife conservation are regularly distributed and fines of upto Rs. 500 are also imposed on drivers when caught speeding.

The National Highway Authority of India is laying 'rumble strips' on the stretch of the Mysore-Calicut National Highway - 212 that bisects the park. The work is presently in progress at Moolehole forest range in the park. Since the Mysore-Ooty Highway is a State highway, the park authorities have requested the Public Works Department for the laying of similar rumble strips here.

Additionally the FD has recommended that vehicle movement on these roads needs to be restricted. While this cannot be done on the Mysore-Ooty Highway in the absence of alternative route to Tamil Nadu, the suggestion is it should be done on the Mysore-Calicut highway, at least at night. It has also been suggested that the night traffic of Kerala-bound vehicles could be diverted via Mysore-Manandawadi Road, which crosses Sultan Bathery in Kerala. However, the road is closed at the moment following the ongoing construction of a bridge. The PWD authorities have promised to complete the bridge soon.

The National Highway connecting Mysore with Kerala passes through Mulehole and Maddur forest ranges in the park and Wyanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala. Since the road has been upgraded to a national highway, motorists drive in a reckless manner, ignoring warnings to pay heed to wild animals that cross the highway. Hence, the park

authorities have pleaded to restrict movement of vehicles on the highways from 6 pm to 6 am.

Other experts like Mr Kumar Pushkar, Executive Director, Zoo Authority of Karnataka have said that the permanent solution to the problem is diversion of highways away from the national parks.

Source: Shankar Bennur, 'Wild animals run over by negligence', *Deccan Herald*, 13/04/04.

Contact: **Deputy Director**, Bandipur National Park, Gundlupet, Chamrajnagar 571 111, Karnataka

CAG report slams state apathy towards conservation

The state audit report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India, has criticised the lack of effort on part of the Karnataka Government in the field of wildlife conservation and protection. The report states that the lack of planned preservation and conservation measures has resulted in endangered species remaining unprotected and some wildlife areas with rich biodiversity not receiving due attention.

Specific cases mentioned in the report include the fate of the Great Indian Bustard in the Ranebennur Wildlife Sanctuary. The population of the birds here is said to have declined from 14 in 1979 to five in 1995. Similarly, Mookambika and Someshwara Wildlife sanctuaries were identified as ideal habitats for Lion Tailed Macaques, which forewarns ecological degradation in the wildlife habitat. Though these animals were identified as endangered species requiring immediate conservation measures, the CAG report says nothing has been done in this regard.

The CAG report also takes the case of the Mandagadde Bird sanctuary, an island whose existence is threatened with submergence, due to ongoing construction work at Upper Tunga Project (see *PA Update* 33). Nothing has been done to save the island from being submerged in the last nine years. The CAG report also pointed out that there had been a sharp decline in the elephant population from 6098 in 1997-98 to 5,845 in 2002-03, and that reasons for this had not been investigated.

The report also took note of the fact that while the budget provision for Forest, Environment and Ecology Department for the year 2002-03 was Rs19.55 crore, the total expenditure that the department had incurred was Rs 25.83 crore.

Source: 'Wildlife suffers due to government apathy', *Times News Network*, 26/07/04.

Deer moved to Bhadra WLS from deer parks in Bangalore and Hassan district

48 deer presently housed in a small deer park besides the Kempambudhi Tank Bund in Basavanagudi, Bangalore are to be shifted to the Bhadra WLS. The park was being maintained by the Forest Department but was not open to the public. Some animals had earlier been moved to Bannerghatta as well.

FD officials said that the park was like an unrecognised mini zoo and the Central Zoo Authority of India had ordered that such unapproved zoos must be closed and the animals be shifted.

The deer are supposed to have been brought here before 1982 from Bandipur. The Bangalore Mahanagara Palike had given the Forest Department 19 acres of land near Kempambudhi Tank on a 20-year lease to accommodate the deer. More recently funds for the maintenance of the deer park had also been stopped and the FD was finding it difficult to maintain the premises and feed the animals. A few years ago, 17 of these 19 acres were handed over when former mayor of Bangalore, Mr K Chandrashekar decided to build a Fantasy Park here.

Other unapproved zoos near Bangalore include Antaragange Children's Park (Kolar), Kaiwar Tapowana (Chintamani taluk), Kempegowda Vanadhama, Savandurga (Magadi taluk), Mini zoo at Minakinagurki (on the way to Doddaballapur) and Sorakayalahalli Children and Deer Park (Kolar).

Another 80 deer were also relocated to the sanctuary from a deer park in the Gendekatte forest area in Hassan district in the month of July.

Source: Chandrashekar. G. 'Oh deer! We're going to a sanctuary', *Deccan Herald*, 31/05/04.

'80 deer relocated to wildlife sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 13/07/04.

Animal Planet - Bannerghatta NP tie up

Animal Planet, the TV channel that focuses on wildlife has decided to partner with the Bannerghatta Biological Park as part of its plans to increase focus on India. It would brand the park by sprucing up signages and re-designing information kiosks to give a more visible presentation about the park. The park itself is hoping that this association will increase its visibility and attract more visitors. Currently about one million visitors visit the park annually.

The Forest Department has said that there are plans to invest about Rs. 20 crore, sourced from

the Central Government and the Karnataka Infrastructural Development Board to improve the park.

Source: 'Animal Planet plans more focus on India', *Hindu Business Line*, 11/006/04.

Contact: **ACF (WL)**, Bannerghatta NP, Bangalore – 560083, Karnataka.

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

KERALA

Proposal to declare Kakkayam forests in Kozhikode district a protected area

A study conducted by the Malabar Natural History Society has said that the Kakkayam forests in the Kozhikode district are very rich in floral diversity and that urgent conservation steps are needed to protect the region from further degradation. The study also recommends conservation of the area by declaring it a wildlife sanctuary.

While 34 sq km of forest area has already been protected in the vicinity of the Kakkayam dam, the suggestion is that the adjacent Lady's Myth Reserved Forest covering an area of 100 sq km could be added to it. The Kakkayam forests are also important as the catchment of the Kuttiadi River, which provides round-the-year water supply to Kozhikode. Additionally it is said to be the only evergreen forest patch remaining in Kozhikode district.

A team from the Department of Botany of the University of Calicut which also participated in the study has provided a checklist of the floral wealth of the forests. The rapid assessment could identify more than 680 species of flowering plants in the forests, of which, 226 species are said to be endemic to the southern Western Ghats. More than 200 species of plants of medicinal use were also identified.

Source: Maleeha Raghaviah. 'Kakkayam forests rich in flora: study', *The Hindu*, 04/09/04.

MADHYA PRADESH

Amusement parks at Kanha and Pench NPs

The Madhya Pradesh State Government issued a statement in July announcing the development of amusement parks at Kanha and Pench National Parks as

part of its policy to take up mega-projects with the help of the private sector. Earlier in the month, State Tourism Corporation Chairman, Mr. Nitish Bharadwaj, reportedly flew to Kanha and Pench in a special chopper, along with Richard C. Hawkins of Sun International of South Africa, to explore the possibility of developing eco-tourism in the state.

The FD too confirmed that the state government was in the process of finalising its plans, but also that this would be difficult after the recent amendments in the Wildlife Protection Act. They also pointed out that the permission of the National Board for Wildlife would be needed for the purpose.

The Amusement Park at Pench is proposed to be built close to the main entrance gate of the park at Turia. A senior forest official informed that the government had identified 120 hectares of revenue land and 40 hectares of forest land for this purpose and that the Wildlife Protection Act would not be applicable in this case. Forest clearance from the Centre would however have to be obtained for the 40 hectares of forest land needed for the project.

A cross-section of forest department officials were reported to be unanimous in their view that the amusement park should not be allowed to come up even outside the Pench Tiger Reserve because it is already touching the peak of its carrying capacity as far as tourists are concerned.

(Also see *PA Update* 41).

Source: 'MP move on parks draws flak', *The Hindu*, 26/08/04.

Contact: **Director**, Kanha TR, Mandla - 481661
Madhya Pradesh.

Director, Pench NP, Seoni - 480 661
Madhya Pradesh.

Officers with wildlife training posted outside PAs

There are reported to be 32 officers of the Indian Forest Service and State Forest Services in Madhya Pradesh that have undergone wildlife training at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Dehradun. The WII offers a nine-month diploma course in wildlife management for Divisional Forest Officers and Assistant Conservators of Forests and a four-month certificate course for Rangers. The training enables the officers to be better suited to manage wildlife in protected areas.

It has however been pointed out that a number of these trained officers are presently posted in positions that have nothing to do with protected

areas or wildlife management. These include the officers posted as Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Betul; DFO, Dewas, a number of officers at Headquarters in Bhopal, the officer in charge of the Working Plan at Shahdol, another at the Ranger School at Shivpuri, Conservator of Forests Hoshangabad and another posted at the depot in Delhi.

At the same time a number of Forest Officers who have not specialised in wildlife management have been posted in protected areas. These include among others, the Directors of some of the best known protected areas in the state. The State Forest Minister, Chaudhry Chandrabhan Singh, said that he was not aware of this situation and that he would look into the matter and enforce changes wherever necessary.

Source: Rahul Noronha. 'Forest staff management policy turns topsy-turvy', *The Pioneer*, 11/09/04.

Contact: **CWLW**, MP, Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal 462003, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0755-2557371/ 2550391.

MAHARASHTRA

HC bans tree felling in Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani

The Bombay High has recently banned the cutting of trees in the Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani region that was declared an eco-sensitive area (ESA) under the Environment Protection Act (EPA) - 1986 in 2001 (see *PA Updates* 36, 34 & 30). The order was passed in response to a petition filed by the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG), which pointed out that forests were being systematically decimated in these hill resorts inspite of its ESA status.

Source: 'Ban on felling trees in Maharashtra hill stations', Email from John Manjali based to defendingwildindia@yahoogroups.com dated 13/08/04.

Contact: **Samir Mehta**, (BEAG), 4, Kurla Industrial Estate, LBS Marg, Mumbai – 400086, Maharashtra. Tel: 022 – 5798638. Fax: 5771459. Email: samir@beag.net

Symposium on three decades of Melghat TR

Melghat Tiger Reserve was one among the first nine tiger reserves declared in the country and the first in Maharashtra. To commemorate 30 years of its existence

the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) Directorate has planned a two-day symposium in October in Amravati titled 'Three decades of Project Tiger in Melghat'. It is being held in association with the P.G. Department of Zoology, Amravati University and Nature Conservation Society Amravati. The symposium proposes to cover a range of themes:

- a) Biodiversity of Melghat and its conservation significance for the people.
- b) Impact of managerial practices on habitats. Relevant changes in the status of habitats and regeneration, with special reference to conservation of rare, endangered and endemic species including medicinal plants in Melghat.
- c) Study of behavioral aspects of wild animals, prey-predator relationships in Melghat with special reference to rare and endangered species.
- d) Research work on biodiversity and gene pool conservation for protecting natural resources.
- e) Social aspects in wildlife management, ecodevelopment, rehabilitation of villages.
- f) Conservation education, interpretation and ecotourism.
- g) Threats to tiger habitats and future strategies for tiger conservation.
- h) Status of Tiger Conservation in Tadoba Andhari

Contact: **Director**, Melghat Tiger Reserve, Amravati Camp, Amravati - 444602.

Kishor Rithe, Satpuda Foundation, 1st Floor, "Pratishtha", Bharat Nagar, Akoli Road, Near Sainagar, Amravati - 444607, Maharashtra. Tel: 0721- 2511966 / 09422157123. Email: kishorrithe@yahoo.com

Forest Development Corporation seeks modification of order banning tree felling in wildlife corridors and eco-sensitive zones

The Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) and the Maharashtra Govt. have moved an application seeking modification of an earlier High Court blanket ban on felling of trees in eco-sensitive zones and wildlife corridors. The ban was effective within 10kms of the boundary of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. According to the corporation the HC the ban would result in a loss of 1400 crores, adversely affecting its operations.

Source: Amrut Dhanwatay. Email to nathistory-india@Princeton.edu based on news item in *The Hitavada* dated 14/07/04

Contact: **Amrut Dhanwatay**, Tiger Trails, 19, Dandige Layout, Shankar Nagar, Nagpur - 440010. Tel: 0712 - 5641327 Mobile: 9823012707
Email: amrutd_ngp@sancharnet.in; Website: www.tigertrailsindia.com

Forest Development Corporation blocking declaration of Mansingh Deo WLS

The three year old proposal of the State Forest Department for the creation of the 115.37 sq. kms Mansingh Deo WLS adjoining the Pench Tiger Reserve has still not been cleared. The proposal had been submitted in June 2001 and even though the FD is said to have satisfactorily replied to all queries regarding the proposal, it is alleged the process is being held up by regular generation of fresh queries.

The main opposition is said to be coming from the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) which holds nearly half (54.97 sq. kms) of the area of the proposed sanctuary. The FDCM has demanded book adjustments against the expenditure it has made in the plantations in this area. It has been pointed out that due to this delay in declaring the sanctuary the corporation is continuing clear felling activities here for the creation of their plantations.

Source: 'Mansingh Deo Sanctuary Yet to Get Green Signal', *The Hitavada*, 03/07/2004.

Contact: **Amrut Dhanwatay**, see above.

'Leopard Rescue Centre' for leopards of Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) has decided that leopards trapped in the vicinity of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) in Mumbai will not be translocated. Instead they will be released in a 'Leopard Rescue Centre' that will be set up on 50 acres of land in Aarey Colony in Goregaon.

This decision was taken after a day long meeting that was held recently in Mumbai and attended by senior wildlife officers, like the Chief Wildlife Warden of Maharashtra, Mr. K Subramaniam; Director Project Tiger, Dr. Rajesh Gopal; former Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Mr. VB Sawarkar and NGOs like the Bombay Natural History Society and Bombay Environment Action Group.

Source: 'Captive cats will get new home, to be left alone', *The Times of India*, 06/07/04.

Gaur from Radhanagari WLS to be shifted to Thane and Raigad districts

A recent census carried out in the Kolhapur Wildlife Division has estimated more than 1000 gaur in the division. The estimates for the three wildlife sanctuaries here, are as follows - Radhanagari WLS: 395 to 610; Koyna WLS: 435-493 and Chandoli WLS: 88 to 243.

It is feared that the declining cover forest cover due to activities like mining and the increased number of gaur, particularly in Radhanagari could result in conflict with farmers in the area. A proposal has therefore been made to shift some of the animals from the Radhanagari WLS to Thane and Raigad districts. Details of the number of gaur to be shifted or the exact new locations are not known.

Source: Radheshyam Jadhav. 'Radhanagari sanctuary bisons to get new home in Thane, Raigad', *Indian Express*, 25/05/04.

Contact: **Sunil Karkare**, Hon. Wildlife Warden, Kolhapur.

Proposal for tourism development in Konkan, Vidarbha; focus on PAs

The Maharashtra Government is reported to have made a comprehensive budgetary allocation to tap the tourism potential in the Konkan and Vidarbha regions of the state.

A budgetary proposal of Rs. 34.50 has been made to upgrade tourism facilities in Konkan, while an integrated tourism plan worth Rs. 170 crore has been chalked out for the Vidarbha region with the help of the Tata Consultancy Services. The areas that would be covered under this include Ramtek, Chikhaldara and the protected areas of Melghat, Tadoba and Nagzira. One of the main thrust areas will be forest, eco and wildlife tourism.

Source: 'Maharashtra to tap tourism potential of Konkan, Vidarbha', *Hindu Business Line*, 05/06/04.

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

MIZORAM

New book on Mizoram's wildlife

The Centre for Environment Protection (CEP) has recently published a book entitled "Mizoram and Its Wildlife - Checklist of Mammal, Amphibian, Reptile, Bird, Invertebrate Fauna, Ichthyo-Fauna & Flora".

Contact: **V.L. Tiana**, General Secretary, CEP, C-54, Phulmawi Run, Tuikual North, Aizawl - 796001, Mizoram. Tel: 0389-2316744. Email: cep_mizo@lycos.com

ORISSA

Wildlife Crime cell in Orissa

The Orissa Forest Department has recently established a Wildlife Crime Cell that will monitor major offences committed under the Wildlife Protection Act. The cell will be headed by a Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and will have a wildlife conservation officer and Assistant Conservator of Forests as its members.

All crimes that fall within the purview of the WLPA will be reported to the cell in a particular format. The cell will help create a database that will have the full details of prosecution status, conviction rates and related issues. It will also closely monitor the progress of the investigation into the cases, launching of the prosecution, seizure and recovery of wildlife products in each case. The cell plans to interact with wildlife wardens, including honorary wildlife wardens and liaise with police for proper investigation, seizure and raids. It will also guide forest and other investigating officers.

During 2003-04, Orissa recorded 46 wildlife crimes out of which elephants were poached in nine. The rest involved hunting of other animals and poachers were arrested in 34 cases. This year, 10 cases have been detected.

Source: 'Wildlife cell to take on poachers', *The New Indian Express*, 27/08/04.

Threat to wildlife from iron ore mining; concern express to the Organising Committee of 2008 Beijing Olympics

The Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO) has expressed concern that the unchecked violation of environmental and wildlife laws due to an increase in iron ore mining

operations in the state was destroying forests and adversely impacting vital elephant and tiger corridors

Most of the 150 highly polluting new sponge iron and ore crusher units that have come up in the state during the past three years were, allegedly, operating without the required approvals of the Orissa Pollution Control Board (OPCB) and without procuring a license from the Department of Mines or clearances from the Forest Department (FD). The operations reportedly thrive due to a strong nexus between local mine owners, and revenue, forest and police officials.

It was also pointed out that there had been a spurt in iron ore mining operations in Orissa following the increased demand for steel in China during the past three years, particularly in view of the Summer Olympics in Beijing in 2008. The WSO had drawn attention of the Organizing Committee (OC) for the Beijing 2008 Olympics to the decimation of vital wildlife habitats and elephant corridors in the districts of Sundargarh and Keonjhar where most of these iron ore mines are operating. It had also urged the International Olympic Committee to review the source of iron ore and sponge iron used for making steel which was being procured for setting up tracks, stadiums and hostels for the 2008 games.

The OC for the Beijing Olympics has reportedly assured the WSO that necessary precaution was being taken to ensure that the wildlife habitat or local environment in India was not being affected as a result of the construction activities. The matter was investigated by the Deputy Director of the Environmental Department of the OC. It found out that the sole steel supplier for all the present constructions is the Chinese steel maker, Shou Gang Group and that all the ore used by this company is sourced from within China, from mines near Beijing city and He Bei province.

Source: 'Wildlife faces the mining threat', *The Statesman*, 07/08/04.

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

Fear of crocodile attacks in villages near Bhitarkanika

Sightings of crocodiles in the month of June in water bodies and fields in villages bordering the Bhitarkanika National Park caused a lot of fear and

panic. All tilling and sowing operations of the kharif crop were reported to have come to a complete halt. The two villages said to be most affected were Iswapur and Rangani located on the banks of the River Brahmani. While no human casualty was reported from the area, a number of cattle were killed by the crocodiles.

This is the breeding season of the crocodiles and they are known to become extremely aggressive and territorial in this period. The villagers alleged that the matter, though referred to forest officials, had not been taken up in earnest to ensure safety of villagers. (Also see *PA Updates* 49, 45, 44, 43, & 40).

Source: 'Jaws fear bits into farmers daily affairs', *The Statesman*, 19/06/04.

Fishing boats seized in Bhitarkanika

The Forest Department seized 10 boats and arrested 24 people in the month of July at the mouth of River Barunei, which comes under the administrative jurisdiction of the Bhitarkanika National Park. Of the confiscated vessels, six were fishing boats while four others were the boats that had been pressed into service for smuggling the timber felled from the coastal mangrove forest.

The forest personnel also seized fishing nets and other implements besides the smuggled timber. Cases against those arrested were registered under Sections 27, 29 and 45 of the Wildlife Protection Act.

Source: 'Fishing boats seized in Bhitarkanika', *The Statesman*, 13/07/04.

Rengali Irrigation Project may affect Bhitarkanika

Conservationists have expressed the fear that the Rengali Irrigation Project that is nearing completion will adversely affect the mangroves of the Bhitarkanika National Park. The project is comprised of the Samal Barrage on the River Brahmani and irrigation channels.

The main fear is that once the project is completed, fresh water presently reaching the mangroves will be diverted away. This is expected to substantially increase salinity in the coastal plains of Kendrapara and Cuttack districts. It is feared that the situation will get worse in the summer months with saline ingress occurring 75 kms upstream.

Mangrove forests require a suitable mixture of fresh and saltwater and the completion of the project is expected to upset the existing balance. There is the possibility that the composition of aquatic fauna could

change, resulting in the loss of many commercially valuable species of prawn and fish. It has also been suggested that estuarine crocodiles may abandon the core area of the sanctuary and migrate upstream in search of freshwater and potentially increasing the human-animal conflict here.

Source: Satyasundar Barik. 'Irrigation project threatens Orissa forest', *The Hindu*, 04/06/04.

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, WSO, see above
DFO, Bhitarkanika NP, At/PO Rajnagar,
Dist. Kendrapada – 745225. Orissa. Tel:
06729-72460/64. Fax: 06727-20775

More infrastructure facilities for Kuldiha WLS

Efforts are being made to add more infrastructure facilities in the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary for its better management and protection from poachers. A larger number of watchtowers and salt licks, development of pasture areas, better roads for communication and fire lanes have been proposed. Approval is being awaited from the Central Wildlife division for the installation of two VHF towers with wireless communication equipment and for firearms for the forest staff. One of these towers will be installed at the divisional office while the other will be installed at Jodachua.

The sanctuary was earlier in the Baripada Forest Division, but after the recent reorganisation of the Orissa FD in October 2003 (see *PA Updates* 46 & 45), it is now in the Balasore Forest Division. An estimated Rs 72 lakhs is required to give the sanctuary a facelift but only Rs. nine lakh has been made available for the year 2004-05.

Forest Department officials have pointed out that illegal quarry operations (blasting) in Nilgiri and Swarnachuda hill areas by some lease holders was adversely affecting the sanctuary. They say that they have now drawn the attention of the Lokpal on the issue after repeated intimations to revenue officials failed to yield results. The FD is of the opinion that the problem would be mitigated to a large extent if the lease would be awarded by the revenue department after obtaining clearance from the FD.

The sanctuary that is connected to the Simlipal Tiger reserve is known to have 56 elephants, eight leopards and one tiger.

Source: 'Poachers no longer allowed', *The Statesman*, 02/9/04.

Demand to tackle forest mafia with help of the National Security Act

Expressing concern over the fast depletion of forest resources in the state, the Orissa Krushak Mahasangh (OKM) and nearly 50 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Orissa have demanded that the timber mafia be booked under the National Security Act and ex-servicemen be entrusted with the task of guarding the forests. They also demanded the enactment of a stringent law on the line of Maharashtra's Tree Act to deal with the situation.

They have pointed out that timber worth an estimated Rs five crore was being smuggled out from the various reserved forests in the states and if this was not dealt with strongly, all the forest resources of the state would be depleted within the coming years. This would result in an adverse impact on the nearly 1.10 crore people in the state dependent on the forest, depletion of the ground water table and loss of wildlife.

The OKM has also pointed out that the Central government has issued guidelines to the states to ban the use of wood as a material for construction and use substitutes but the state government had done little towards its implementation. Alleging that the government plantation programmes had been a flop, Mr Bibhudendra Prasad Das, President of the OKM also demanded that special courts be created for quick disposal of forest and pollution related cases; plantation work be privatised and payment to be made on the basis of survival rate of plants; retired defence personnel should be appointed on a contract basis for guarding the forest; and plantations must be made a compulsory subject in the school curriculum.

Prominent among the signatories were former ministers, Mr Habibulla Khan, Mr Netrananda Mallick, Mr Gajadhar Majhi, (all Congress) Mr Chaitanya Prasad Majhi, Mr Duryodhan Majhi, Mr Debi Prasad Mishra (all Biju Janata Dal) and Mr Himanshu Meher (Bhartiya Janata Party).

Source: 'MLAs for forest laws', *The Statesman*, 09/08/04.

'NSA to tackle forest mafia', *The Statesman*, 31/08/04.

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

PUNJAB

Punjab may allow hunting of *neelgai*, wild boar

The Punjab Wildlife Department is in the process of finalising a proposal that will allow for the hunting of *neelgai* and wild boar in the state. The department has claimed that the population of the two animals has grown substantially and they were causing huge losses to farmers (see *PA Update* 46).

According to the proposed plan, Sub Divisional Magistrates (SDMs) will be authorised to issue permits to hunters identified by panchayats of villages where the crop is being affected. The Chief Wildlife Warden of the state is reported to have said that census figures have indicated an excess population of *neelgai* in the districts of Mansa, Muktsar, Patiala, Sangrur, and Bathinda. As per official estimates there are 7000 *neelgais* in the state.

A number of conservationists have however opposed the proposal and have suggested that a better way to deal with the problem would be to compensate the losses that farmers incur due to these animals. They have pointed out that in the absence of a proper census it would be difficult to determine the number of animals to be killed. Fears have also been expressed that once shooting permits are issued to individuals, it would be difficult to ascertain whether the same is used to kill the animal for which it has been issued. The CWLW has, in response, assured that the laws will be very strict, and that the killed animal will have to be handed over to the Wildlife Department. Sources in the Wildlife Department itself have however said that they lack the infrastructure, including vehicles for this purpose.

Source: Aditi Tandon. 'Punjab may allow hunting of blue bull, wild boar', *The Tribune*, 20/08/04.

RAJASTHAN

Bird species adversely affected due to human impact in Sariska Tiger Reserve: study

A collaborative study by the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Council for Social Development and the Wildlife Protection Society, exploring the linkages between human use and biodiversity in Sariska Tiger Reserve has just been completed. The study identifies grazing and biomass collection as major threats to the park and has found that bird species composition

changed significantly in response to intensive human use of forests.

The bird species affected included the white-bellied drongo, Hume's warbler, red-vented bulbul, oriental magpie-robin, brown-capped pygmy woodpecker, white-browed fantail, red-throated flycatcher, grey-headed canary flycatcher, oriental white-eye, and rufous treepie. Generalist bird species like the common mynah, house sparrow and house crow were encouraged by forest degradation, and were found in higher densities in degraded areas. Changes in bird species composition were related to changes in vegetational features, such as canopy cover, density of trees, average tree height and shrub density brought about by intensive biomass extraction.

It has been estimated that forests over a third of the area of the proposed national park are highly degraded due to human pressure. Regeneration of native scrub trees is highly constrained and invasive species such as *Prosopis juliflora* and *Cassia tora* are gaining ground. Pollution, due to tourism-related activities, is also emerging as a major threat to the few critical perennial water sources inside the reserve.

The study indicates that there is an urgent need to reduce pressure on forest resources because of grazing and fuelwood collection inside the reserve, apart from controlling tourism activities. Creative livelihood solutions need to be explored to divert pressure on forests for fodder which sustains the grazing economy of the people here and find viable alternatives to fuelwood. In a bid to reduce pressure on forests, the Project Tiger authorities have been planning for the relocation of the eleven villages located inside the core zone but discussions indicate that in its present form, the relocation plan is unlikely to be accepted by the affected people as it is inadequate on many counts.

The full technical report of this project can be obtained from Dr. Ghazala Shahabuddin

Contact: **Dr. Ghazala Shahabuddin**, Fellow, Environmental Studies Group, Council for Social Development, C/o Mr. Jawed Ashraf, Embassy of India, P.O. Box 292, 336, Kapurdhara Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: 00977-1-4422455 (R) Email: ghazalafarzin@yahoo.com

High Court clears Salim Ali Nature Interpretation Centre in Keoladeo NP

The Rajasthan High Court recently cleared the construction of the controversial Salim Ali Nature

Interpretation Centre at the Keoladeo Ghana National Park in Bharatpur. Work on the Rs.2.5- crore project, coming up over an area of 500 sq metres in the park with the support of the Austrian multi-national company De Sorovoski, was stopped in April 2003 after a court order. (See *PA Update* 43 & 39)

The Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court, Justice Anil Dev Singh and Justice KS Rathore, dismissing the writ petition filed by Samudra Singh, a retired professor and OP Choudhary, a retired employee of the Forest Department, ruled that there was "no merit" in the writ and that the petition, which was filed in public interest was motivated by private interests.

The petitioners, terming the construction of the centre illegal and against the provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 had sought the demolition of the building and removal of its debris at the cost of the respondents--the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) - India which has undertaken the task and De Sorovoski, the sponsor. The petitioner had cited the Supreme Court order of 1997 in the Godavarman case in which it was ruled that no construction could be carried out in the forest area and nothing, including dead wood, could be removed from there. The petitioners had alleged vested interest on the part of De Sorovoski in promoting the project in the Park, saying that the MNC wanted to make its presence in the park visited by thousands of nature lovers every year, as it manufactured tourism related products like binoculars, visual aides and cameras.

The allegations in the writ included charges against the former PCCF, RG Soni and the then Deputy Wildlife Warden in the Park, Shruti Sharma, that they had favoured Sorovoski as the MNC had arranged a trip for them to Austria in the year 2000. The court was requested to order an inquiry to pin point those responsible for the "starting and restarting of the huge illegal construction" inside the park. The MNC, which too filed its affidavit in the case, testified that it had no vested interest in promoting the centre.

The court order termed the construction of the interpretation centre as an ancillary activity to forest management, that it was not a non-forestry activity and that there was no fault with the construction of the interpretation at the site in question. The court also permitted the use of the Sorovoski logo at the interpretation centre and absolved the officials from the charges of taking any

favour pointing out that they had made the trip after getting clearance from the authorities.

The work on the building of the centre has already been completed and the construction of an auditorium and open air theatre, setting up of a library and making of a film on Ghana are to be taken up soon.

Source: 'High Court clears Salim Ali centre', *The Hindu*, 18/08/04.

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

Water shortage affects Keoladeo National Park

Severe water shortage in the marshes of the Keoladeo National Park is reported to have forced a large number of breeding birds to leave, adversely affecting the heronries here. The State Government, had in response directed that the water be released from the Panchana Dam in Karauli. About 350 mcft water was released from the dam into the Gambhiri River, but the dry bed of the river is said to have soaked it all up before it could reach Keoladeo NP.

Hundreds of farmers also opposed the move saying that this will leave little for their agriculture. Some of them even threatened that they would commit suicide if the water was released. Some ministers in the Rajasthan government too have openly supported the farmers in this matter.

As a temporary measure, 18 mcft of water from Ajaan Dam was released into the park, but is reported to have filled only about a 10th of the area of the wetlands here.

Mr. Francesco Bandarin, Director of UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, too wrote to Ms. Vasundhara Raje Scindia, CM of Rajasthan in the matter, requesting for action that will not compromise the integrity of this world heritage site. (Also see *PA Updates* 43, 40 & 39).

Source: 'Migratory birds in troubled waters', *The Statesman*, 11/09/04.

'Birds deserting Bharatpur', *The Tribune*, 31/08/04.

'Keoladeo park gets no water; birds desert nests', *The Hindu*, 02/09/04.

Francesco Bandarin. Letter to Ms. Vasundhara Raje Scindia, dated 07/09/04.

Contact: **Director**, Keoladeo Ghana NP, see above.

Tourism promotion in protected areas

Rajasthan Tourism has unveiled major plans for the upcoming tourist season. These include initiatives like 'adopt-a-monument' scheme to promote heritage conservation as a part of which Non Resident Indians and corporate houses are being asked to join in their conservation. Individuals can also adopt a heritage monument, restore it and look after it for 10 years.

Other public-private participation projects include the makeover of the Tijara Fort and Jal Mahal Tourism plan worth Rs 125 crore that aims to boost eco-tourism in Jaipur by creating facilities like heritage resort, craft village, sports club and a convention centre.

Restoration work is also being taken up of old forts at Kumbhalgarh, Jaisalmer, Chittorgarh and Amber. A Jaipur Heritage International Festival has been planned in January and the Jaisalmer Desert Festival is to be held in February next year

Plans have also been made for promotion of tourism in the protected areas of Darrah WLS located near Kota, the Ramgarh WLS near Bundi, and the Sitamata WLS near Chittorgarh.

Source: 'Rajasthan's regal flourish', *The Statesman*, 26/08/04.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Government of Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, Jaipur - 302 005

SIKKIM

Conservation Reserve proposed for the cold desert region of Sikkim

The Department of Forest, Environment and Wildlife Management, Government of Sikkim has proposed the creation of the Tso Lhamo Cold Desert Conservation Reserve (TLCDCR) in North Sikkim in an attempt to protect the habitat and wildlife here.

The proposal is based on extensive field studies of the cold desert and trans-Himalayan areas of North Sikkim carried out in the alpine grasslands in collaboration with the Bombay Natural History Society. The field studies that were facilitated by the Indian Army stationed in the area, under Commander 112 Mountain Brigade and CO 30 Assam Rifles have generated valuable information on a hitherto virtually ignored area of Sikkim.

A stakeholder's consultation has been planned in October 2004 at Tsunghang, North Sikkim to discuss various issues related to the area.

The army has reportedly expressed concern that the creation of the conservation reserve 'will impose severe restrictions on defence related activity, ultimately impinging on their operational preparedness and national security.....'. They have written to the Governor, Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary, Government of Sikkim and the FD suggesting that the workshop should not be held until clearance is received from the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Contact: **Usha Lachungpa**, Sr. Research Officer (WL), Dept. of Forests, Env. & WL, Government of Sikkim, Deorali, Gangtok 737102. Email: slg_ganden@sancharnet.in; lachungpa2001@yahoo.com

TAMIL NADU

Ganja plantation near Indira Gandhi WLS destroyed

The personnel of the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary recently conducted a raid against ganja cultivations in the Amaravathy range near Udumalpet and destroyed Rs. 9.48 lakhs worth of ganja.

The teams raided the North Eastern slope in the V cut hills coming under the Manjampatti area abutting Kodaikanal hills along the Kerala border and destroyed 2,370 ganja plants being cultivated in about four hectares. The teams suspect the involvement of Ganja cultivators from Kerala's Idukki district.

Source: 'Forest personnel conduct raid, seize ganja', *The Hindu*, 03/07/04.

Water bodies desilted in Greater Moyar Elephant Corridor

The Nilgiri Wildlife and Environment Association (NWLEA) in association with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) recently desilted six water harvesting structures in the Sigur area of the Moyar valley. The main purpose was to create water sources for wild animals, particularly elephants that were being forced to stray from their habitat due to water shortage as a result of recurring droughts.

The water bodies in question, had been created several decades ago by tribal communities living here, and are known as 'keru' in tribal parlance. Each water

body has an estimated capacity of six lakh litres of water. Over the years, lack of maintenance had resulted in the silting up of these water holes-cum-wallowing grounds for elephants and other animals.

The desilting was taken up as there was evidence that the wild animals were continuing to visit the `kerus' despite lack of water. It is hoped that the desilting will contribute to reducing human-wildlife conflict to a significant extent in the region.

Source: D. Radhakrishnan. 'Ooty forest ponds desilted', *The Hindu*, 16/08/04.

Census in Mudumalai WLS; Mukurthi NP

A census of wild animals in the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary was held in the month of June. While all the animals were to be covered in the count, the focus was on herbivores like the elephant and gaur.

Sample block counting, line transect and counting of water holes and dung piles were the methods used for the census. The forest staff was assisted by volunteers of the Nilgiris Wildlife and Environment Association and the Indian Institute of Science.

While the full details of the census are not known, it did report a healthy population of the Nilgiri tahr in the Mukurthi National Park. During the two-day census operation, the park was divided into 18 blocks, and 157 tahrs were sighted in eight blocks. In the remaining blocks there were fresh pellets though the animals could not be seen due to mist and incessant rains.

Source: D Radhakrishnan. 'Census at Mudumalai sanctuary from June 11', *The Hindu*, 25/05/04.

D. Radhakrishnan. 'Plan to declare Mudumalai sanctuary area `eco-sensitive zone', *The Hindu*, 01/07/04.

Proposal to declare forests surrounding Mudumalai WLS 'eco-sensitive zone'

A proposal to declare areas within the 10-km radius of the Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park an 'Eco-sensitive zone', under the Environment Protection Act (EPA) - 1986 is to be sent to the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state.

The proposal is in response to the recommendations made in the National Wildlife Action Plan that was released in 2002. A proposal to

expand the sanctuary by merging the Singara and Sigur forest ranges is also said to be pending.

Source: D. Radhakrishnan. 'Plan to declare Mudumalai sanctuary area 'eco-sensitive zone', *The Hindu*, 01/07/04.

Exploitation of coral reefs in Gulf of Mannar NP continues

Large-scale extraction of coral from the waters of the Gulf of Mannar National Park continues, threatening the survival of the coral reef system here. Large-scale extraction has been reported from the Threspuram and Gruspuram areas of the Gulf.

An estimated 10 per cent of the total 100 sq.km. of coral reef formation in the Gulf has been taken over by vested interests in Tuticorin and nearby areas. Most of the limestone industries in this region use coral as raw material.

Source: C Jaishankar. 'Exploitation of coral reef continues', *The Hindu*, 08/06/04.

UTTARANCHAL

Tourism to account for 35% of Uttaranchal GDP in five years

The Uttaranchal Government is set to ensure that tourism's contribution increases from the present 20% to 35% of its GDP in the next five years. The focus would be on developing adventure and eco-tourism. Efforts to encourage private sector investment include several sops such as concessional financing packages, income-tax exemption for five years, and subsidy on capital expenditure.

Some of the specific suggestions include the creation of a Rs. 400-crore master plan to develop lesser-known hill stations in the state. Recently a MoU was signed for the development of 803 acres of land outside the Corbett National Park at an investment of Rs 512 crore (see story below). An 'Institute of Eco Tourism' is also to be set up to train villagers to boost community-based tourism.

Additionally twenty-four global majors have submitted "expressions of interest" to develop a "world class high-end spa and reserve" on a 172-acre plot outside Mussorie. The Taj Group has agreed to set up four budget hotels in the state. Already, the "stated investments" in the tourism sector in Uttaranchal have

been pegged at Rs 1,800 crore and these are expected to be implemented in the coming years.

The state government has also earmarked a corpus of Rs 38 crore to market Uttaranchal as a tourist destination both within the country and abroad. The Germany-based Tourism Management Group International has been appointed to promote and market the tourist attractions overseas.

Uttaranchal has been ranked No. 4 by the Union Government in terms of tourist arrivals. In 2003-04, the State attracted 13 million domestic tourists, up from 96 lakh in 2001-02. The number of foreign tourists visiting the state is said to have gone up from 44,000 in 2001-02 to 64,000 in 2003-04.

Source: 'Tourism set to account for 35% of Uttaranchal GDP in 5 yrs', *The Hindu Business Line*, 21/08/04.

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

MoU signed for Rs. 512 crore Corbett Country Tourism Destination

The Uttaranchal Tourism Development Board and the Ramnagar Eco Park Pvt. Limited (REPL), have recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the development of the Rs 512 crores Corbett Country Tourism Destination (CTCD) over 325 hectares of land at Hempur in the Udham Singh Nagar district.

The destination would include an aviary, theme halls, petting zoo, promenade and lake, conference facilities, therapeutic centre-cum-golf course, serviced cottages, apartments, motels, youth hostels and an agri business zone as it is expected to attract and cater to all sections of tourists.

It would also act as a hub for tourism in Kumaon and eastern Garhwal and would provide easy access to areas like Binsar, Kausani, Ranikhet, Lohaghat, Badrinath via Karnaprayag and Kedarnath, the famous Corbett National Park, Tumaria Dam, and the Harsha period ruins at Dhikuli. (Also see *PA Updates* 47 & 44).

Source: 'Shot in the arm for Uttaranchal Tourism', *The Hindu*, 27/08/04.

Contact: **NN Prasad**, Secretary Tourism, Govt. of Uttaranchal and CEO Uttaranchal Tourism

Development Board, Secretariat, 4B, Subhash Road, Dehradun - 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135 - 2712095. Email:

nareshnp@sancharnet.in

Field Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar -244715, Nainital, Uttaranchal. Tel: 05947 - 85489. Fax: 85376

Rajiv Bhartari, see above

Proposed road through Corbett to be relocated

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has reportedly told the Supreme Court (SC) that it would relocate a stretch of the proposed Ramnagar-Kotdwar highway so as to minimise damage to Corbett NP. The Uttaranchal Government too has agreed to the proposal.

The proposed road, linking the Kumaon and Garhwal regions of Uttaranchal, would have cut through the forests of the Corbett Tiger Reserve. This matter was brought to the notice of the SC by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) which also showed the stretch of the road proposed through the park could be shifted south, through Uttar Pradesh, minimising damage to the Reserve.

The new alignment will now take the road through the buffer zone of the park. The MoEF has also stated that no new constructions: hotels, *dhabas* or repair shops should be allowed to come up in the 1.5km Eco-Sensitive Zone to be notified along the road. Uttaranchal has agreed not to let any human establishment to come up in its territory along the road.

The Uttar Pradesh Government has asked for more time to study the proposed alignment.

Source: 'Government Decides to Minimise Damage to Corbett', WPSI email to nathistory-india@Princeton.edu Dated 14/09/04.

Contact: **Director**, Corbett National Park, see above
WPSI, see above

2003 census indicates growth in wildlife populations

Information from the 2003 wildlife census in Uttaranchal has revealed that the total number of leopards in the state has increased from 1507 in 2001 to 2090 and that of elephants from 157 to 1582. The tiger population is reported to have experienced a small dip from 251 in 2001 to 245 now.

Interestingly, the number of leopards in the protected areas in the state has come down by 7.2% while those in reserved forests has increased by a little over 12%. The Pithoragarh Forest Division was

reported to have registered a 64.5 percent increase in the number of leopards while the Champawat Forest Division has shown a decrease of 41.6 percent in their number.

Source: 'Wildlife lovers ecstatic with rising animal population', *Deccan Herald*, 18/08/04

Contact: CWLW, Uttaranchal, 85, Rajpur Road, Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-744225 / 679817. Fax: 675138/747669

WEST BENGAL

Crocodile and dolphin census in Sunderbans

The Forest Department has proposed to hold the first ever census of crocodiles and dolphins in the Sunderbans in the month of December. The exercise will also involve experts of the Orissa FD.

Unofficial estimates indicate that the Sunderbans in home to more than 400 crocodiles and close to 100 snub-fin dolphins and porpoises in the estuaries in and around the islands.

Source: Marcus Dam. 'Counting crocodiles in Sunderbans', *The Hindu*, 09/09/04.

Satellite based radio collars for Sunderban tigers

A joint project of the Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve (SBR), Project Tiger and the Wild Life Institute of India is being initiated in which satellite-based radio collars will be used to study tigers in the Sunderbans.

The collars will initially be fixed on six tigers. Further details are presently not available.

Source: Marcus Dam. 'Tracking the tigers', *The Hindu*, 01/08/04.

Contact: **Director**, Sunderbans 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

Early migration of elephants from Dalma WLS into West Bengal

Two herds of elephants from the Dalma WLS, comprising 30 elephants, were reported to have arrived in Bankura and the adjoining areas in the month of August. Another herd of 12 animals was

also said to have had reached the jungles of the Midnapore (West) division.

The first herd comprising eight members reached Jhargram division on August 1, much before their scheduled monsoon visit. They did not face any obstacle while crossing Jhargram and walked into the forests of the Panchet Soil Conservation Division in Bishnupur. The second herd reached Jhargram on August 19. Another herd comprising 22 elephants had entered Bishnupur and then again started their journey towards the Sonamukhi range.

Last year the elephants from Dalma had wreaked havoc in these regions, destroying houses, fields and also resulting in a few human deaths (see *PA Updates* 47 & 38)

This year the forest officials had chalked out strategies to restrict the wandering herds to Jhargram, Bishnupur, Sonamukhi and Barjora ranges but the early arrival of the pachyderms has upset their calculations and preparations. The Bankura Police, local administration and forest officials have prepared an elephant squad this year comprising policemen, forest guards and the villagers in order to protect the crops from the pachyderm attack. The Barjora, Beliatare and Sonamukhi ranges had witnessed extensive damage and loss of human life owing to frequent raids by the elephants and so they decided to have the squad.

Earlier in August, the State Forest Minister Mr Jogesh Chandra Burman reportedly said state government will build an elephant sanctuary at Mayurjharna in Jhargram, bordering Bankura and Purulia where fodder will be grown on 400-acre area and that the Centre has already sanctioned Rs one crore for the project. This proposal has been in the pipeline for a while, but had not been implemented because of the opposition expressed by the naxalites in this region (see *PA Update* 38).

Source: 'Early visit of elephants this year', *The Statesman*, 02/09/04.

'Talk to tackle elephants', *The Statesman*, 13/08/04.

Night safari in forests bordering Gorumara NP

A night safari, the first of its kind in the state was to be inaugurated on September 13, in the forests bordering the Gorumara National Park.

The inaugural safari was planned as a three hour trip starting at 6 pm from the interpretation centre and covering a route that would include Lataguri,

Kalamati, Budhram, and the Bichamara range and covering a distance of 15 to 17 km.

The safari has been planned by the state FD with the active participation of the local people. The zilla parishad has been asked to prepare the safari route and the diesel jeeps will be provided by the residents of Lataguri. A number of tour operators were reported to have started designing new package-tours with extra emphasis on the event at Gorumara.

Source: 'Night safari in forest to draw tourists', *The Statesman*, 30/08/04.

Firearms factory found in Buxa Tiger Reserve

Forest officials unearthed a clandestine factory, engaged in manufacturing illegal firearms in the Panbari area of the Buxa Tiger Reserve in June. It is believed that the arms were being used by anti-social elements and poachers in the Dooars region. No one was however arrested during the raid that found the factory. Arms seized by the officials included single-barrel guns and pistols along with instruments and tools for making the firearms. The price range for these arms varies between Rs 500 to Rs 3,000.

A senior forest official has suggested that the arms manufactured in the factory might have been used during the recent incidents of elephant poaching in the forests here.

Source: 'Firearms factory found in Buxa', *The Statesman*, 23/06/04.

Contact: **CF & Field Director**, Buxa National Park, Forest Dept. PO Alipurduar, Dist. Jalpaiguri - 736122, West Bengal.

Captive bred panda gives birth in wild in Singalila National Park

Two red pandas bred in captivity in Darjeeling's Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park (PNHZP) had been released into the Singalila National Park in November 2003 (see *PA Updates* 46 & 40). One of them named Sweety gave birth in the wild in July earlier this year, indicating a big success for the reintroduction program.

Serious concerns had however been raised a few months earlier, when Millie, the other of two radio-collared animals was found dead on March 17. She had been reportedly killed by a leopard. A little later another panda, Dolma, who had also been released into the wild too went missing.

The birth of the new panda was however followed by more good news. Dolma was also sighted.

Source: 'Released red panda dies in wild', *The Statesman*, 22/04/04.

Niraj Lama. 'Panda birth cheers wildlife buffs', *The Statesman*, 23/07/04.

Contact: **Director**, PNHZP, Darjeeling-734101, West Bengal

100 years of The Bengal Natural History Museum

The Bengal Natural History Museum located in Darjeeling celebrated its centenary in September with the formal inauguration of a library and a diorama covering the various natural habitats. The library, though small, has a priceless collection of journals on natural sciences, including some very old ones.

The museum houses specimens of all the major species of fauna in the state, but the focus of the collections here are from the Himalayan region. It has specimens of 403 bird species, out of the 700 odd species found in the region; 54 of the 80 odd mammal species, 35 of the 70 odd snakes, and 57 species of fishes. The butterfly and beetle collections are said to be very striking

The museum had been initiated in 1903 by the then Lt Governor of Bengal with the aim of informing visitors about birds and butterflies of the region. It was first established in Lloyd's Botanical Garden and constructed at a cost of Rs 14,000. It was then shifted to its present site in the year 1919.

The museum is inextricably linked with the name of Charles M Inglis, an amateur ornithologist, who held the post of curator between 1926-1948. Considered as the father of the museum, Inglis' writings can be found in the many issues of the Journal of Bengal Natural History Society, which have been preserved in the library.

Printing of the journal was stopped in 1994.

Source: 'Centenary bash at Hills museum', *The Statesman*, 01/09/04.

Contact: **DFO, Wildlife (II)**, Aranya Bhawan (Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. Tel: 03561-24907(O) / 30383 (R).

E-mail: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in

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

Mumbai-400023. Tel: 91-22-22821811 Email:
kos78@sancharnet.in

Open letter to the MoEF

A group of 50 leading environmental organisations and individuals recently issued an Open Letter to the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The letter that was released in a press conference in New Delhi on September 3, 2004, raised various issues and concerns regarding the country's degrading environment, the reduction in space for public participation in environmental decision making as also the decreasing transparency in the working of the MoEF itself.

Some of the specific issues highlighted included those related to the notification of the Biological Diversity Rules 2004; dilutions of the notifications under the Environment Protection Act, clearance of development projects without adequate assessment, the delaying of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and the lack of public discussion and transparency on genetic engineering. To get the full text of the letter write to Ashish Kothari at the editorial address or email ashishkothari@vsnl.com

The letter can also be accessed at the following website:

<http://www.infochangeindia.org/analysis43.jsp>

A 2nd letter during *Wildlife Week*, signed by 40 organisations and individuals, highlighting the threats to wildlife was sent to the MoEF. (see Pg. 29 for an extract from the letter). For further details write to the editorial address of the *PA Update*.

Request for information on Four horned antelope

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is carrying out a study on the ecology of Four-horned Antelope (Chousingha) in Central India with support of the Department of Science and Technology. As part of the study, a questionnaire survey is being conducted to assess the status and distribution of the animal throughout India.

Those who have information and are willing to help should look at the following website:

<http://www.treepie.org/chousinga/index.htm>

Contact: **Koustubh Sharma**, Four-horned Antelope Project BNHS, Hornbill House, Dr. Salim Ali Chowk, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road,

Wildlife Trust of India launches 'Communities for Conservation' programme

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has launched a new programme 'Communities for Conservation' that will seek to work actively with local and traditional communities for the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of habitats. The programme proposes to work on a range of issues including involvement of communities in management of habitats, protection of sacred groves, supporting community action against destruction of habitats by mining or industrial interests, and issues related to traditional livelihoods.

The programme is seeking help to a) Build a network of like-minded community based organisations and groups to work on community involvement in conservation; b) Suggest projects which can be taken up by the programme and c). Identify ongoing community based initiatives in need of support.

Contact: **Bahar Dutt/ Nidhi Agarwal**, WTI, A-220, New Friends Colony, New Delhi - 110065.
Tel: 011 - 26326025/26. Fax: 26326027.
Email: bahar_dutt@hotmail.com

Taj Hotels to enter wildlife tourism

Taj Hotels Resorts and Palaces has entered into a joint venture with Conservation Corporation, Africa and Cigen Corporation with the aim of providing wildlife enthusiasts, circuit tourists and high-end domestic travellers with 'wildlife experiences' in India with an ecologically sustainable model.'

The venture will offer a mix of game sightings, nature walks through the jungle and meditative experiences in solitude along with personalised service and expert guides for the guests.

In the first phase of operations, there would be a test model in a few locations — any of the protected areas of Kanha, Tadoba, Pench or Ranthambore. The initial investment for this first phase would be Rs. 30 crores which would be used in setting up lodges and other infrastructure. Further expansion will be based on the success of this first phase. The company will start with two lodges and then expand to 15-20 in partnership or alliance with various operators.

The setting up of a Wildlife Advisory Group comprising environmentalists, forest officials and NGOs has also been proposed. Apart from advising the

Taj Hotels in its foray into wildlife tourism, this body will serve as a certification body endorsing the authenticity of the experience.

Source: 'Taj Hotels' foray into wildlife tourism', *The Hindu*, 05/08/04.

Course on health care and management of Asian elephants

A week -long refreshers' course on health care and management of Asian elephants for field veterinarians was held in Assam in the month of March. The course was conducted at the College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara, and was sponsored by Project Elephant, and MoEF.

A total of 20 selected field veterinarians participated. This included eight from Assam, three from Meghalaya, two each from Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal and one each from Nagaland and Orissa. Two Vets working with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) from Kaziranga National Park and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park in Assam and one from Centre for Bear Rehabilitation and Conservation, Wild Rescue, Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh also participated.

Sixteen faculty members and three senior forest officials of the Government of Assam acted as resource persons, during the course, Dr Dennis Schimdtt from Missouri University and Ms Heidi Riddle of the International Elephant Foundation (IEF), USA also participated as resource persons from abroad. Others who spoke on the occasion included Dr Dharmeswar Das, Course Director cum Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Science and Mr. SS Bist, IG, Forests and Director, Project Elephant.

Dr Schmidt delivered a lecture on the technique of ultrasound for the diagnosis of pregnancy and reproduction in elephant and subsequently the technique was demonstrated in the elephants of Assam State Zoo with a pregnant elephant of Pobitora Sanctuary.

Source: 'Refreshers course on health care and management of Asian elephants', *The Assam Tribune*, 14/03/04.

Guidelines for ecotourism in forests and protected areas under preparation

The Union Government is reportedly putting together 'comprehensive guidelines for ecotourism' for forests

and national parks and sanctuaries. These will be independent of the general ecotourism guidelines prepared by the Union Ministry of Tourism.

Some of the activities that are being proposed include trekking, angling, whitewater rafting, elephant, cycle, photo or canoeing safaris, rock climbing, mountaineering, para gliding, hot-air ballooning, birdwatching, skiing, camping in abandoned rest houses and visiting sites to see how forests are managed.

The guidelines would also include stipulations related to use of non-conventional energy, careful water use and waste management. The principles that these guidelines will be based on are the concepts of low volume, low impact, locally controlled tourism to enjoy nature, generate awareness, public support and revenue.

Private players too will be invited to participate, particularly for investment in infrastructure like accommodation and transport facilities. The respective state governments will have the right to identify and decide on the specific proposals they are interested in.

The latest status of these guidelines is not known.

Source: Chandrika Mago. 'Govt, planning to open forests for ecotourism', *The Times of India*, 02/07/04.

SOUTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan approaches WII to help in wildlife conservation

As part of the rebuilding programme in Afghanistan, the Ministry of Irrigation Water Resources and Environment (MIWRE), the Transitional Government of Afghanistan and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have approached the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to sensitise and train its people to help in wildlife conservation and protection. A three member WII team recently visited the Afghan capital as part of the new initiative.

A post conflict environment assessment conducted by UNEP in 2002 has warned of a future without water, forests and clean air if environmental problems are not addressed in the reconstruction period in Afghanistan. The status of the wildlife and rangelands of the country is in a state of limbo and as a

result of the two decades of warfare no biological work was done in the country. Before any management programmes can be initiated in relation to biodiversity conservation and protection of species, it is essential that the population and ecology of those wildlife species, which are threatened as a result of increasing human activities, be investigated on a scientific basis.

The WII is currently preparing a concept paper on how to build the capacity of the Afghans for biodiversity conservation and management. Selected Afghan officers/ university scientists may be first trained at WII, who can then train others in their country. Organization of study tours and customized training courses are some of the other measures being worked out. Funding support is being sought from UN agencies and US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Source: 'Afghanistan ready to answer wildlife concerns', *Deccan Herald*, 10/08/04.

Contact: **Dr. VB Mathur**, WII, PO Box 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-640111 – 15. Fax: 640117 Email: ybm@wii.gov.in

OPPORTUNITIES

Project co-ordinator needed for Dahanu Taluka Environment Welfare Association (DTEWA)

The DTEWA which is focussed on preserving Dahanu (120 kms from Mumbai, India) as a green belt and protecting its special environmental status is looking for a Project Co-ordinator.

The applicant should have a master's degree or a higher qualification in social work or environmental sciences (or related field) and should have excellent communication and writing skills. S/he should also have experience in advocacy, building public support, preparing supporting documents, should have the capacity to independently correspond and communicate with government agencies and the capacity to contribute and supervise publications and supervise scientific research.

Contact: **Kerban Anklesaria**, C/o DTEWA, 79, Janmabhoomi Marg, 1st Floor M. B. House Mumbai 400001. Email: dahanujob@yahoo.com

RSPB small grants for research on endangered birds

As part of its annual program, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), has again offered grants of up to US\$ 1,000 to fund research on bird species listed by IUCN as "Critically Endangered" or "Endangered".

Priority will be given to people working in-country, particularly BirdLife Partners and other conservation NGOs, although individuals not attached to an institution may also apply if they can obtain a letter of support from a recognised institution in their country. The closing date for applications is 31 October 2004.

Contact: **Dr Paul Donald**, RSPB. Email: paul.donald@rspb.org.uk Website: www.rspb.org.uk

UPCOMING

International meeting on Birds and Environment

The Department of Zoology and Environmental Sciences, Gurukula Kangri University, Haridwar, is organizing an International meeting on Bird and Environment from Nov. 21-24, 2004. The meeting is being organised under the auspices of Ornithological Society of India.

Contact: **Dr. Dinesh Bhatt** Organising Secretary, Deptt. Zoology and Env. Sci., Gurukula Kangri University, Haridwar, Uttaranchal. Email: dd_bhatt@yahoo.com. Website: www.geocities.com/birdenv

ERRATA: With reference to the story '**Fire destroys large part of Bhadra WLS**' (*PA Update* 49, June 2004), it has been pointed out that the last para "Some of the villages living in the area have suggested that the fires may be linked to rehabilitation program, as part of the 16 villages were moved out of the sanctuary. they suggest that the fires might have been started by some of the displaced villagers" does not appear in the original story by Nupur Basu, NDTV, credited at the end as the source.

The information was indeed sourced from another source which was not credited. The error and the confusion caused is regretted. **Ed.**

OPEN LETTER TO THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

October 4, 2004

National Wildlife Week, October 2-8, 2004

WHY IS THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUING TO 'CLEAR' CRITICAL WILDLIFE HABITATS?

Even as the nation celebrates National Wildlife Week, critical wildlife habitats continue to be 'cleared' for dams, mines, roads, ports, industries and other 'development' projects. Shockingly, this is being done by the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), the central agency in charge of protecting India's wildlife.

Wildlife in India continues to suffer serious threats, with over 5% of species being in danger of extinction, and many threatened species going further into decline. Clearly MoEF and other agencies need to take drastic action to save these species. Yet, and despite claims that it has improved its wildlife conservation performance, the MoEF's record in protecting wildlife from destructive 'development' and commercial pressures has gone from bad to worse.

Poor environmental impact assessments and a disregard for citizens inputs are key aspects of this decline. As civil society groups, we the undersigned are deeply concerned with this trend, which poses a grave threat to India's wildlife habitats, and simultaneously to the lives and livelihoods of tribal and other communities that depend on such habitats. We demand that urgent steps to be taken to arrest this trend, and to guarantee the security of critical wildlife habitats against destructive development.

Wildlife habitats and populations continue to be under serious threat from 'development' projects across India. Non-transparent decision-making by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is aiding this process.

1. Clearing projects despite poor Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Several kinds of development projects require clearance from the MoEF under environment and forest laws. MoEF is supposed to protect critical wildlife habitats by vetoing or otherwise amending projects, which would entail significant environmental losses. However, *in several instances, such clearances have been granted despite extremely poor environment impact assessment, including blatantly plagiarized studies.* Most of these are particularly weak on wildlife and biodiversity aspects. In situations where additional environment and wildlife impact studies have been asked for, they are either 'rapid' assessments which are inadequate to aid decision-making, or are detailed studies to be conducted **after** the clearance has already been granted!

There is little logic in first 'clearing' the destruction of wildlife habitats and then doing a detailed assessment as a formality after project work and environmental destruction has commenced. An EIA is primarily a decision making and planning tool, but it has been reduced to a procedural formality to clear projects and hence cannot be utilized to its optimum for safeguarding the environment.

Eg.

Environmental clearances granted to:

- Lower Subansiri hydroelectric project (Assam – Arunachal Pradesh) impacting the Tale Valley Sanctuary and adjacent wildlife habitats, home to species such as the clouded leopard, elephant, golden mahseer and river dolphin.
- Barh Thermal Power Plant (Bihar) impacting the Taal wetlands, which are extremely rich in avifauna.
- Human irrigation project (Maharashtra) impacting critical tiger corridors bordering the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

2. Allowing destructive development projects inside protected areas

In the past few years, several destructive development projects have been allowed inside or immediately bordering protected areas (sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, elephant reserves etc.) by the MoEF.

Eg:

- Permission for oil prospecting in the Desert National Park (Rajasthan)
- Clearances to iron ore mining projects in the Sarai Kela Kharsawa Elephant Reserve (Jharkhand) seriously impacting the elephant habitat.
- Permission for mining in Valmiki TR (Bihar)
- Clearance for uranium exploration bordering the Nagarjunsagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (Andhra)

1. Ignoring citizens' inputs:

In several instances, peoples' groups, wildlife and social NGOs, have made submissions to the MoEF about the serious impacts of specific projects on wildlife habitats as well as the livelihoods of local communities, *yet clearances have been granted completely ignoring these inputs.*

Eg.

- Bodhghat hydel project (Chhattisgarh) impacting critical wild buffalo habitat and resisted by local villagers for years.
- Parbati Stage – II hydel project (Himachal Pradesh) impacting the Great Himalayan NP.

2. Weakening the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and Expert Committees for environmental clearance

In 2003 the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL), set up in 1952, as a national advisory body on wildlife matters, was converted into the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) under the amended Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. It seems more than just a coincidence that all the members who had opposed the clearance of destructive development projects (for example the Lower Subansiri hydel project) were dropped while reconstituting the body. Those dropped include India's oldest wildlife NGO, the Bombay Natural History Society.

Simultaneously, the Expert Committees assisting the MoEF in evaluating projects for environmental clearance, have shown little or no sensitivity to protecting wildlife habitats. **Not a single national NGO working on wildlife is on these Expert Committees.**

Eg.

- The MoEF Expert Committee on River Valley projects recommended the Lower Subansiri hydel project for environmental clearance, just three weeks after a meeting of the then IBWL had decided that fresh biodiversity impact studies were required as the existing studies were grossly inadequate. The same River Valley Committee readily recommended the clearance of the Human dam although it will have serious impacts on a tiger corridor bordering Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra.

3. Dilution of notifications under the Environment Protection Act (EPA):

Repeated dilutions of notifications under the EPA, such as the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification and the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) have made wildlife habitats and sensitive ecosystems more vulnerable to development pressures.

Eg. -

- A few dilutions of the EIA notification, 1994, making sensitive habitats vulnerable include: no EIA report required for pipeline projects; a substantial increase in the investment limit of projects requiring environmental clearance; no public hearings for mining projects (major minerals) with lease area upto 25 hectares, although Indian Bureau of Mines data indicates that almost 50% of leases for major minerals are less than 25 ha!
- The CRZ notification, 1991, was amended in 1997 to delegate powers to the Ministry of Surface Transport (MoST) to grant environmental clearance to port projects. In 2000 the MoST promptly cleared the Dhamra port just north of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, one of the most important nesting sites of the endangered olive ridley turtle in the world. The decision was based on a poor environmental impact assessment, and the proposed port will be a major threat to the future of the endangered turtles. While the MoEF has subsequently withdrawn the delegation of powers to the MoST for environmental clearance of such ports, undermining the CRZ notification on various other counts continues.

4. 'Compensating' wildlife losses:

Increasingly, MoEF is clearing projects destroying critical wildlife habitats based on poor assessments, and then claiming to compensate the losses by requiring the relevant state government to declare a protected area (sanctuary or national park) somewhere else. Often both the land used for the project as well as the new land to be declared a protected area is critical for supporting the livelihoods of local communities who end up getting doubly deprived. Compensatory mechanisms cannot be a substitute for sound decision making based on comprehensive environmental and social impact assessment. Due to the cleared projects already having negative environmental and livelihood impacts on local communities, alienation of additional lands to declare them protected areas, only antagonises them further and is counterproductive to wildlife conservation in the long run. This practice is unacceptable.

Keeping the above scenario in mind, we demand that the Government takes the following urgent steps:

- 1) Draw up a list of critical wildlife and biodiversity habitats in India, that are not open to large-scale development projects.
- 2) Make public the precise reasons and justification when it is considering granting environmental and forest clearance to a project, *before* such clearance is granted, and ask for public response to such proposals. Evolve appropriate mechanisms to inform citizens on what action has been taken on submissions made by them during the clearance process.
- 1) Make public the minutes of meetings of the Expert Committees and the National Board for Wildlife deciding on clearances of development projects. This should be done for all future projects, as well as projects cleared in the last 10 years, to enable public scrutiny of the basis of recent clearances.
- 2) Make public the status of compliance of conditions of environment and forest clearance by all projects being monitored by the MoEF. This is critical since earlier exposes have indicated that most projects are *not* complying with the conditions under which they were granted clearance. Despite this, the MoEF has taken very little punitive action and is even granting fresh clearances often to the same project proponents. A glaring example is the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), which has been guilty of flouting clearance conditions on several

projects (for example Teesta Stage-V hydel project in Sikkim), yet continues to be granted clearances for new projects.

- 3) Provide a legally mandated and explicit role for citizens in the decision-making process within MoEF. This can be done by including independent and credible representatives of communities and civil society including gram sabhas/tribal councils in the various expert committees; ensuring that citizens' inputs in draft notifications and legislation are considered through a transparent process; strengthening the public hearing process for 'development' projects; constituting an independent monitoring and evaluation agency to assess compliance of environmental conditions and regulations; and by adopting other such measures.
- 4) Have the MoEF commission environmental impact assessments (EIAs) using an independent fund set up for the purpose through contributions from project authorities. An independent mechanism to assess the quality of such EIAs, including through public inputs, needs to be simultaneously setup. This is essential because at present project proponents themselves commission agencies to carry out the EIA. It is consequently very rare for such agencies to be objective and unbiased, as they seek to please their employer for ensuring similar contracts in the future. Similarly no mechanism is currently available to independently review the quality of the EIAs.

Signed:

Neeraj Vaghlikar / Ashish Kothari
(Kalpavriksh)

Ravi Agarwal
(Toxics Link)

Shekhar Singh
(Centre for Equity Studies)

Ashish Fernandes / Bittu Sahgal
(Sanctuary Magazine)

On behalf of 40 individuals and organisations.

IN THE SUPREME COURT

- a) Matters heard by the CEC on 16/08/04
b) Some important IAs in the Godavarman Case
c) Godavaram Update: Hearing on 17/09/04
d) Notification of CAMPA

HEARING IN THE CENTRAL EMPOWERED COMMITTEE (CEC): 16-8-2004

- **Saw Mills in Maharashtra:** Bombay Environment Action Group Vs State of Maharashtra

This case concerns the violation of the Supreme Court dated 14/7/2003, where the Court accepted the recommendation of the CEC dated 27/12/2002. The CEC had recommended that saw mills that did not fulfill the criteria laid down by Notification dated 16-7-1981 should have been closed down in 1981 itself. According to the notification of 1981, new licenses could be issued only if the following conditions were fulfilled:

- The Applicant has purchased machinery prior to 16-7-1981.
- Municipal licenses have been obtained.
- Saw mills are located at least 10km away from the boundary of the Reserved and Protected Forest.

The Applicants also brought to the notice of the CEC, the joint raid conducted against an illegal sawmill near Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary in Thane District.

The CEC in the hearing dated 16/8/2004 ordered for a site visit by the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) and also informed that the CEC had already asked for the details of the officers who were involved in the grant of licenses.

Also See:

<http://www.ahmedabad.com/news/2k3/june/27state.htm>
<http://www.indianjungles.com/191103d.htm>

- **Human River Project:** Bombay Natural History Society Vs State of Maharashtra

The Applicant's concern is that the Human River Project in Chandrapur District of Maharashtra will result in the submergence of the only effective wildlife corridor connecting Chandrapur Division with Brahmपुरi Division, This corridor is vital as it serves to maintain the genetic continuity between Kolsa range of Tadoba Tiger Reserve through Shivani range in Chandrapur Division with Pendhi Protected Forest in Brahmपुरi Forest Division. Further, the Tadoba

National Park is 4.25 Km and Andhari Wildlife Sanctuary is 3.2 Km from the proposed submergence area of the Human River Project. The Application refers to the faulty Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), specially the fact that the Public Hearing for the project was held on November 26, 1999 while the EIA report was prepared in December 2001!

The Union of India sought a further period of four weeks time to respond to the Application. The CEC allowed the impleadment application of the Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation.

Also See:

www.bnhs.org/bo/documents/Human%20Dam%20project.pdf
<http://envfor.nic.in/divisions/forcon/reply.html>

- **Illegal widening of road and continuing encroachment by Sadanand Baba Ashram:** Bombay Environmental Action Group Vs State of Maharashtra

Tungreshwar Wildlife Sanctuary was notified in October 2003. The Sadanand Baba Ashram is in illegal occupation of forest land. The application of the Government of Maharashtra for the regularisation of encroachment was not accepted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Despite this not only does the Ashram exist, there is a heavy rush of pilgrims as well as illegal expansion of the road in violation of the Forest (Conservation) Act.

The CEC adjourned the matter for three weeks as the Maharashtra Government represented by Prem Yaduvendu, CCF (Wildlife) sought time.

Also See:

<http://www.sanctuaryasia.com/news/detailnews.php?id=1024>
<http://www.kidsfortigers.org/cgi-bin/kftmessageboard/YaBB.pl?board=general&action=display&num=1056005649&start=9>

Some Important IAs in the Godavarman Case

IA Number	Issue Concerned	Present Status
I.A 548	Removal of dead, dying diseased, drift wood and grasses etc from National Parks and Sanctuaries	The Supreme Court through order dated 14-2-2000 restrained all State Governments and UT's from removing any dead, diseased, dying or wind fallen trees, drift wood and grasses etc from any National Park, Sanctuary or forests. Further, the Court directed that if any order to the contrary has been passed the operation of the same shall be stayed. Subsequently the word 'forest' was deleted and as such the order applies only to National Park and Sanctuaries.
Application No 121 before the CEC	Illegal mining carried out in Choursil reserved forest area of Lalitpur at Uttar Pradesh by a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). [The Application was filed by Pratap Singh Patel, Editor of a local daily who during the hearing before the CEC, expressed his desire to withdraw the application. However the CEC did not permit it in view of the violation of the laws, the public interest involved]	- The CEC recommended to the Supreme Court that mining lease in favour of the MLA be suspended. Further, mining activity in the mining area be allowed to resume only after Survey of India confirms that the area is outside the reserved forest. The funds required for rehabilitation of the mined area are to be secured from the mine owner. - The decision of the Supreme Court on the recommendation is pending.
I. A 707	Clarification on the Status of Bamboo	Through order dated 18-2-2002, the Court clarified that the order prohibiting cutting of trees does not apply to Bamboo including cane as it belongs to the grass family; other than areas that are National Park and Sanctuaries.
I.A 634-635, 697 and 698	Felling 14,739 trees as against 67,500 trees in the Rajaji National Park, Uttaranchal for laying transmission line by Power Grid Corporation Ltd.	Applications were allowed this by the Supreme Court (through order dated 29-10-2002) on the condition that the trees cut shall be sold by the Forest Department under the supervision of the CEC by public auction. The amount so realized as well as the amount payable by power Grid Corporation (Rs. 50 Crores) will be kept by fixed deposit till the constitution of the body for the management of Compensatory Afforestation.

Godavarman Update: Hearing on 17-9-2004

The Godavarman Case was heard in the Supreme Court on the 17th September 2004.

Some of the matters that were heard included the clearance for the Lower Subansiri Hydro Electric Project, ammunition dumping near Rajaji National Park, challenging the April 2004 notification of CAMPA, and fishing in the Jambudwip Islands.

The official orders for all these are awaited and the information below is primarily based on observations and notes taken during the hearing by the editors of *Forest Case Update* (see below)

Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project:

With reference to the I.A. 1205 in the case of the Lower Subansiri Hydro Electric project [Also see *Forest Case Update* 1, June 2004], the proceedings began with the counsel of National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) stating that the company is ready to deposit Rs. 300 crore as against Net Present Value (NPV) for the forest land diverted for non forest purpose. In an earlier hearing NHPC had requested for the exemption from the payment, which was not accepted by the Supreme Court. The NHPC counsel also requested that following the payment of this amount the final forest clearance be granted so that work can begin at the project site. The Amicus Curie pointed out that an earlier order of the Supreme Court dated 19-4-2004¹ had laid down several other conditions and on the fulfillment of these can the clearance can be granted. Keeping these in mind the Supreme Court passed an order that the applicant (i.e. NHPC) can be granted clearance subject to all conditions laid out in the 19-4-2004 order being fulfilled and the NPV being deposited in the Supreme Court.

Ammunition dumping close to Rajaji NP:

Another matter with extensive discussion was with reference to ammunition dumping in forestland close to Rajaji National Park, Uttaranchal (I.A. 1003 in I.A.965). This is affecting the Chilla Motichur elephant corridor. The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) in their report had suggested a few options and the Ministry of Defence in their response had agreed to option 1 which was essentially that the use of forest land may be permitted only after clearance under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and further on the

matters of compensatory afforestation where Uttaranchal government would need to make the land available. However, the court took the view that even if this option were to be agreed to it will not resolve the problem of the impacts on the elephants and the forest area. The court ordered that senior officers from the Ministry of Defence, Uttaranchal State Government, Ministry of Environment and Forest along with the Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttaranchal meet to discuss another possible option presented in para 12 of the CEC report and accordingly see the feasibility of shifting the site of the ammunition dump. [Also Also see:

http://www.wildlifetrustofindia.org/html/news/2002/021019_uttaranchal.htm;
<http://www.sanctuaryasia.com/takeaction/detailcampaign.php?cid=93>]

I.A. 826 challenging CAMPA notification:

The main point of discussion was with reference to the inclusion of NGOs in the Governing Body and the Executive Body of the authority. At present the only non-governmental representation in these is of one professional ecologist each. The judges questioned the necessity of NGOs to be represented on these bodies, as the power and function don't demand it. During the discussions the MoEF counsel pointed out that the eminent ecologists nominated on the governing board is a retired Principle Chief Conservator of Forests and Prof. C.R. Babu pro-Vice Chancellor of Delhi University who is on the executive board. (see below for details of the CAMPA notification)

Fishing in Jambudwip Island:

With reference to the matter related to fishing activities of the transient fisher folk communities and the encroachments in the Jambudwip Islands in the Sunderbans, West Bengal; the counsel for the State of West Bengal asked for 2 weeks time to respond to an affidavit by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The Supreme Court agreed to this. Sanjay Parikh, the counsel representing National Fishworkers Forum highlighted that the matter had not been heard in a year and requested the court to expedite the matter in the light of the fishing season approaching from October onwards.

¹ Refer Forest Case Update 1, June 2004 for full order.
Protected Area Update 50 & 51

Notification of CAMPA

On 23rd April 2004, the Forest Conservation Division of the Ministry of Environment and Forests in exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-section (3) of Section 3 of the Environment Protection Act, 1986, passed an order constituting the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). This was following the Supreme Court accepting the recommendations of the Central Empowered Committee, that there is a need to “*create a separate fund for compensatory afforestation etc. wherein all the monies received from the user agencies are to be deposited and subsequently released directly to the implementing agencies as and when required*”. Following this the Supreme Court in an order dated 30-10-2002, “*in Interlocutory Application No. 566 in Writ Petition (C) No.202 of 1995 directed the Central Government to take necessary steps required for implementing the recommendations of the CEC.*”

The order specifies the purpose of CAMPA to be management of money towards compensatory afforestation, Net Present Value and any other money in compliance of conditions stipulated by the Central government while according forest clearance for non-forest use of forest land.

It further states that the CAMPA shall function through the Governing Body and Executive Body, which will have their functions and powers.

As per the order, the Chairperson of the Governing Body would be the Minister of Environment and Forests, and the members include Secretary, Director General of Forests, Additional Director Generals of Forests (both Forests and Wildlife), Inspector General of Forests (Forest Conservation) and Financial Advisor from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). It will also include the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests from the MoEF regional offices and six Principle Chief Conservator of Forests will be nominated on an annual basis. In addition there would be an eminent professional ecologist as a member and the Chief Executive Officer (CAMPA) as Member Secretary. This body will meet at least once in six months.

The Executive Body will function with the Director General of Forests as its chairperson and the members would include, Additional Director Generals of Forests (both Forests and

Wildlife, Inspector General of Forests (Forest Conservation) and Financial Advisor. It will also have a professional ecologist as a member along with its own Chief Executive officer with the rank of Inspector General of Forests.

The order also states that the CAMPA will be the custodian of the Compensatory Afforestation Fund and lays down functions and powers relating to the funds, including its management, disbursement as well as monitoring and evaluation.

For every state there would be State-Level Steering Committees as well as Management Committees. Their powers and functions have also been specified in the order. The Steering Committee will be under the chairpersonship of the Chief Secretary with the Principle Chief Conservator of Forests, Principle Secretaries (Forests, Finance and Planning), Chief Wildlife Warden, and a Nodal Officer as members. It will also have a representative of an eminent NGO nominated for a two-year period. The Chief Conservator of Forests (Plans/schemes) will be the Member Secretary. This committee will meet at least every six months.

The Principle Chief Conservator of Forests would be chairperson of the state management committee, along with Chief Wildlife Warden, Chief Conservator of Forests (Plans/schemes), Financial Controller/Advisor in the office of the Principle Chief Conservator of Forests and an eminent NGO nominee as members. The Nodal Officer would act as the Member Secretary.

The jurisdiction of the CAMPA would be entire country and its headquarters shall be at New Delhi.

This section 'In the Supreme Court' is based on Forest Case Updates II, III, IV. The Forest Case Update is a web based initiative to provide information and updates on developments related to forests and wildlife in the Supreme Court (see *PA Update* 49). It is produced with the support of the Foundation for Ecological Security, Anand.
Forest Case Update Editors:

Ritwick Dutta (Court Office), 69, Lawyers Chambers, Supreme Court, New Delhi-110001.
Kanchi Kohli, (Coordinating Office)
Email: forestcase@yahoo.com

LOOKING INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL...

If what is happening on the ground today will decide what the future will be like, this is what the *Protected Area Update* will be reporting in **October 2029**, 25 years from now says **Kishen Das...**

Assam: Butterfly smugglers from Russia who were caught with 50 boxes of butterflies and moths were released recently. None of the butterflies were identified by experts and it was not possible to prove that they were on any of the Wildlife Protection Act schedules. The Russians were charged Rs. 4,590 for not informing the government about their collections.

Karnataka: The **Bandipur NP** which has 89.02 sq kms (not 890) of core protected area, will be opened to eco tourists as the Forest Department has failed to sight a single carnivore in last 12 months. The Chief Wildlife Warden says that now there is no threat to the eco tourists from these animals. The last tiger in the **Nagarhole NP** died after getting hit by a truck.

Kerala: The construction of India's largest power plant in the **Silent Valley NP** will be completed by the end of this year. Scientists have also claim that the extinct Nilgiri Tahrs can be created from their DNA samples.

Maharashtra: The government has ordered the BNHS to stop its activities as it was found guilty of protesting against hydro-electric projects in protected areas and thus hindering development.

Orissa: Only 20 Olive Ridleys Turtles make it back for nesting this time. Conservationists have expressed the fear that the species may go extinct in 2-3 years.

Tamil Nadu: Elephants which are thought to be locally extinct, have been sighted in the **Mudumalai WLS**. This is a very important find, say conservationists.

West Bengal: A Sahara 'Entertainment Park' has been created in the Sundarban mangroves exclusively for entertaining the cricket players. The general public can come and see their favourite cricketers, but they will not be allowed to enjoy the rides.

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 (FES)** in the compiling and production of *PA Update* 50 & 51. This issue has been compiled and edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria. Several news items were accessed from the Centre for Science and Environment's (CSE) Green Files and the EnvironmentNepal website and press clippings from the FES, 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:

KALPAVRIKSH

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

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239 Email: pankajs@vsnl.com

For Private Circulation
Book Post / Printed Matter

To

From

Kalpavriksh

Apt. 5, Sri Dutta Krupa

908 Deccan Gymkhana

Pune 411004