

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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OBITUARY

Banka Bihari Das

EDITORIAL

Tourism and Protected Areas

So, its now the turn of Nandadevi National Park! For almost two decades the park was kept closed on grounds that it needed rest. Now, suddenly, a cash strapped (at least that's what they claim) state of Uttaranchal has realised that money can be made from opening it up for tourism. (See UTTARANCHAL; Nandadevi likely to be opened to tourism).

A high profile team of various experts was sent in to study the feasibility of reintroducing tourism here. It has also been made clear that though tourism will be allowed, the ban on human activities which includes use of resources and grazing of sheep will remain. The State Forest Minister is reported to have said that the locals will be allowed to act as porters and guides when tourism starts. He apparently believes that this is a big opportunity that is being created for the local communities, for their economic and overall development.

Need one say that this is completely unacceptable? And here are some further questions that will explain why. First, who decided and how was it decided that the park had rested enough and could be now opened to tourism? What is the scientific basis for this? And what makes tourism such a sacred cow that it alone will be allowed? That the locals were not taken into confidence is evident from the fact, that not one of them or their representatives was included in the expedition. Why are the locals or their knowledge and opinions dispensable?

If indeed the park is to be opened up, the first right to the use of the resources should go to the local communities. What kind of representative of the people is a government that will open up the park to those with the money and offer opportunity to the local citizens only as porters and guides?

It is no wonder, then, that the local communities are unhappy with the developments. They have justifiably protested, threatening a mass agitation. Tomorrow when the situation gets a little out of hand, it will be declared a law and order problem and the will of course be put on the locals.

It is one of the strangest quirks of the powers that be, that, extraction of resources from PAs is considered detrimental to the ecology of the area, while tourism, or trekking or vehicles zooming in and out of PAs is okay.

We have to be clear that this cannot go on. It needs to be emphasised that conservation is the main mandate of the Protected Area Network of the country. The way things are going in different places, it seems, protected areas are primarily for tourism. Conservation happens by the way and communities are, of course, of no interest to anyone anyway.

No one is against tourism per-se, but it has to be subordinate to conservation priorities and to the livelihood interests of the local communities and should be controlled by local people so that maximum benefits reach them.

If we are to save our protected areas, their commodification in the manner that is happening today has to stop. That as we all know, is much easier said than done!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Workshop on PA s held

A three day workshop on the 'Management of Protected Areas in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' was held in Port Blair from July 9-11, 2001. It was organised jointly by the Department of Environment and Forests, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Andaman and Nicobar Environment Team (ANET) and the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi and was supported by the Darwin Initiative and Fauna and Flora International (FFI).

Nearly 80 people from the islands and those representing organisations on mainland India participated.

Contact: **Dr. Alok Saxena**, CWLW, Van Sadan, Haddo, Port Blair. Tel: 03192 – 33549.

Harry Andrews, ANET, Post Box 1, Junglighat PO, Port Blair – 744103. Tel: 03192 – 80081.

Shekhar Singh, IIPA IP Estate, New Delhi – 110002. Tel: 011-6178048 / 3317309 / 3318554. Email: shekhars@nda.vsnl.net.in

ANDHRA PRADESH

Entry fee to K Brahmanand Reddy NP reduced

The annual entry fee to the Kasu Brahmanand Reddy National Park (KBRNP) in Hyderabad has been reduced from Rs. 700 per person to Rs. 250 and the monthly pass has been reduced from Rs 60 to Rs 50. However, for the occasional visitor, the daily ticket has been hiked from Rs 2 to Rs 5. The national park is reported to generate an annual gate fee of Rs. 3-4 lakhs from the 1000 odd walkers who come here regularly. The FD has argued that reducing the entry rates would only encourage more people to abuse the national park at the cost of the occasional nature lover who visits the park. Their objections were however brushed aside in a decision making process that went up to the Chief Minister of the State, Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu. It is also significant in the present context that the park lies opposite the office of the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

The forest here is the last remaining example of the Deccan thorn scrub forest. In the recent past a large number of exotic tree species have been planted here in an attempt to make the park more 'attractive and some parts of the park have also been lost to road expansion activities in the city (See *PA Updates* 30 & 26)

Source: P Balu. 'Walkers to have the last laugh at the cost of ecology', *The Times of India*, 25/06/2001.

Contact: **DFO (WL)**, KB Reddy National Park, Hyderabad -500004.
PCCF (WL), Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Army men involved in hunting, wildlife souvenir collection

It has been reported that the army is widely involved in wildlife souvenir collection and hunting in Arunachal Pradesh. The collections include those of skins and horns of different mammalian species. Usually a few rupees are paid for the trophy, but the army men also acquire them from the locals by giving away a few discarded goods like old jackets, boots and blankets. The army men who are mostly from other parts of the country, where such items are not very common, are known to be the ones most interested and fascinated by these souvenirs.

Hunting too is rampant, mainly by the non commissioned ranks of tribal soldiers like the Gorkha and those from the North East. Officers are usually not involved in this.

Source: Asif Ahmed Hazarika. Letter to Kalpavriksh, dated 12/07/2001.

Contact: **Asif Ahmed Hazarika**, WWF-India, Seujpur, 4th Bylane, PO Dibrugarh - 786001. Email: asifhaz@rediffmail.com
CWLW, Forest Department, Itanagar - 719111 Arunachal Pradesh

ASSAM

Veterinary camps around Nameri, Deepor Beel

Free veterinary camps were organised recently for villagers around Nameri National Park and the Deepor Beel WLS by Early Birds, an NGO that is working for nature care in the North East

The camp around Nameri was organised from April 27 - 29, 2001 with the support of the Western Assam Wildlife Division. A total of 1400 cattle including 200 buffaloes were inoculated on the occasion.

A one day camp was organised around Deepor Beel on June 16. Villagers from Deochotal, Chakrdo, Nepalichuburi and Kalitapara were the main beneficiaries.

Source: Moley Baruah. Letters to Kalpavriksh dated 01/05/2001 and 18/06/2001 respectively.

Contact: **Moley Baruah**, Early Birds, 26, Surujmukhi, PO Silpukhri, Guwahati - 781003, Assam. Fax: 0361 - 550158. Email: baruahm@iocl.co.in

Wild buffalo census in Kaziranga

For the first time in March 2001, a census (visual count in open grassland) of wild buffaloes was conducted in Kaziranga National Park. A total of 1666 buffaloes were counted, making it the largest concentration of the species anywhere in the world. The population of the wild buffalo in Manas National Park is reported to be less than 500 animals now.

Source: 'Wild buffalo census in Kaziranga', *The Rhino Foundation for Nature in NE India, Newsletter No. 3*, June 2001.

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

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

BIHAR

Proposed mining in Kaimur WLS; surrounding forests

The Mines Department in Bihar is said to be pressing hard to get about 800 sq. kms of forest land in the

Kaimur hills for the mining of limestone. This area also covers some part of the Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary here. The main reason for this is a sharp drop in the revenue of the Mines department of the state from Rs. 900 crores earlier to a mere Rs. 28 crores after the formation of the new state of Jharkhand, now.

There is an estimated 200 million tonnes of limestone beneath the Kaimur forests and the department believes that if then can procure these tracts of land, their annual turnover would go up to Rs 300 crore. In addition to the Kaimur forests, the Mines department has also asked for 800 acres of forest land in Rohtas, 250 acres in Munger and 100 acres in Gaya for sandstone mining. The biggest stumbling blocks to this are the forest and wildlife related laws in the country. In this matter the Mines Minister of the state is reported to have pointed out that FD land was being made available for mining in other states like Rajasthan and MP and there was no reason why this should be permitted in Bihar.

Source: 'Govt depts battling over forest land', *The Times of India*, 25/05/2001.

DELHI

Mining mafia in Asola Wildlife Sanctuary

Illegal sand mining is reported to be going on unchecked in an area of over 6,500 acres on the Haryana Delhi border, including the Asola Wildlife Sanctuary.

What gives an advantage to the mafia, is uncertainty over the boundary between Delhi and Haryana, along the Asola and Bhatti villages. Taking advantage of this, the mafia have "bent" what used to be the border in collusion with local officials. They then claim that the stretch of Delhi land, belongs to Haryana. Their modus operandi is simple. They take up Haryana land, on the border with Delhi, on lease. Then, as no one is very certain as to where exactly the border lies, hundreds of trucks enter Delhi via this illegal route. It is estimated that the Delhi government loses close to Rs 30 crore every month because of these illegal mines.

Additionally the mining carried out here directly affects the water table in Delhi. Of the nearly 550 tube wells operating in the Mehrauli assembly area, nearly 200 have dried up in the last couple of years. It has been alleged that such large scale mining activity involves the omission and commission of lakhs of rupees every month at different levels, including that of politicians and bureaucrats. This is one reason why people occupying important positions in the government, maintain a deafening silence over the issue.

Source: SK Jha. 'Mining mafia takes govt for ride', *The Pioneer*, 10/05/2001.

GOA

Tourism promotion in PAs of Goa.

The Goa government is putting together a new plan for the promotion of the tourism in the state. This will have a special focus on tourism promotion in the six protected areas of the state, along with the promotion of heritage and cultural tourism.

The Forest Department (FD) is also reported to have received a communication from the Union Ministry of Tourism, sanctioning in principle, an amount of Rs. 39 lakhs for the development of two 'ecotourism sites', at Dudhsagar waterfalls in the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and in the Dr. Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary in Charao.

Source: Sanjay Banerjee. 'Goa wants tourists to come for its sanctuaries as well', *The Times of India*, 17/07/2001.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Wildlife Wing
Junta House, Panaji 403001, Goa.

GUJARAT

SC allows Essar pipeline in Marine NP

The Supreme Court (SC) has recently stayed an order of the Gujarat High Court (HC) which was preventing Essar Oil Ltd. from laying oil pipelines for their Rs. 8000 crore Jamnagar refinery project. The pipelines are also to pass through the Gulf of Kutch Marine National Park.

The HC, acting on two Public Interest Litigations (PILs) had earlier directed the state government not to allow any party to lay pipelines in the protected area. This had severely affected the Essar project (See *PA Update* 30, 27 & 26).

The Essar counsel argued before the SC, that the HC, acting on the two PILs had passed an order without making Essar a party to the case. It was contended that the refinery project was substantially complete and the non grant of the permission had put into jeopardy its present investment of Rs. 5300 crores. Essar also contended that it had already received all the legitimate approvals from the Central and State governments including environmental clearance.

Meanwhile there have been reports of two huge spills in the Gulf of Kutch within eight days in the month of June. One of these was on June 2, when the pipeline which runs from a factory of Tata Chemicals Ltd. at Samlasar to the Padli and Mithapur salt works burst, spilling thousands of tonnes of effluents.

A contingency plan to deal with situations like this was to have been readied in April 2000 (see *PA Update* 25) but nothing seems to have been done about it. This time too, little was reported to have been done to retrieve the situation or to nab the culprits.

Source: 'Essar SLP up for hearing in SC', *The Pioneer*, 11/05/2001.
'SC stays Gujarat HC order against Essar', *The Times of India*, 12/05/2001.
Janyala Srinivas. 'Oil and a troubled park in Gujarat', *Indian Express*, 10/06/2001.

Lion population in Gir goes up to 327

The recently concluded lion census in Gir has put the number of lions here at 327, up from 304 counted the last time. The census was conducted from May 11 to 17, earlier this year. Following protests against the using of live bait for the census, the 'beat system' for counting the lions was used for the first time (See *PA Updates* 30 26, & 25).

600 officers and staff were deployed in 206 beats for the purpose of the census. Experts from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL) also participated.

The increase in the population has once again raised the issues regarding the over population of lions in Gir and their translocation to Madhya Pradesh. The Gujarat Forest and Environment Minister, Kanjibhai Patel is reported to have again stressed that, the lion is the proud possession of Gujarat and they will not allow the lions to be moved to Madhya Pradesh (Also see *PA Updates* 26, 22 & 20).

Another report stated that in the 3rd week of June carcasses of two lions were found in the Dhrafed river bed near Gir. They had been swept away in the swirling waters of the flooded river flowing through the sanctuary.

Source: 'Census shows Asiatic Lion is breeding fine in Gir', *The Times of India*, 21/05/2001.
RK Mishra. 'Rise of population in Sasan Gir', *The Pioneer*, 26/05/2001.
'More Asiatic lions doesn't worry Gujarat', *The Pioneer*, 27/05/2001.
'Two lionesses' carcasses found', *Navhind Times*, 20/06/2001.

Contact: **Mahesh Singh**, DCF, Sasan, Junagadh – 363125, Gujarat.

Status paper on PA network of Gujarat

The Gujarat Ecological Education and Research Foundation (GEER), has recently prepared a status paper on 'Wildlife Protected Area Network in

Gujarat – A Critical Review and Recommendations' after extensive field surveys and studies.

Contact: **HS Singh**, GEER Foundation, Indroda Park, Sector 9, Gandhinagar – 382009, Gujarat.
Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden - Gujarat**, Block 14, Dr, Jivraj Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-30007. Fax: 21097.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Renuka dam project held up by SC orders

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has rejected the site clearance to the Renuka Dam project in Himachal Pradesh as the project involves diversion of 485 hectare of government and private forest land. 49 hectares of this land are within the Renuka Wildlife Sanctuary. It has been estimated that there are over two lakh trees of various species on the 319 hectares of the government forest alone.

The ministry had to reject the clearance in light of the orders of the Supreme Court dated November 13, 2000, which prohibits diversion or "dereservation" of wildlife sanctuary area and also another order, 'restraining the state government from removing dead, diseased and dying and fallen trees from national parks and wildlife sanctuary' (See *PA Update* 27).

Senior officials have pointed out that a headway could be made if the Delhi Government, the main beneficiary of the project, moves the Supreme Court and seeks clearance as a special case in view of the acute shortage of water in the Capital. The project, which has been hanging fire since the past 11 years, will help provide 23 cusecs (cubic metre per second) of water to Delhi nine months in a year. Himachal does not have much stake as the generation of 40 mw electricity is only incidental. While the cost of the project right from, investigation to construction, will be met by the Delhi Government, the state will have to spend about Rs 125 crore for setting up the penstock and powerhouse.

Source: Rakesh Lohumi. 'Forest Ministry, not CMs, to blame: Renuka project hanging fire', *The Tribune*, 15/06/2001.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden – HP**, Mistchamber, Khalini, Shimla – 171002, Himachal Pradesh. Tel: 0177-201660 / 223030.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Hangul to be relocated from Dachigam NP

The Jammu & Kashmir Wildlife Department has proposed to move the entire population of the

endangered Kashmiri stag, the hangul, from its present home in the Dachigam National Park to the Kishtwar National Park in Ladakh and the Gulmarg and Overa Aru Wildlife Sanctuaries. The main two reasons being cited by the officials for this are a) the increased population of leopards in Dachigam and b) foot and mouth disease.

The Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) of the state has explained that one leopard kills two hanguls a week in the park and this could endanger its population. The department says that the proposal for the relocation was made after consulting scientists of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and has been forwarded to the State and Central governments earlier this year.

Many Wildlife department officials in the state and wildlife experts have strongly criticised the proposed plan. They argue that the two problems of increased population of the leopard and the foot and mouth disease will be there in the new places where the relocation has been proposed as well. Dr Mir Mansoor, a veterinarian with the Wildlife Department has even questioned the assumption that leopards kill a lot of hanguls. There have also been apprehensions on how the relocation programme will be carried out, and if it happens how the hangul will adjust to the new situation.

The official figure for the hangul in Dachigam is around 450 animals. Some experts however feel that this number is an exaggerated one and the population is more likely to be around 200 individuals.

Source: Mufti Islah. 'A habitat for the hangul', *The Indian Express*, 24/05/2001.

Contact: **CWLW**, Forest Department, Manda Deer Park, Manda, Near Hotel Ashok, Jammu - 180001 Jammu & Kashmir.

KARNATAKA

Committee to identify land for Nagarhole evacuees

A committee, comprising officials of the Revenue, Forest and Police Departments has been formed to identify land for rehabilitating the tribal people living in the Nagarhole National Park on the Kodagu side.

A meeting for this was recently presided over by the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. GV Ramachandra. He has suggested that an action plan similar to that adopted for rehabilitating the tribal people at Heggadadevanakote in Mysore district was needed in Nagarhole.

This move has come following the decision of the State Government to rehabilitate the tribal people out of the forests and make them join the mainstream.

Source: 'Moves afoot to rehabilitate tribals', *The Hindu*, 18/07/2001.

Elephant deaths by electrocution

There have been reports of the deaths due to electrocution of a number of elephants recently from Karnataka. Two elephants died in an incident that took place at Hondarabalu at the foot of the Biligiri Rangan Hills in Chamrajnagar district in the middle of June. A few days later a pregnant elephant was electrocuted near Attigulipura in Chamarajnagar taluk and a five-year-old tusker became the fourth victim when it was electrocuted at Kottegere near Thimrajapura. The elephants are killed when they come in contact with illegally electrified fences that have been erected by the farmers here to protect their crop from animal raids.

Wildlife activists have expressed concern over the increasing electrocution deaths of elephants in this region. Encroachment of traditional elephant migratory paths together with the degradation of the habitat have forced the pachyderms to raid the fields.

Source: 'Two tusked electrocuted', *The Hindu*, 18/06/2001.

MB Maramkal. 'Elephant deaths cause concern', *The Times of India*, 29/06/2001.

Lakshmi R. 'Live fence wires claim another tusker', *The Times of India*, 22/06/2001

New power line to affect Anshi, Dandeli, adjoining forests

The proposal for a new electricity line from Kaiga to Narendra in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka has been opposed by environmentalists on grounds that it would cause large scale destruction of forests here. The Bedthi Aghanashini Kolla Samrakshana Samiti (BAKSS) and the Vriksha Laksha Andolana (VLA) have been in the forefront of the opposition.

The proposed line will pass through the forests in Karwar, Yallapur and Ankola Talukas and also affect the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary and the Anshi National Park.

This proposed line is in addition to the Kaiga Davangere line via Sirsi, which too had caused a lot of forest destruction and was opposed at the time that it was being laid.

Source: M Madan Mohan. 'Greens see red on Kaiga-Narendra power line', *The Hindu*, 04/06/2001.

3700 hectares excluded from Kudremukh

In a move that shocked wildlife activists and environmentalists, 3703 hectares of the initially notified Kudremukh National Park were left out

when the final notification was issued recently. This is the area which has been leased out to the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited (KIOCL) for iron ore mining. This move has been opposed by many groups who have been fighting to protect the forests of Kudremukh. Sri Vishweshwara Theertha Swamiji of Paryaya Sri Pejavar Math too joined in the opposition to this denotification. Additionally, the opposition to the mining here has also been supported by a number of well known personalities in the region. This includes, noted writer and Jnanpith award winner Dr. UR Ananthamurthy and another well known writer, Mr. KP Poornachandra Tejaswi

However the Union Minister for Steel, Mr. Braj Kishore Tripathy wrote to the Chief Minister thanking him for the move, saying that it could now pave the way for the grant of a fresh mining lease here.

The exact situation related to the national park and the mining there, however continues to be unclear and is expected to clear up in the next couple of weeks. (Also see *PA Update 31*)

Source: 'Greens protest denotification of KIOCL mining area', *The Hindu*, 22/06/2001.
'Pejavar seer opposed move on Kudremukh', *The Hindu*, 23/06/2001.
'KIOCL: Minister thanks State', *The Hindu*, 23/06/2001.
'Save Tunga stir gets a shot in the arm', *The Hindu*, 16/07/2001.
'Govt. may withdraw mining lease to KIOCL', *The Hindu*, 20/07/2001.

Contact: **Wildlife First!** 249, 4th Main Road, Chamarajapeth, Bangalore-560018, Karnataka. Email: pbsolus@blr.vsnl.net.in
Leo Saldanha Environment Support Group S-3, Rajashree Apartments, 18/57, 1st Main, S. R. K. Gardens, Jayanagar, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore 560041, Karnataka. Telefax: 080-6341977. Fax: 080-6723926 (PP) Email: esg@bgl.vsnl.net.in
S Murari, Chairman, KIOCL, 2nd Block, Koramangala, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore-560034, Karnataka. Tel: 080-5531322 Fax: 5521584.

Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore - 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993.

KERALA

Proposal to revive Silent Valley hydel project

The Kerala government has expressed its intention to revive the Silent Valley hydro-electric project, two decades after abandoning it in the face of global

protest. The State Electricity Minister, Mr. Kadavoor Sivasadan recently stated in the State Legislative Assembly, that the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) had been instructed to formulate a fresh proposal to submit to the Union Government.

The proposal has been strongly opposed by many senior environmentalists and ecologists, many of whom had played an active role in the first opposition to the proposal in the late 1970s.

Those who have expressed their opposition include Dr. VS Vijayan, Director of the Salim Ali School for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Coimbatore, Ms. Dilnavaz Variava and Mr. JC Daniel of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Mumbai Dr. Madhav Gadgil of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore and Prof. MK Prasad of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP).

Source: Anand Parthasarthy. 'Decision to revive Silent Valley hydel project decried', *The Hindu*, 21/07/2001.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Silent Valley NP, Forest Department, Mannarghat PO, Dist - Palghat Kerala.

Vinod Kumar Damodar, Friends of Elephants Forum, Breeze, Near Cheeroty Nagar, Calicut - 673006, Kerala
Chief Wildlife Warden - Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum - 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-322217 / 204896. Fax: 325804.

MADHYA PRADESH

State allows collection of NTFPs from buffer zones of PAs

The Madhya Pradesh government has reportedly allowed local communities in the state to collect non timber forest produce (NTFP) like honey from the buffer zones of national parks for non-commercial use, on the condition that the collection process would not involve the use of fire.

The decision was taken during a recent meeting between the Chief Minister of the State, Mr. Digvijay Singh and the Union Minister of Environment and Forests, Mr. TR Baalu.

The state government is also planning to seek the permission of the Supreme Court to allow the indigenous communities to collect such produce from notified wildlife sanctuaries as well.

(Ed. It is not clear as to what is meant by the buffer zone, as it does not exist as a legal entity under the *Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) - 1972*).

Source: 'Access granted', *Down To Earth*, 31/07/2001.

Contact: **PV Jayakrishnan** Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110003.

New strategies outlined for Kanha

The Madhya Pradesh State Wildlife Advisory Board (SWAB) which met in the last week of June has outlined a new set of strategies aimed at the better management of the park.

The park will now be opened for visitors from October 1 on an experimental basis for one and a half years. In a significant move, it was decided to shift the boundary of the 699 sq km core area to include around four villages into the buffer zone while adding some forested area to the core area. (*Full details of the reorientation of the park boundary are not yet available*). However another recommendation to allow local people to access minor forest produce, including fallen wood, was disallowed saying that this would open the way for illegal activities inside the forest area.

It was also announced that, funds would be expedited under the eco-development project so that the villagers in the vicinity of the park would be able to meet their livelihood needs without the need to venture deep into the forest area. The Madhya Biodiversity board has also identified 11 medicinal plants for commercial exploitation and the relocated villagers are to be assisted in setting up herbal gardens.

It is said that a 11 point agenda had been placed before the SWAB and most of recommendations have been accepted.

Source: 'Wildlife board outlines strategies for Kanha park', *The Times of India*, 02/07/2001

Contact: **Director**, Kanha Tiger Reserve, Mandla, 481 661 Madhya Pradesh

MK Ranjitsinh, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), 71, Lodi Estate, New Delhi - 110003.

Harvansh Singh, Forest Minister, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

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

Wildlife census results declared

The tiger-leopard census report for Madhya Pradesh for the year 2000 has been released. According to this report there are 709 tigers and 1024 leopards in the state's forests, including national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.

The figures were approved by the State Wildlife Advisory Board during its recent meeting in at the Kanha National Park recently.

Source: 'Tiger population static in MP', *The Statesman*, 02/07/2001.

MAHARASHTRA

SC asks for Eco-sensitive zone for Matheran

The Supreme Court has directed that the Matheran plateau be declared an eco-sensitive zone (ESZ). In an order dated July 112, the court has stated that, '...no vehicle, like tractor, tempo, car, truck or other mechanised vehicle, excepting an ambulance and a fire-engine will be permitted to ply in Matheran....Pending further orders, there shall be no movement of felled timber by natural causes or otherwise from Matheran ...' The order came in a petition that was filed in 1995 by the Matheran Bachao Samiti (MBS).

The immediate provocation for the order was the May 2, 2001 decision of the state government to permit tractors and other vehicles to ply inside the hill station and to change the surface of the road from the present earthen road. The MBS had challenged this decision in court on May 10.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) will now have to publish a notification declaring Matheran as eco-sensitive under the Environment Protection Act (EPA)- 1986. The region will require a new master plan as also a tourism master plan. Pending approval of this new master plan, the court has ordered that development parameters will remain at current levels and that there will be no reduction in the forest and agricultural zones.

Earlier, in January this year, the MoEF has issued a notification declaring Mahabaleshwar as an ESZ (See *PA Update* 30).

Source: 'Matheran eco-sensitive: SC' *Indian Express*, 19/7/2001.

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

Wildlife census in Satara district

The results of the recent census of wildlife in the seven forest divisions of the Satara district have now been released.

The numbers of tiger, leopard, bear, hyena and the peacock are reported to have increased whereas those of gaur and deer have reduced. The census has also indicated that there is rise in the number of animals in the three wildlife sanctuaries in the region (not just the Satara district): Radhanagari, Chandoli and Sagareshwar.

Source: Nandkumar Dhavalikar. 'Wildlife census brings good news on endangered species', *The Times of India*, 28/05/2001.

Contact: **Asst. Conservator of Forests (Wildlife)**, Forest Department, Koyanagar, Taluka Patan, Satara – 415207, Maharashtra.

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

ORISSA

New method of smuggling ivory uncovered

A recent study carried out by the Asian Elephant Research Conservation Centre (AERCC) and the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) has uncovered a new method by which ivory is smuggled out from Orissa.

It was found out that large quantities of ivory are taken out inside sacks of Kendu leaves that are the states most important non timber forest produce (NTFP). Kendu leaves are used for making bidis and several kendu trade centres have come up along the National Highway 6 connecting Kolkata and Mumbai.

Forest officials have however pointed out that it was not possible to check thousands of kendu leaf sacks, each weighing between 12 and 100 kgs for ivory. The report pointed out that the small town of Palahara had emerged as the key ivory smuggling trade centre. The study has also claimed that more than 2,200 kgs of ivory was being stored in different districts of the state.

Source: 'New method of smuggling ivory worries officials', *The Statesman*, 28/05/2001.

Contact: **AERCC**, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore-560012, Karnataka. Email: aercc@ces.iisc.ernet.in

Belinda Wright, WPSI, E-71 Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi 1100048, India. Tel: 011-6213864 / 6292492. Fax: 011-6464918, Email: wpsi@vsnl.com; blue@vsnl.com

Orissa to have three elephant reserves

Orissa will soon have three elephant reserves under Project Elephant. A decision to this effect was taken at a recent meeting of top officials of Project Elephant which was also attended by senior wildlife officials from Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand.

One of the reserves would be located in the Mayurbhanj district which encompasses the Simlipal Biosphere Reserve, while the other two would be set

up at the Satkosia-Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary (to be known as Mahanadi Elephant Reserve) and Badrama-Khalasuni Wildlife Sanctuary in undivided Sambalpur district.

It was also decided that a synchronised census of elephants in the three states of Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand is to be held between May 2 and 8, 2002.

Source: 'Orissa to have three elephant reserves soon', *The Times of India*, 01/07/2001.

Bird catchers near Chilka give up profession

Nearly 400 residents of village Soran, located near the Chilka lake have agreed to give up their age old profession of catching wild birds. This is an outcome of the work towards this of an NGO, Wildlife Orissa. Most of the villagers would earlier spread their nets in the night and had lately taken to shooting as well. The fact that this initiative has reduced bird catching in Chilka has also been acknowledged by the Forest Department (FD).

However, the villagers are now finding it difficult to make ends meet. It is estimated that earlier a family could earn Rs 60,000 annually from catching birds, and now they have been forced to look for alternative means, which are not easy to come by. (Also see *PA Update 27*).

Source: 'Bird catchers near sanctuary giving up age-old profession', *The Navhind Times*, 06/07/2001

Contact: **Wild Orissa**, 5R-1, OUAT Colony, Gopalbandhu chowk, Bhubaneswar-751001, Orissa. Email: wildorissa@hotmail.com
DFO (WL), Chilka, 1865/66 Nuasahi Nayapalli (near Sub PO), Bhubaneswar – 751012. Orissa. Email: bravo_123@satyam.net.in
AK Patnaik, CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485. Email: ajitpatnaik@hotmail.com
Website: www.chilika.com

One month ban on tourists in Bhitarkanika

The Forest Department (FD) had imposed a one month ban on entry of tourists to certain parts of the Bhitarkanika National Park. This was mainly applicable to the Bhitarkanika forest block, Khola rivulet and adjoining water bodies and Dangamal forest block.

The ban was in response to the rise in cases of crocodile attacks on humans in the area and was imposed from May 15 to June 15..

Forest officials said this was the breeding period of the estuarine crocodile and they had been

displaying violent behaviour following unrestricted human intrusion into their habitat.

Attacks by crocodiles, around the Khola and Pathsala rivulets within the sanctuary had spread terror in the region. While one villager was killed recently, six others were reported to have been injured. About a dozen crocodiles have also been killed during the last one year following retaliatory action by irate villagers.

Official figures show that the crocodiles had killed 27 persons ever since the crocodile rearing farm was set up at Dangamal in 1982. However, villagers claim that about 100 people had died.

Source: 'Tourists banned near Bhitarkanika water bodies', *The Times of India*, 09/05/2001

Contact: **DFO** - Bhitarkanika National Park, Forest Department, At/Po Rajnagar, Dist Kendrapada – 745225, Orissa. Tel: 06729 – 72460/64. Fax: 06727-20775

Trenches to be dug around Chandka

The Orissa Government has decided to dig fresh trenches around the Chandka Wildlife Sanctuary to prevent elephants from straying into neighbouring villages. Elephants here have killed at least three people and damaged large areas of crops in the last few months (See *PA Update* 29).

The trench digging work is to be taken up by the government under the food-for-work programme to provide employment to the locals and make best use of the available food stock.

Source: Orissa Govt wakes up to elephant menace' *The Pioneer*, 19/05/2001

Contact: **DFO** – Chandka Wildlife Division, FD, SFTRI Campus, AT/Po Ghatkia, Bhubaneswar, Dist. Khurda, Orissa.

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

PUNJAB

All forest officers given powers under the WLPA; reorganisation undertaken of Wildlife Wing

The Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation in Punjab has given powers to all state forest officials to implement the Wild Life Protection Act (WLPA), 1972, in the areas other than wildlife sanctuaries. Earlier this was restricted only to those officials who were in the Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department (FD).

Meanwhile some changes have also been made within the FD itself. The government has

redesignated the post of Conservators of Forests-Wildlife (Director Zoo) as Conservator of Forest-Wildlife and Additional Chief Wildlife Warden. The post of DFO (wildlife), Hoshiarpur, has been shifted to headquarters and designated as DFO (wildlife) and Deputy Chief Wildlife Warden, Punjab.

The Divisional Forest Officer (wildlife), Patiala, would now be in charge of all works of animal protection at the Wildlife sanctuaries at Bir Motibagh, Bir Bhuneriheri, Bir Gurdialpura, Bir Bhadson, Bir Mehas, Bir Dosanj (Patiala) and Bir Aishan (Sangrur).

The DFO (wildlife), Harike, will now be in charge of the implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act in Harike, Abohar and Takhni-Rehmpur Wildlife Sanctuaries..

Source: 'Forest officials can prosecute hunters', *The Tribune*, 03/05/2001.

Shortage of funds, weapons affects Abohar

According to Forest Department (FD) officials, paucity of funds has prevented the purchase of weapons and vehicles needed for the protection of the Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary in the Ferozepur district of Punjab. The department is frequently forced to use two jeeps that are lent to them by the villagers for patrolling.

The local Bishnoi community here too has demanded support for the FD for the protection of the sanctuary and prevention of the hunting of neelgai and blackbuck that are found here. The All India Jeev Raksha Bishnoi Sabha regularly helps the officials of the FD in night patrolling and with jeeps and armed volunteers when needed.

However, it is hoped that the situation will now improve with the decision of the state to provide weapons, confiscated by state police under judicial orders, to the wildlife staff in the protected areas in the state (See *PA Update* 30)

Source: Gurpreet Singh. 'No weapons to keep poachers off', *The Tribune*, 11/02/2001.

Encroachment threat to Harike

A report prepared under the State Bio-Diversity Strategy and Action Plan (SBSAP), has pointed out that the Harike lake was being threatened by encroachment by a religious organisation. The organisation had resorted to a virtual 'kar seva' like operation on the canal side of the lake to take possession of the land.

The report which was submitted to the government a few months ago has warned that if the encroachments are not removed soon, the sanctuary could receive a permanent setback. It has also accused the local wildlife officials and the district

administration of being mute spectators to this development. It has been pointed out that some musclemen were growing vegetables in the sanctuary and had also installed illegal water pumps in the wetland. They said this was being done in the downstream area which had a sizable population of otters, turtles, fish and rodents. In the upstream area too, cattle grazing was common which disturbed the temporary abode of the migratory birds.

The committee also pointed out that an afforestation drive should be launched in the downstream area where eucalyptus trees had been growing. It said local trees should be planted and that 'kangni', 'bajra', 'bakla' and chillies could be grown along with elephant grass in the floating islands of the lake to attract more birds. It has also been proposed that intensive studies of other animals of the wetland besides birds should be conducted. The committee said an inter-disciplinary team of taxonomists from universities, non-governmental organisations, members of the state Wildlife Board and the Forest Department could do the job. Additionally it has recommended that aerial photography of the wetland be done to understand the topography of the lake afresh.

Source: Jangveer Singh. 'Encroachment threatens Harike' *The Tribune*, 05/07/2001.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Forest Department, Government of Punjab, S.C.D. 2463-64, Sector B-C, Chandigarh.

UTTARANCHAL

Large areas of Forest land under encroachment

It is estimated that 10,000 hectares of reserved forest land in Uttaranchal is under encroachment and at least 40% of this land will be lost because of a 1975 order of the Uttar Pradesh Government. Although most of the encroachments took place in the 1950s and 1960s, the matter only came to light recently, after the Registrar, High Court, reportedly admitted a Public Interest Litigation, suo moto, following a news report on timber felling.

An affidavit filed by the Forest Department, states that all nine territorial circles of reserved forests in Uttaranchal, along with the Rajaji National Park have been afflicted with illegal encroachments over the years. The worst affected area is the Terai Bhabar area in Udham Singh Nagar. The Forest Department had handed over large tracts of lands to the Irrigation Department in the 1960s and 1970s for construction of irrigation dams. The unused land was returned to the FD, but by then it had been encroached upon to a large extent.

The FD says that the policy announcement of the UP Government in 1975, that all land encroached "prior to the year 1973 would be

regularised, now means that at least 4000 hectares of the encroachment would be regularised and there is nothing that they can do about it.

Source: Namita Kala. 'Uttaranchal may lose 4000 hectares of forest', *The Pioneer*, 16/07/2001.

Train kills another elephant in Rajaji

Another elephant was killed in the Rajaji National Park by the speeding Mussoorie Express on May 28, 2001. The female elephant was crossing the track about one-and-a-half km before the Motichur station along with other members of the herd, when the train is supposed to have hit her back on the night of the 27th. The hips of the animal were dislocated and she had to be moved with the help of a crane.

The park officials have filed a case against the engine driver and the Divisional Railway Manager under the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) – 1972. This is reported to be the 17th elephant death in the Rajaji NP in the last 15 years and the railways and the Forest Department have yet not been able to come to a solution to these tragic losses (See *PA Updates* 25, 23, 21 and 20).

According to another report a meeting between the forest and railway officials was held in the matter in the middle of June in Dehradun. Another meeting was scheduled for July, but details of that are not available.

Source: 'Another elephant crushed to death', *The Pioneer*, 30/05/2001.

'Another elephant lost to 'killer' track', *The Times of India*, 21/05/2001.

'Right of way not really a mammoth problem', *The Statesman*, 02/06/2001.

Tuskers' population in Uttaranchal on decline', *Navhind Times*, 20/06/2001.

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, Shivalik House, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal.
Divisional Railway Manager, Northern Rlys., Moradabad – 244001, Uttar Pradesh.
Tel: 0591-411519. Fax: 429885

Nandadevi likely to be opened to tourism

The Uttaranchal government is considering a move to reopen the Nandadevi Biosphere reserve for tourism. A eight member team headed by noted mountaineer, Mr. Harish Kapadia recently undertook an expedition to the area to explore the possibilities for the same.

It may be recalled that the Central Government had banned all human activity in the biosphere in 1982 to protect the fragile ecosystem here. This ban had adversely affected the local communities including the graziers who had been traditionally using the resources here.

The State Tourism Minister, Kedar Singh Fonia has said that the State will approach the Central Government and the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for lifting of the blanket ban. He is also reported to have said that though tourism will be allowed here, the ban on human activities which include the exploitation of natural resources and grazing of sheep in the area will continue.

Villagers living around the park have submitted a memorandum to the expedition demanding the restoration of their traditional rights here, including over their summer houses (*kacchi channi*). They have also expressed the fear that tourism, if started, will be taken over by big commercial houses from outside and they will be left only with jobs like porters and guides for the tourists.

The villages here, along with Vanadhikar, an NGO, have been demanding their traditional rights for sometime now. In 1998 they had launched a '*jhapto-chino andolan*' in protest of the violation of their traditional rights.

Source: Memorandum by villagers and Vanadhikar dated 03/06/2001, submitted to the expedition
Dhan Singh Rana, Pradhan, Village Lata.
'*Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve prakaran me hastakshep ki appeal*', 04/06/2001
SMA Kazmi. 'Veil on Nanda Devi reserve to be lifted', *The Indian Express*, 09/06/2001.
'*Grameeno ne uthai pratibandh ke prabhavon ki mang*', *Amar Ujaala*, 09/06/2001.
'Nanda Devi may be reopened for tourism', *Hindustan Times*, 14/06/2001.

Contact: **Sunil Kainthola**, Vanadhikar, 682, Indiranagar, New Forest, Deharadun – 248086, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-764393. Email: dhaar@vsnl.com
Harish Kapadia, 72, Vijay Apts, 16 Carmichael Rd., Opp. Usha Kiran Bldg, Behind Jaslok Hospital, Mumbai, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-4950772. Email: harikaps@vsnl.com

UTTAR PRADESH

Forest Department, STF, trade charges

The two major agencies in Uttar Pradesh involved in wildlife conservation related work, the state Forest Department (FD) and the Special Task Force (STF) of the UP police have been trading charges over the large scale poaching incidents that have been reported from the state.

The first salvo was fired by the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW), Mr. RL Singh in his

letter dated March 29, 2001, where he accused the STF of 'subverting evidence to get out of turn promotions...and of conniving with poaching gangs and letting off the hook a prime accused, Ram Das, in a poaching case'. At a meeting organised by the State Forest Minister on May 16, the STF accused the FD of not being 'serious enough', and even of them being 'hand in glove' with the poaching gangs.

A joint meeting of the two agencies had been called by the state Forest Minister on May 16 in an attempt to evolve a strategy to combat the forest mafia and the poachers.

Source: 'Forest Minister asks officials to sit up', *The Times of India*, 16/05/2001.

Mohit Dubey. 'Forest brass hit back at STF' *The Times of India*, 18/05/2001.

2 legislators on State Wildlife Advisory Board

The Uttar Pradesh Government has appointed two legislators, Bharat Singh and Nawab Singh Nagar as members of the State Wildlife Advisory Board.

Source: '2 legislators on wildlife panel' *The Times of India*, 02/07/2001.

No to railway line through Chambal WLS

The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department (FD) has refused to grant permission for the transfer of 82,533 hectares of forest land to the railways for a new railway line from Guna to Etawah.

The FD has argued that more than 60,000 trees would have to be cut for the railway line and over 10,000 of these are in the National Chambal Wildlife Sanctuary. It has said that a recent SC order banning the denotification of protected areas (See *PA Update 29*) prevents it from releasing the land.

This particular project has evoked greater overall interest, because the line is to pass through Bateswar, the birth place of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Source: Mohit Dubey. 'UP forest dept. refuses to play ball to PMs 'well-wishers'', *The Times of India*, 07/03/2001.

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

WEST BENGAL

Special armed squad for wildlife protection to be revamped

The West Bengal Forest Department (FD) has planned to revamp its special armed squad for the protection of wildlife. A proposal to this effect was

drafted recently, and an approval from the Centre is awaited.

It was a long-standing demand of the department employees, especially from those working in the field, that the force be increased and modernised. Initially, the department needs 50 additional armed guards and the grant required is nearly Rs 10 lakh per annum. The current squad of around 200 looks only after the forests with assistance from the state police department and criminal investigation department. It is hoped that the new force will boost the morale of the employees, particularly while conducting raids and keeping vigil on poachers.

Source: Satrajit Moitra. 'Bengal to revamp wildlife protection squad' *The Times of India*, 28/05/2001.

Tea garden pesticides lead to wildlife deaths

It has been estimated that at least 10 leopards and 5 elephants have been killed in North Bengal in the last two years due to leakage of pesticide through water from the tea gardens here. A number of rivers flowing through the sanctuaries and reserve forests get residual pesticides drained from the tea gardens. Research by groups like the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment – Eastern Himalayan Program (ATREE-EHP) and the People's Science Institute (PSI) has found out that sometimes the toxicity of the rivers goes up alarmingly.

According to tea board statistics, the total area under tea cultivation in North Bengal is 104,226 hectares and pesticides worth nearly Rs. 73 crores are used here annually. Recently, with the usage of high yielding tea plant varieties chances of pest attack have gone up and the usage of pesticide too has increased.

Efforts are being made to encourage planters to minimise the use of pesticides or use only bio-pesticides. Tea planters have however pointed out that production of tea will go down by at least 70% with 33 % depreciation in plantation areas due to pests if all pesticide usage was stopped.

Source: Debasis Sarkar. 'Leakage of tea garden pesticides kills 10 leopards, 5 elephants', *The Times of India*, 23/05/2001.

Contact : **ATREE - EHP**, Bungalow #2, Bhujiapani
Po: Bagdogra, Dist. Darjeeling, West Bengal –734422. Tel:0353-550093/551110,
E-mail: atree@dte.vsnl.net.in

40% Project Elephant funds spent on relief

Conservator of Forests (CF), West Bengal, South, Mr. SK Das, has said that 40% of the funds provided to West Bengal under Project Elephant (PE) are spent

on giving ex-gratia relief to those affected by elephant depredation in different parts of the state. The main reason for this is said to be the intermittent spread of about 20,000 families in elephant habitat in South Bengal. Every year about 15 people are killed in elephant attacks while elephants killed in 1999 and 2000 were 12 and five respectively. The total allocation to West Bengal under PE is around Rs. 80 lakhs.

An additional financial burden has also been placed on the Forest Department (FD) due to the recent decision to award a financial incentive for information related to poaching and wildlife trade. A maximum of Rs. 20,000 is to be awarded in case of a seizure or arrest based on information provided. Six such awards have already been given in South Bengal.

Another measure to ensure the safekeeping of elephants, has been the creation of a 1,500 sq.km area as a special elephant management area. This comprises Simplipal in Orissa, Dalma in Bihar along with parts of West Bengal, mainly southern Midnapore, parts of Bankura and Purulia. The 400 sq. km area in West Bengal is named 'Mayurjharna.'

Forest officials and Mr. DK Lahiri Choudhary, member of the PE Steering Committee have also commented that the gauge conversion of the railway line from Siliguri to Alipurduar will have an adverse impact on the elephants and their habitat (See below. Also see *PA Update* 29).

Source: 'Project elephant funds being spent on other heads' *The Times of India*, 04/07/2001.

Contact: **DK Lahiri Choudhury**, 45 Subarban School Road, Kolkata - 700 025, West Bengal. Tel: 033-4551144. Email: dklc@cal.vsnl.net.in

Elephant killed by train in North Bengal

A female elephant was killed in the month of June after being hit by a goods train near Rajabhatkhawa, Dooars, in North Bengal. This is a metre gauge line of the North East Frontier Railway that runs from Siliguri in West Bengal to Guwahati in Assam via Alipurduar and Cooch Behar. The track cuts through substantial sections of the Mahandanda Wildlife Sanctuary (14.10 km), Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary (8 km), Buxa Tiger Reserve (12 km), the Gorumara National Park and North and South Diana Reserve Forests (2 km). This incident has again evoked serious concerns over the impacts of the ongoing conversion of the track to broad gauge. Many environmental groups have protested against this upgradation saying that it will have adverse impacts on the forests here and particularly the elephant populations.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – West Bengal has even filed a PIL in the matter in the Calcutta High Court. (See *PA Update* 29).

In the last three years, seven elephants have been mowed down by running trains. A local NGO, the Himalayan Nature and Adventure Foundation (HNAF) has claimed that trees are being felled within the sanctuaries and reserved forests by the railways who are claiming authority over 60 ft area on either side from the track-centre. The Forest Minister of the State, Mr. Jogesh Burman has however said that he had no information of tree-felling inside the forests by the railways.

Justifying the project, the North-East Frontier Railways said it was “impractical and uneconomical to sustain the metre-gauge line”. It said the project was undertaken following “regular demand from the local population”. Already, Rs 142 crores worth of work has been contracted out of the total cost estimate of Rs 380 for the project.

Source: Niraj Lama. Track Upgradation may harm wildlife’, *The Statesman*, 17/06/2001.

Contact: **Animesh Bose**, HNAF, Nivedita Market, Hospital Road, Siliguri – 734401, West Bengal. Tel: 0353 – 430856. Fax: 537609
WWF- I, West Bengal State Office, 5th Floor, Tata Centre, 43, Jawaharlal Nehru Road, Calcutta 700071, West Bengal. Tel: 033 – 2889530. Fax: 2883761,
CWLW, Government of West Bengal, Vikas Bhawan, North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta 700 091, West Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900/3583208. Fax: 3345946. Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Awards presented to unsung heroes

‘The Jungles’, a Kolkata based NGO recently gave away the ‘Green Guard’ Awards to forest guards, rangers, cattle guards, game watchers and chowkidars working in the 27 tiger reserves of the country. The awards were given under the categories of ‘Anti-Poaching Operation’, ‘Wildlife Habitat Conservation’ and ‘Best Protected Wildlife Range’.

Madhu Manke, the bungalow chowkidar of Mayur Jharna Elephant Conservation Zone in West Bengal was given the ‘Exceptional Individual Performance Award’ posthumously for courageously fighting a group of poachers in September 1999. A team from the 777 sq km Periyar Tiger Reserve in Kerala bagged the team performance award for an anti-poaching experiment where 21 die-hard offenders were motivated into becoming conservationists by the forest guards. The 960 sq km

Kalakad Mundanthural Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu got the ‘Exceptional Team Performance Award’ in wildlife conservation for dramatically changing the perception of conservation in 113 villages and 29,000 families around the reserve through an exceptional money loaning scheme. The team performance prize was given to the Sariska Tiger Reserve while Shreya, a student of Ballygunge Siksha Sadan was honoured for collecting over 1,500 signatures in protest against the shooting of black buck by film star Salman Khan.

Source: ‘Green guard awards honour unsung heroes of forests’, *The Times of India*, 09/07/2001.

Contact: **Raja Chatterjee**, The Jungles, 78, Brahma Samaj Rd., Behala, Kolkata – 700034. Tel: 033 – 4680271. Fax: 292897.

Panel to monitor elephant movements

Senior wildlife officials of Orissa, West Bengal and Jharkhand have decided to constitute a high level committee to monitor movements of pachyderms between the three neighbouring states and also adopt the radio collaring method to track the movements. The committee will comprise the Field Director of Project Tiger in Baripada, the Conservator of Forests (CF) of the southern circle in West Bengal and his counterpart at Jamshedpur in Jharkhand. The committee will share information about the elephants and their movement. Generally, the elephants migrate from Jharkhand’s Dalma forest to bordering districts of Midnapore in West Bengal and Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar in Orissa. (Also see West Bengal: 40% Project Elephant funds spent on relief; above)

Source: ‘Panel to monitor tusker movements’, *The Statesman*, 01/07/2001.

Contact: **SC Sharma**, Addl. IGF, MoEF, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodi Estate, New Delhi – 110003. Tel: 011- 4362285.

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

Tanguar Haor to be declared as Ramsar site

Tanguar Haor, the most important fresh water wetland of Bangladesh has been declared as the country’s 2nd Ramsar site.

The wetland is spread over 9,500 hectares in the Sunamganj district in the Northeastern part of the country. It lies in the flood plain of the River Surma which is one of the main tributaries of the

Brahmaputra at the base of the Meghalaya hills adjacent to India.

The wetland, which has been listed by the Bangladeshi government as one of the ecologically critical areas is threatened by over exploitation of fishery stocks and large scale destruction of the waterfowl itself. The local community too has been, reportedly, denied access to the resources by outsiders who have been granted leases for fishing here.

Tanguar Haor is the second wetland in Bangladesh after the Sundarbans to be declared a Ramsar site (also see *PA Update* 24).

Source: Shakhawat Hussain. 'Bangladesh to declare Tanguar Haor its 2nd Ramsar site', *Bangladesh Observer*, 05/09/2000

NEPAL

Mt. Everest cleaned of garbage

An 'Everest Rejuvenation Campaign Spring 2001' to clean up Mt. Everest has removed more than 4.3 tonnes of garbage from as high up an altitude as 7,985 metres. The garbage collected included 211 oxygen cylinders left behind by expeditions since 1959.

US\$ 53,763 were raised for the campaign by the sponsors that included the Tourism Ministry of Nepal. The work was carried out by 150 Sherpa porters who had already been hired for 12 separate expeditions. Each had been instructed to fetch the garbage down to the base camp and were paid US\$ 6 per Kg.

Some 2.3 tonnes of the garbage has been buried or burnt near the mountain's base camp. Other debris such as aluminium and wooden ladders, pieces of nylon rope, tents and oxygen cylinders were transported to Kathmandu by helicopter. Oxygen cylinders and other materials of antique value will be exhibited in the Nepal Mountaineering Museum at Pokhara and the other cylinders will be sold to some American trekking organisers. The proceeds from the sales will fund future garbage collection programs.

The next priority of the campaign is to get down the bodies of the climbers who died while reaching the summit. There are believed to be 28 dead bodies on Everest between the Khumbu glacier and the southern route to the summit. Though these dead bodies do not bother the European and other foreign mountaineers, the Nepalese porters are said to be scared of their spirits.

Source: 'Mount Everest cleaned of piles of garbage', *The Times of India*, 26/05/2001.

Children help protect Parsa Wildlife Reserve

Children of the Amalekhganj Village Development Committee have played a major role in the protection of their community forests and those of the Parsa Wildlife Reserve (PWR).

The initiative started after the PWR started the Park and People's Programme (PPP) at the VDC in 1997. The barren area has now been clothed completely in green.

As part of the measures taken by the VDC, an area of 159 hectares of the community forest here is opened for the members of the users group only for two days a week for fetching firewood and grass. People have also stopped bringing cattle into the forests and have chosen options such as rearing of livestock and pounding boulders in rivers as alternative means of livelihoods instead of depending entirely on the forest.

Source: 'School children: The saviour of forest', *Kathmandu Post*, 07/09/2000

Contact: **Director**, Dept. of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, PO Box 860, Babarmahal, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: +977-1-227675. Fax: 250850

Rhino translocation from Royal Chitwan NP to Bardia and Sukhlaphanta

10 One horned rhinos were translocated from the Royal Chitwan National Park to the Royal Bardia National Park and the Sukhlaphanta Wildlife Reserve in November 2000.

The Government's Department of National Parks and Nature Conservation and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation were involved in the programme along with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – Nepal.

The entire operation is estimated to have costed US\$ 30,000.

Source: 'Nepal begins translocating rhinos to new site', *Central Chronicle*, 22/11/2000.

Contact: **Director**, Dept of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, see above.

SRI LANKA

ADB support for wildlife conservation

Sri Lanka is to institute a comprehensive protected area management system to conserve wildlife and ecosystems with the help of a US \$ 12 million loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The project seeks to address the institutional and legal deficiencies in developing a more sustainable protected area management and wildlife conservation system and provide the resource base for developing

the country's globally competitive eco-tourism potential. Seven protected areas have been identified to pilot test the project.

These areas are also home to some of Sri Lanka's poorest communities and the project believes that they are the greatest threat to the protected areas, as they depend on the forest for subsistence and their livelihoods. The project is expected to reach out to 180,000 villagers in the area and help them with job opportunities and higher incomes as a result of eco-tourism, benefit-sharing arrangements and the establishment of a sustainable financing mechanism for community improvement.

The total cost of the project is US \$ 34.7 million, of which ADB will finance 35%. The government and other co-financers will fund the balance. The ADB loan is repayable over 32 years, including a grace period of 8 years. It will carry an interest rate of one percent per annum during the grace period and 1.5 % per annum thereafter.

The executing agencies for the project which is scheduled for completion in December 2006, are the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC) and the Ministry of Environment and Forests. (Also see *PA Update 27*).

Source: 'Sri Lanka adopts strategic approach to wildlife conservation', *The Island*, 23/10/2001.

Contact: **Director**, DWLC, 18, Gregory's Road, Colombo - 7. Tel: +94 1 698086. Fax: 581540.

WHAT'S AVAILABLE ?

- ◆ Rangarajan, Mahesh. *India's Wildlife History*, Permanent Black, 2001.

This book by the well known historian author is focussed on the landmarks in the history of Indian Wildlife - both its conservation and decline. Chapters on the ancient and medieval periods sketch out India's early wildlife history. Nature's retreat against human onslaught over the past two centuries, and efforts to reverse the trend, are then addressed in greater detail.

Contact: **Mahesh Rangarajan**, 24 Samachar Apartments, Mayur Vihar Phase-I Extension, Delhi - 110091. Tel: 011-2712442. Email: mahesh3@del6.vsnl.net.in

- ◆ Shamungou, Dr. KH. *Wildlife in Manipur*, Sangai Publication, Imphal, 2000.

A comprehensive guide on the wildlife in Manipur it covers various issues in the state related to the subject. It has geographical as well as historical information besides chapters on endangered animals, wildlife sanctuaries and national parks and the amphibian and reptilian fauna of Manipur.

- ◆ Ceballos-Lascurain, Hector. *Tourism, ecotourism, and protected areas*, IUCN, 1996.

This book is one of a series of publications issued by the World Conservation Union (IUCN), following the IV World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas held in Caracas, Venezuela, in February 1992. It is based mainly on papers presented at the two tourism workshops held during the congress, although many other sources, as well as research carried out by the author, have also been used.

Contact: **IUCN Publications Services Unit**, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, UK.

Latest Publication from Kalpavriksh !

- Kutty, Roshni., and Kothari, Ashish. *Protected Areas in India - A Profile*, Kalpavriksh, 2001, pp157

This book is designed as a handy reference guide that can be consulted for basic facts and figures related to PAs in this country. It consolidates critical and basic information about PAs. The book contains tables with names, district, area, and dates of notification of each PA in the country. Also included are tables on tiger reserves and biosphere reserves. These statistics are complemented by brief write-ups on key issues facing PAs, a list of official and NGO contacts and a detailed bibliography of relevant material. The location of all PAs is also shown on maps.

The book is available for **Rs. 50** only (handling charges only). Postage extra. Please send a Demand Draft for Rs. 70 in the name of Kalpavriksh, payable at Pune. For outstation cheques add Rs. 15.

Contact: **Roopa Bandekar**, at the editorial address.

- McNeely, Jeffrey., *Mobilizing Broader Support for Asia's Biodiversity*, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and IUCN, 1999

Written by the Chief Scientist of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the book attempts suggestions on 'How civil society can contribute to

Protected Area Management'. It offers insights on how members of civil society, including private sector companies, NGOs, local communities and other entities can participate in this.

The book also has a number of estimates of the amount of financing that would be needed if we are to sustainably manage our biological resources.

Contact: **Office of External Relations**, ADB, PO Box 789, 0980 Manila, Phillipines.

UPCOMING

22nd Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation

The 22nd Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation has been preliminary arranged to take place in Miami, Florida during the first week of April 2002. Details are to be finalised shortly.

Contact: **Symposium President**, USFWS, University of West Georgia, Dept. of Biology,

Carrollton, Georgia, USA, 30118-6300. Website: www.seaturtle.org

OBITUARY

Banka Bihari Das

The doyen of the environmental movement in Orissa, Banka Bihari Das passed away on July 28. He was 81. His struggle to save Orissa's coast from the destructive projects that governments were intent on thrusting on it, is surely one of the most inspiring stories from the recent past. Amidst the corrupt ruins of politics in India, he shone out as an example of how one could be honest and committed to ideals, despite the consequences, even in political life.

The Protected Area Update and all of us here in Kalpavriksh pray that his soul may rest in peace and that his courage and wisdom will continue to guide all of us in the fight for saving our precious natural heritage.

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

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The *PA Update* can also be accessed on the following websites:

<http://www.indianjungles.com>;

<http://home.att.net/~spiderhunters/attachments.htm>;

www.cee.envirodebate.org

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

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