

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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EDITORIAL

How many more Wynads?

The one protected area incident that caught the attention of the nation in the last few months, without doubt, was the firing that took place inside Wynad Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala. Admittedly, it is easy to sit far away from the realities and happenings on the ground, unaware in full measure of the compulsions of those who forcibly occupied the sanctuary lands and the compulsions of those who forcibly removed them, and write an edit about it.

The one thing that seems to increasingly characterise the protected area network of the country today is conflict, and one that is getting more violent. The conflict in PAs does not occur in isolation. It is reflective of our larger socio - economic - political reality. If indeed the rights of tribal communities to their natural resources had been ensured, and if promises made to reverse the historical process of their land alienation had been met, would they still resort to such extreme and violent measures? It is a question that can be asked of situations across the length and breadth of the country.

What happens in PAs, is that the articulations are much sharper, because of their special status, both legal and presumably ecological. This special situation, if anything, should be the one reason why these areas have to be dealt with extra care, concern and sensitivity. The questions are the same. How will these islands of our protected areas survive amidst a sea of growing hostility of the marginalised and alienated local communities? How will the needs of the people, particularly communities that critically depend on natural resources be met if the ecological and environmental stability of the lands are not ensured and sustained? Whose responsibility will this be?

An important role can be actually be played here by those who fight on behalf of our beleaguered wildlife. A role that moves beyond simply demanding state action to save wildlife and one that includes a look at the historical and social factors that cause these conflict situations in the first place. Unless these factors are tackled, more Wynads cannot be prevented.

What happened in Wynad is not the first conflict of its kind. It will not be the last. This Update itself has two examples. One is the Chail Wildlife Sanctuary in Himachal. More than 15,000 people whose rights to the lands go back to the 1950s, live in the town that is inside the sanctuary. Now that it has been finally notified they are facing severe problems. They have been petitioning authorities all along, but nothing has happened, and now in a last ditch effort have approached the President of the country. The other is that of Pench National Park on the Maharashtra MP border. Sometime back the full might of the police state was used to remove the alleged encroachers and fishing mafia. Now the Chief Minister of both the states have jointly announced a tourism project here, with water sports facilities added on. The Forest Minister of MP, even announced that this water sports facility will be the first in any national park in the country.

Is'nt it futile to even ask if this is needed? Are'nt there more important things that should be dealt with first. Why then, these invitations to more Wynads?

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Fresh turtle deaths reported along Vizag coast

A 'turtle walk' undertaken in the month of February by college students and organised by the Dolphin Nature Conservation Society reported fresh Olive Ridley turtle carcasses from the beaches of Vizag and Bheemunipatnam in Andhra Pradesh. The walk was organised from Bheemunipatnam to Sagarnagar, covering coastal areas such as INS Kalinga, Chepaluppada, Kapuluppada and Mangamaripeta. This number is reported to be significantly higher than what is normally found along the AP coast.

The survey team also found that Olive Ridleys were coming to this stretch of the coast for nesting were being attracted by the artificial illumination on the beach road and lighting of the shrimp hatcheries here.

The other observation was that the coastal area was being polluted with the dumping of solid waste, debris from the building-construction sectors and that casuarina trees raised for protecting the coast were being felled at many places.

Source: 'Fresh turtle deaths reported along Vizag coast', *The Hindu Business Line*, 24/02/03.

National park status for Kambalakonda forest

The Kambalakonda reserve forest which is spread over an area of 7000 hectares between Vishakapatnam and Simhachalam is to be declared as a national park (See *PA Update* 34). A government order to this effect has been issued for gazette notification. An earlier proposal to develop the area as a botanical garden with an outlay of Rs. 30 crores had been rejected by the Central Government. The proposal for the national park was reportedly accepted after the Chief Minister of the state intervened in the matter.

Source: 'New sanctuary declared in Andhra Pradesh', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 09/12/02.

ASSAM

Rs. 1.19 crores for sanctuaries in state

The Central Government has released Rs. 1.19 crores to the Assam Forest Department (FD) for wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. Rs. 54 odd lakhs have been made available for the maintenance and development of protected areas. The first three PAs selected are Panidihing, Laokhowa and Kaziranga.

Rs. 69.70 lakhs has also been released to the state government under Project Elephant, towards dealing with the human-elephant conflict.

Source: 'Rs. 1.19 cr. for state's wildlife sanctuaries', *The Assam Tribune*, 20/12/02.

Setback for proposed Joydehing sanctuary

The proposed Joydehing Wildlife Sanctuary that is yet to be notified inspite of assurances from the government for the last couple of years (see *PA Updates* 29 and 21) now faces another hurdle. The State government wants the Upper Dehing Reserved Forest removed from the purview of the proposed sanctuary. Upper Dehing is one of the three contiguous reserved forests that were to be included in the sanctuary, the other being Dirak and Joyepur.

It has been reported that the FD wants Upper Dehing out of the sanctuary for future commercial exploitation by government agencies. Upper Dehing is also the only forest area among those mentioned above, where illegal tree felling is still taking place. It is felt that the decision to leave out the area from the sanctuary will lead to the increased plundering of these forests by the timber smugglers who are alleged to be in connivance with politicians. Several NGOs including Nature's Beckon, which had initiated the campaign for the declaration of a sanctuary here, have expressed concern at the delay in the notification and say they will unitedly oppose any move to reduce the size of the proposed sanctuary.

Source: Ron Duarah. 'Setback to proposed Joydehing sanctuary', *The Assam Tribune*, 22/12/02.

Contact: **Soumyadeep Dutta**, Natures' Beckon, Datta Bari, Ward No.1, Dhubri – 783301, Assam. Tel: 03662-31067. Fax: 30076

Honorary wildlife wardens appointed

The Governor of Assam has recently appointed honorary wildlife wardens (HWLW) in all the 23

districts of the State for the period of two years in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 4 (1)(b) (bb) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The primary responsibility of these wardens will be to assist the District Administration in all aspects relating to wildlife in their respective district. They will, in particular, assist the Divisional Forest Officer on matters such as enforcement of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, creating awareness among the local people on wildlife matters, and issues relating to the interface between wildlife and people, specially in respect of national parks and sanctuaries.

The appointed wildlife wardens are Achinta Rup Basumatary (Kokrajhar), Bhargav Kumar Das (Darrang), Karuna Dutta Choudhury (Barpeta), Alope Goswami (Nagaon), Dipak Kathar (Morigaon), Shanta Sharma (Jorhat), Rishi Das (Tinsukia), Girban Biswas (Cachar), Dayananda Bharali (Sivasagar), Bhola Baruah (Golaghat), Dr Bijoy Kumar Deb (Karimganj), Satananda Bhattacharjee (Hailakandi), RN Sonowal (Dibrugarh), Gautam Terang (Karbi Anglong), AK Padmapati (Sonitpur), Soumyadip Dutta (Dhubri), Parimal Das (Bongaigaon), Dipak Kalita (Nalbari), Progress Medok (Dhemaji), Bikul Goswami (Lakhimpur), Bhaba Kalita (Kamrup), Tridip Narayan Choudhury (Goalpara) and Dwizen Khersa (NC Hills)

Source: 'Honorary wildlife wardens appointed', *The Assam Tribune*, 24/12/02.

Kaziranga employees remain neglected

There are reports that the employees of the Kaziranga NP are being neglected by the park authorities. Each forest camp, most of which are in a dilapidated condition are manned by only two or three forest guards, who have to deal with poachers and also wild animals like elephants and rhinos.

Casual employees, numbering 160 had been appointed at a daily wage of Rs. 30 each and these too had been discharged in 1998. As a result of this now, the permanent staff is having to take on additional tasks and responsibilities. 42 of the temporary employees even filed cases in the High Court to ensure their regularisation.

There have also been allegations that employees who are injured, or families of those who are killed either by poachers or the wild animals are not receiving adequate help and support from the park authorities. NGOs and the local people have appealed to the State government to regularise the

services of the temporary employees and also to ensure other help and support to them.

Source: 'Kaziranga National Park accused of neglecting employees' problems', *The Assam Tribune*, 17/12/02

Elephant festival at Kaziranga

Air India, in association with the Assam Government, organised a two day elephant festival in Kaziranga National Park. Held on January 11 & 12, 2003, the festival aimed at projecting the culture and heritage of the North Eastern region in general and Assam in particular. 275 tame elephants of the Forest Department participated in the festival. One of the aims of the festival was to highlight the need to protect wildlife in general and in particular, to resolve the growing elephant-human conflict here.

Two well known personalities, expert mahout and elephant catcher Parbati Barua and documentary film maker, Robin Banerjee were also honoured during the festival.

The North Eastern region is embarking on a major drive for the promotion of tourism here and this is one step in that direction (Also see *PA Update* 39)

Source: 'Elephant fest at Kaziranga', *The Hindu Business Line*, 19/12/02.

Barun Das Gupta. 'Elephant festival in Assam', *The Hindu*, 13/01/03.

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

Extremist support for wildlife around Kaziranga

The United Peoples Democratic Solidarity, a rebel group in Assam has threatened to execute poachers and timber smugglers. Villagers found indulging in activities like destroying forests or killing rhinos, elephants and other animals - would be flogged publicly and fined Rs. 5,000-10,000. H.E. Kathar, the group's general secretary, has said that his group has already started patrolling the fringes of the Kaziranga National Park. With this newly expressed interest in preserving flora and fauna, the group has. However, not abandoned its main goal of winning greater autonomy for the *Karbi* tribe

Source: 'Extremist support for wildlife', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 08/01/03.

Elephants from Kaziranga extension kill four people

Wild elephants from the Panpur Reserve Forest (the 6th addition of Kaziranga National Park) have caused a lot of damage in the southern part of the Jamugari area which includes the revenue villages of Amdara, Hokoma, Panpur, Puraniveti, Nepali Panchgaon Mohmorapar, Erabari and Borbhagiagaon under Naduar revenue circle (NRC), within the East Sonitpur Forest Division of Sonitpur district. The problem has been going on since 1999. Seven people were killed in the southern most part of Jamugari in February 2002.

The Govt. of Assam had included 6095 hectares of the Panpur Reserve Forest under the 6th addition to the KNP in 1985. It has been alleged that no steps were however made to protect these forests from encroachers, illegal poaching and fishing. This is said to be have contributed to the increased conflict.

The final handing over of the forest area to the park authorities happened only in 1999. Consequently staff of the territorial wing of the FD that were employed here were removed, but wildlife staff has still not been appointed for the area.

Source: 'Wild elephants kill 4 persons in Jamuguri', *The Assam Tribune*, 20/02/03.

NGOs call for declaring Reserve Forest within Guwahati as Wildlife Sanctuary

Environmental and Wildlife NGOs in Assam have suggested that a wildlife sanctuary be declared to protect the forests of the Kamrup district that lie within the Greater Guwahati region. These include the 5318 hectares of Amseng Hills Reserve Forest, 1550 hectares of the Amseng South Reserve Forest and the 996 hectares of the Khanapara Reserve Forest: a total of 7864 hectares.

These forests are rich in wildlife and support a number of rare and endangered species that includes the Asian Elephant, and the Hoolock Gibbon. The NGOs that include Early Birds and Rhino Foundation have pointed out that there is large scale encroachment in these forests and that there is an urgent need to protect them.

Source: 'Destruction of city forest starts, authorities unmoved', *Sentinel*, 07/12/02.

Sivasish Thakur. 'Exotic wildlife of Guwahati remains unexplored', *The Assam Tribune*, 15/12/02

Contact: **Moloy Baruah**, Early Birds, 26, Surujmukhi, PO Silpukhri, Guwahati - 781003. Tel: 0361-666353. Fax: 550158. Email: baruahm@iocl.co.in

Encroachment reported inside Laokhowa WLS

Encouraged by political powers, a vast tract of land inside the Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) was reportedly encroached upon in the month of December. 700 families settled in forest villages near the sanctuary forced their way into the Singimari area of the park and cleared vegetation in preparation for agricultural activities.

The Forest Department, ill equipped to meet the mob and afraid of mob violence in the event of their action in evicting the encroachers informed the Nagaon district administration about the incident. The administration instructed the SDC of Samaguri to help the forest officials, but the police of the area refused to provide the necessary support saying that the area under encroachment did not fall under their jurisdiction.

Source: 'Heavy encroachment inside Laokhowa WLS', *The Assam Tribune*, 14/01/03.

Proposal to create sanctuary comprising Nambar and Dorgrong Forests

The Golaghat Forest Division of the Assam Forest Department has proposed the creation a new wildlife sanctuary comprising the Reserve Forest areas of Nambar and Gorgrong and spread over an area of nearly 9450 hectares. A proposal for the same was recently submitted to the Chief Conservator of Forests of the state.

The division has also reportedly formed 24 public committees to assist the FD in forest protection work here. Additionally a Rs. 4.8 crores plan has also been drawn up for the protection of the area and this is proposed to be done with the help of the committees.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) has also released some funds for project work of the division and Project Elephant authorities too have visited the area.

Source: 'Forest Department plans to protect Nambar reserve', *The Sentinel*, 14/01/03.

State to constitute 35 Forest Development Agencies

The Assam State Government has announced that 35 Forest Development Agencies (FDA) will be registered in the state. This decision was taken in a cabinet meeting held in the capital Guwahati in February. They will be registered under the Societies Act and operate in both territorial and wildlife forest divisions of the state. The local Conservator of Forests will be chairperson of the FDA which will have 50 other members.

Various schemes relating to afforestation, preservation and protection of forests shall be undertaken through the Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMs) and the Eco-Development Committees. (also see *PA Update* 30)

Source: 'New govt. bid to conserve forests', *The Assam Tribune*, 08/02/03.

Proposal for a new 'Sankosh-Aie' Wildlife Sanctuary

The Kokrajhar based NGO, Green Hearts Nature Club (GHNC) has proposed that a new 'Sankosh - Aie' Wildlife Sanctuary be declared that will include the forests of Ripu, Chirang and Manas. The area stretches from the River Sankosh to Manas through out the foothills of Bhutan and includes good forests contiguous with Manas National Park on the east and Buxa Tiger Reserve on the west. The forests belong to the Kachugaon, Haitugaon and Aie Valley Forest Divisions in the Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts.

The region was once famous for its sal forests and patches of good Terai grasslands which support populations of endangered species like the Pygmy Hog, Hispid Hare, and the Bengal Florican. Other endangered species of fauna that are found here include the Golden Langur, tiger, clouded leopard, leopard, leopard cat, elephant, slow loris, and binturong.

This area has already been included under Project Tiger as a buffer zone for tigers from the Manas Tiger Reserve and more recently it was proposed by the Central Ministry of Environment and Forests to include it under Project Elephant (see *PA Update* 39).

GHNC has already submitted this proposal to the State Forest Minister.

Source: 'Demand for Sankosh-Aie wildlife sanctuary', *The Assam Tribune*, 02/11/02.

Contact: **Green Heart Nature Club**, W. No. 6,
Kokrajhar-783370m, Assam. Tel: 03661 -
270970. Fax: 70694. E-mail:
ghncne@yahoo.com; ghnc@rediffmail.com

Panidihing Birds festival held

A two day Panidihing Birds Festival was held at Sivasagar in Assam in the last week of January. A seminar on 'Bird Habitat and Ecological Balance' was held on the second day of the festival. Experts who spoke on the occasion included Dr. Asad Rahmani, Soumyadeep Dutta, Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhary and Dr. Hilloljyothi Singha.

The Deputy Commissioner, Sivasagar, Gayatri Baruah also participated in the programme.

Source: Dr. Assad Rahman stresses need for bird conservation', *The Assam Tribune*, 25/01/03.

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

BIHAR

State seeks Central help for ecodevelopment, environmental awareness

The Bihar state Forest and Environment Minister has sought financial help from the Centre for ecodevelopment activities and raising environmental awareness in the state. In a meeting held with the Union Minister for Environment and Forests in December 2002, he also pointed out the difficulties arising due to the shortage of officials belonging to the Indian Forest Service.

He has also sought a compensation of Rs. 1024 crores against the loss incurred on account of a railway project that affected the Madanpur forest area and the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in West Champaran district. (Full details are however not known)

Source: 'Centre's help sought on eco development', *The Hindustan Times*, 06/12/02

GOA

Poaching with crude bombs common around Mahavir WLS

The use of crude bombs, particularly to kill wild boar is reported to be rampant in certain areas in and around the Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary. One of the

main areas where this happens in the Sacordem village in Sanguem taluka near the sanctuary.

Killing wild boar with the help of such bombs has been a common practice in the area for some time. Initially, the purpose was to protect the plantations, but now it is used to poach the animals inside the sanctuary as well. The prevalence of this activity came into the spotlight recently when a cow died after chewing on one of these bombs. In another incident a villager lost his hand when he tried to break open an arecanut like substance that turned out to be the explosive.

Local villagers however deny that they are majorly involved in this activity. They point out that hotels in the vicinity are willing to pay a handsome amount for wild boar meat, which is considered a delicacy. They also say some urban people regularly visit the area and take the help of some locals for the poaching activities. Further they say that the involvement of people from the other side of the border from Karnataka also cannot be denied.

Source: Rupesh Sawant. 'Sacordem a haven for poachers', *Navhind Times*, 01/02/03.

Deer safari at Bondla WLS

The Goa Forest Department (FD) has proposed the creation of a deer safari with *sambar* and *chital* at the Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary. Rs. 20 lakhs have already been allotted for the project.

The aim is to add another attraction for the tourists that visit here. 20,000 tourists visit Bondla annually and the FD is hoping to increase that number with the creation of the safari.

Source: 'Deer safari planned at Bondla', *Navhind Times*, 28/01/03.

Bondla-Tambdi Surla-Satpal - Mollem tourism circuit.

A new tourism circuit comprising the Bondla WLS, Tambdi Surla's Kadamba temple, Satpal arboretum, Dudhsagar waterfall and the Mollem National Park is being shortly introduced by the Goa govt.

The Satpal arboretum, located in a forest bordering Mahavir WLS will be the latest addition here. The arboretum is more than 25 years old and has been done up recently. It is spread over an area of 24.50 hectares and has different plots for medicinal plants and different tree species.

Source: 'Satpal arboretum all set for visitors',
Navhind Times, 07/01/03.

GUJARAT

Forest fires reported in different parts of Gir

At least 700 hectares of forests have been destroyed inside Gir in the month of March. The incidents have been reported from five different places inside the sanctuary starting March 9.

On March 9 forests engulfed 300 hectares of forest around Chrakiyo Dundar inside the sanctuary. Another 100 hectares were destroyed on March 12 and a few days later, fires were reported in more than 10 hectares in the Kangha taluka. The last week of March saw a fire in the Bhanaj area of the park which destroyed another 300 hectares. Bamboo and grass resources have been the worst hit and some small fauna including avian life have also been affected, in addition to pilgrims visiting the Kankai temple.

Though fires are a natural annual occurrence, forest officials have indicated that the incidence seems to have gone up because of man-made factors. It is being said that three of the five fires this year were set by locals to get even with local officials who booked them for violating forest laws. The increase in the number of tourists visiting here has further compounded the problem.

Source: Stavan Desai. 'Fires eat away Gir forest cover', *Indian Express*, 31/03/03.

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

Gir lions in Porbandar cause panic

Fear gripped several villages in the Porbandar district in early January as two lions from Gir WLS were reported to be on the prowl in the region. They had been spotted in the coastal region, about 100 kms from the boundary of the sanctuary. Two cows and two buffaloes were found dead on the outskirts of Ratanpur village, presumably killed by these lions.

The Forest Department along with the villagers was patrolling the area along with two cages in an attempt to capture the animals.

There have been similar reports in the past, of lions from Gir being found in other parts, outside the park as well. (see also *PA Updates* 34 and 32)

Source: Hiral Dave. 'Lions escape Gir forest, Porbandar lives in fear', *Indian Express*, 08/01/03.

Nal Sarovar dries up during migratory season

Scanty rains earlier in the season resulted in the Nal Sarovar drying up completely in the middle of the migratory season in December itself. The water level in the lake during a normal monsoon year is about six feet and the lake has water till the end of March.

Post monsoon, last year the water level was only between 1.5 to 2 feet, and phenomenon of the early drying up was seen after nearly a decade and a half. The Nal Sarovar receives water from the catchment areas in Ahmedabad and Surendranagar districts, but this time these were mostly dry.

This situation has forced the Forest Department (FD) to consider using the water from the Narmada to fill up the lake. The FD has discussed the plan with the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam, which has reportedly agreed in principle. The channel is however 20 kms short of the Nal Sarovar

Ornithologists have also stressed on the need to develop satellite water bodies, and to preserve other water bodies near the Nal Sarovar. The example sited is that of Bhaskarpura, some kms from the Nal, which has now become a haven for the birds.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Nal Sarovar dries up during migratory season.' *The Times of India*, 31/12/02.

Water scarcity affects birds in Nal Sarovar, Little Rann of Kutch

Scanty rains earlier this year led to the early drying up (see above) of the traditional wintering ground of migratory waterfowl at Nal Sarovar.

Nava Talao in the Little Rann of Kutch emerged as an alternative site for the birds, but was being rapidly emptied by the locals for irrigating fields in the vicinity. The water from the lake was being used to grow water intensive crops like cotton and *jeera* and some of the water pipelines were as much as two kms long.

There is, in fact a High Court order restricting the lifting of water from such water bodies, and the Surendranagar District Collector had even issued circulars to all village panchayats informing them of the same. The farmers however point out that they have no option in light of the fact that water is scarce now and that their fields will dry

up in the absence of any irrigation. They also pointed out that they have paid Rs. 200 to Rs. 250 per bigha for lifting the water. It is however not clear who gave them the permission in the first place.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'No respite for migratory birds as Nava Talao dries up as well', *The Times of India*, 05/01/03.

Nal Sarovar, Little Rann of Kutch to be declared Ramsar sites

The Government of India has recommended to the Ramsar Bureau to include the Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary and the Wild Ass Sanctuary in the Little Rann of Kutch in the Ramsar list of wetlands of international importance.

This was announced by a official from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) at a workshop on wetlands held recently in Gandhinagar by the Gujarat Ecological Education and Research Foundation (GEER).

There are other suggestions for the declaration as a Ramsar site some areas of the Great Rann of Kutch as well.

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'Nal, Little Rann to enter world list', *The Times of India*, 14/02/03.

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HIMACHAL PRADESH

Illegal constructions threaten Kalatop Khajjair

Large scale illegal constructions are reported to be coming up in the Kalatop - Khajjair Wildlife Sanctuary, threatening the beauty and the environmental balance of the area. The famous Khajjair lake, the main source of water here, has been fenced off using barbed wire, thus preventing wild animals from accessing the lake to quench their thirst. There is also the fear that the slopes, made of loose soil, may not be able to withstand the heavy pressure, thereby giving the chances of massive landslides.

The state government has constituted a Special Area Development Authority (SADA) for the planned development of Khajjair, taking into account the stringent provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Town and Country Planning Act (HPTCPA). There is one opinion, however, that the HPTCPA lacks political and public support.

Source: Balkrishan Prashar. 'Haphazard growth Khajjair's bane', *The Tribune*, 29/10/02.
Illegal construction in wildlife sanctuary', *The Tribune*, 04/12/02.

Chail residents demand denotification of their lands from sanctuary area

The residents of Chail town have sent a representation to the President of the country asking for the denotification of their lands from the Chail Wildlife Sanctuary. The final notification for the sanctuary was issued in 1999.

The residents have pointed out that more than 15000 residents were being denied their rights though they had been resident in the area for many decades. They also say that there was no effort to get the opinion of the seven panchayats of Chail area and two from Simla that fall within the boundaries of the sanctuary, when the sanctuary was notified. People are now unable to avail basic facilities like fodder and firewood from the forests and their houses too are in a dilapidated condition. They have also pointed out that the town came into existence much before either the Wildlife (Protection) Act - 1972 or the Forest Conservation Act - 1980 and therefore there should be no delay in the denotification of the lands that belong to them.

The villagers have been petitioning the central and state governments for a long time, but to no avail. The officials of the State Wildlife Department have clarified that they had sent the case to the Central Government a number of times, but no success could be achieved in getting the area denotified.

The total area under the ownership of the town and its residents (technically being called encroachments) is reported to be 3600 bighas. A stretch of 25 bighas had been gifted to the people here in 1953 for the construction of houses and markets. There are a number of government departments on the encroachers list as well. These include the Forest Department itself, the Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC), the Defence Department, the PWD, the

IPH, and the Horticulture, Health, HPSEB, telecommunications and animal husbandary departments.

Source: Ambika Sharma. 'Woes of Chail residents', *The Tribune*, 14/11/02.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Tso Morari: world's highest Ramsar site

The Tso Morari lake in the Changthang area of Ladakh was recently declared as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention (See *PA Update* 40). The lake now has the distinction of being the highest Ramsar site in the world surpassing Salar de Tara in Chile. It is now the second Ramsar site in the state after Wular Lake.

The lake is approximately 19 kms long and 7 kms wide and is located at an altitude of 4595 metres above sea level. It is fed by a number of small glacial streams and has no external drainage. This fact coupled with a high rate of evaporation, has resulted in the waters being brackish and bereft of any life.

A small northern offshore island here forms the main nesting site for the Bar Headed Geese and the Brown Headed Gull. The area also serves as an important breeding ground for the rare and endangered Black Necked Crane.

Increased human activity, particularly since 1990, after a road was built right upto the lake is considered as one of the biggest threats to the lake and the nesting birds here. Rising tourism, in particular, is creating problems. A Tso Morari Conservation Trust has been recently formed to work towards the conservation of the lake. This was done with the help of the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF) local office in Leh. Local people are reported to be involved in the working of the trust.

Source: Tashi Morup. 'Tso Morari in Leh declared important wetland', *Kashmir Times*, 12/12/02.

Lakes of J&K, increasingly threatened

Large number of lakes in Jammu & Kashmir are increasingly being threatened by siltation, pollution and agricultural activities. These include among others, the Hygam wetland, Dal Lake, Wullar Lake, Anchar Lake, the Nigem lake and Hokresar. Of these

Hokresar is a notified wildlife sanctuary and Wullar is on the Ramsar list.

The Hygam wetland located some 50 kms from Srinagar has shrunk from 4.5 sq. kms to less than 1.5 sq. kms. Recently neighbouring villagers squashed a bund that held water here and the bed of the lake is now being used for agriculture and grazing cattle. The famous Dal Lake of Srinagar has shrunk from an area of 16 sq. kms in the 1980s to about half, at 9 sq. kms today. The water quality of the Wullar too is reported to have deteriorated substantially in the last few years.

Source: Mufti Islah. 'How green is this valley?', *Indian Express*, 26/11/02.

Large number of migratory birds in Hokresar

More than four lakh migratory birds, were estimated to have been spotted at the Hokresar Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of December. This is supposed to be a record for this wetland.

The birds that were seen included teals, mallard, pintail, gadwall, white-eyed pochard, red-crested pochard, common pochard, shoveller, wigeon, coot and the brahminy duck.

Source: 'Migratory birds set record in Kashmir', *The Asian Age*, 03/02/03.

JHARKHAND

50 elephants reported missing in the last two years

50 elephants are reported to have gone missing in the state of Jharkhand in the last two years. Three reasons are being given for this: some mysterious disease; poachers that are active in some parts of the state and retaliatory killings by villagers where rampaging elephants have caused damage to life and property. 50 people have been reported killed in the state by wild elephants in the last couple of years.

Forest officials also say that the elephants keep moving and it is possible that they have gone to the forests of the states bordering Jharkhand. The Chief Wildlife Warden of the state, Mr. AK Malhotra has however said that no elephants are missing, that autopsies are carried out for all dead elephants and that these reports were only a creation of the media.

NGOs and local wildlifers have however alleged that all autopsies are not carried out as mandated by the law. They say there are two reasons for this: officials fear that the results of the autopsy

reports will go against them; and some of the forest staff are in connivance with the poachers.

Lending credence to the allegations of the NGOs is the case of the death of three elephants in the Betla NP in the state in November. While the FD blamed a mysterious disease, locals alleged that the burials were carried with undue haste and that one of the elephants had a bullet wound on its head (see *PA Update* 40). Two female elephants were also found dead in the Palamau Tiger Reserve in April (*PA Update* 36). At least one of them was killed by poachers as the trunk, nails and jaws of the animal were found missing.

Source: Nityanand Shukla. 'Jharkhand's jumbo mystery', *Pioneer*, 10/12/02.

Trains killed nine elephants in last three years in Jharkhand

In the past three years at least nine wild elephants have been killed by speeding trains in Jharkhand. Most of the killings take place in the Chaibasa Gua railway section of the Singhbhum district. While one elephant was killed in 2002, the numbers for years 2001 and 2000 were three and five respectively. A Rs. 1.60 crores project to deal with the situation had been mooted by the Forest Department two years ago, but there has been no progress because of lack of co-ordination between the FD and the Railway authorities. The project essentially envisages the erection of a solid barrier along the railway track to prevent the elephants from crossing the track.

Source: Nityanand Shukla. 'Save tusker project faces elephantine obstacles', *The Pioneer*.

KARNATAKA

Hunting is the biggest threat to wildlife in protected areas: Study

A study published recently in *Ambio*, a journal of the human environment, published by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has argued that hunting in protected areas by local communities continues to be the biggest threat to Indian wildlife. The study by Dr. Ulhas Karanth and MD Madhusudan was conducted during 1996-97 in the Nagarhole and Kudremukh National Parks in Karnataka.

In Kudremukh the survey was conducted on the western fringes which has evergreen vegetation. 49 active and 19 retired hunters were interviewed. It

was found that at least 26 species of mammals were hunted here, mostly with guns, at an estimated intensity of 216 hunter days per month per village (surrounding the forest area). An average hunter hunted 18 species in his lifetime. 78% of the hunters ranked the chevrotain as the species they hunted most, followed by the common langur (60%) and the Giant Indian Squirrel (50%). Three quarters of the hunters reported a general decline in the abundance of large mammals in the region. Most hunters admitted that they hunted for food, but 48% said they did it for the thrill. None of them reported encounters with enforcement staff and 40% even admitted that they received assistance in hunting activities.

In Nagarhole, the study comprised of a survey of two forest patches, Nalkeri and Arkeri, each about 70 sq. kms in area. In Arkeri the pressures of hunting have been consistently higher for the last three decades as compared to Nalkeri. Systematic line transect surveys were used to estimate abundance of nine species of mammals, the Indian Giant Squirrel, Bonnet Macaque, Common langur, Barking Deer, Wild pig, chital, sambar, gaur and the elephant.

Patterns of hunting at Nagarhole differed from that of Kudremukh. In Arkeri, some hunters 'specialise' in exclusive supply of wild meat to eateries in nearby towns, and sometimes in Kerala. As many as 16 of the 29 mammal species of weight over 1 kg in Nagarhole were regularly hunted. Shotguns were the most popular weapons, but the tribal hunters were known to use at least eight traditional methods as well.

The survey and its outcome is supposed to be the prelude to the drafting of a conservation programme with a 'preservationist' approach, towards a socially acceptable, economically equitable, and morally agreeable ways of minimising hunting pressures on large mammals.

Source: Alladi Jayasri. 'Hunting is the biggest threat to wildlife', *The Hindu*, 01/01/03.

Alladi Jayasri. 'Numbers of large mammals is dwindling', *The Hindu*, 02/01/03.

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

Tourism development project at Ranganthitlu

Tourist facilities like a restaurant, clean drinking water supply, toilets, a reading room, a children's

park and vehicle parking lots are coming up at the Ranganthitu Bird Sanctuary as part of the project conceived by the Forest Department under the Protected Area Development Fund. The facilities are being created on a 3.5 acre plot in the sanctuary.

Plans are also being made to connect all the five islands of the sanctuary with suspension bridges. Presently, tourists can visit only one of these five islands, but soon all five will become accessible. (Also see *PA Update* 34).

Source: Shankar Bennur. 'Ranganatittu to become a tourist paradise', *Deccan Herald*, 17/02/03.

Lokayukta raids Nagarhole forests

The *Lokayukta* of Karnataka, Justice Venkatachala, recently (in February) conducted a raid in the Veerahasalli forests of the Nagarhole Range. During his six km. trek into the forest he found a number of stumps of full grown trees as also neatly chopped logs meant for use as doors and windows.

There have been a number of recent reports of large scale smuggling of timber from the forests here (also see *PA Update* 39) and the *Lokayukta* blamed the officials of the Forest Department for this. The Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF), Hunsur Division under whose jurisdiction these forests fall, tried to defend himself, reportedly, by saying that there were vested interests involved and the poor numerical strength of the FD was the reason for not being able to stop the smuggling. Of the 110 posts in the division as many as 60 were empty, but the *Lokayukta* pointed out that the DCF was empowered to recruit tribal people as watchers on daily wages.

The *Lokayukta's* team earlier had raided the office of the DCF following a complaint from the Kodagu Ekikarana Ranga (KER) alleging misuse of funds in the Rs. 36 crore World Bank aided Eco-Development Project. The KER alleged that at least Rs. One crore meant for tribal welfare had been appropriated. This money was meant for the purchase of gas stoves, cookers, shelter, and construction of toilets and community halls. The beneficiaries of the project complained that the gas stoves provided were substandard. They also said that the FD had used their manpower for digging trenches free of cost though the project stipulated payment of remuneration for the labourers.

The *Lokayukta* was accompanied by a team comprising superintendents Riyaz and Uthappa and the Task Force (Health) Chairman and the Director Vigilance, Dr. H Sudarshan.

In a press note issued by the Bangalore based group Wildlife First immediately after the visit of the *Lokayukta*, it was pointed out that the raids have only confirmed the undesirable role played by the WB Eco-development projects, like in Nagarhole. There have been regular allegations that the eco-development programme in the park has actually served to distract forest officials from their basic duty of protection of the forests (also see *PA Updates* 24 and 39).

The Wildlife First statement further pointed out that 77 elephants had died or had been killed in the Nagarhole (Rajiv Gandhi) National Park in a 34-month period from January 1, 2000 to October 31, 2002. Worse, at least 44 of these were tuskers. In what is considered a cover up effort, the autopsies are said to indicate that a quarter of the tuskers killed were due to 'interfights'. Experts have pointed out that the elephant is a social animal and such a large number of deaths due to infighting is very unlikely.

Wildlife First has appealed to the Chief Minister and Forest Minister of Karnataka to immediately order the stoppage of the World Bank Project and spending of a further 14 crore rupees and also to scrap the present management plan written under this World Bank project.

Source: 'Lokayukta raids Nagarhole forest range', *The Hindu*, 16/02/03.

Wildlife First, Press statement dated 19/02/03.

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

World Bank probe into eco-development project functioning in Nagarhole

The World Bank initiated a probe into allegations of irregularities in the functioning WB eco-development project in Nagarhole that it has been funding since 1998. The probe followed the raids made by the *Lokayukta* of Karnataka to look into allegations of timber smuggling and the misappropriation of the money earmarked for eco-development work (see news item above).

The World Bank team was to have submitted its report towards the end of the month of March.

The Senior Social Development Specialist of the WB, Mr. S Satish did however point out that

the bank was satisfied with the progress and implementation of the eco-development project in the park. He said that he would allot seven marks on a scale of ten to the project and that it had helped generate a lot of awareness amongst the people.

He also expressed happiness over the success of the rehabilitation project for the tribal people from Kodagu in Nagapura near Hunsur. The relocation had been taken up by an NGO with the Union Government providing funds, the Karnataka Government land and the WB, technical assistance. (Also see *PA Updates* 39, 38, 34, 32, 27 & 24).

Source: Jeevan Chinnappa. 'WB team begins probe into Nagarhole project', *The Hindu*, 28/02/03.

Contact: **Praveen Bhargav**. See above.

Water levels fall in Nagarhole

According to reports in early January 2003, water levels in water bodies in Nagarhole had fallen drastically. The main reason for this has been the failure of the monsoons. Water in the Kabini backwaters had also dipped. The Command Area Development Authority reported that the water level has touched 'dead storage' level due to the release of water to Tamil Nadu. An estimated 1200 elephants, 1000 gaur, 8000 deer and other animals depend on the Kabini backwater when most other parts of the park dry up in summer.

This year however, summer like situations were being reported in the beginning of the year itself giving rise to the fears that the animals will be badly affected. There is also the fear of increased forest fires, which are already reported to have started in the neighbouring Mudumalai forests.

The Deputy Conservator of Forests, Hunsur Wildlife Division has requested the authorities of the Kabini reservoir to maintain the water level in the interest of the wildlife of Nagarhole as well as Bandipur National Parks.

Source: Shankar Bennur. 'Water levels dwindling in Nagarhole', *Deccan Herald*, 20/01/03
Vijay Madhav. 'Shadow of drought stalks Mysore forests', *The New Indian Express*, 04/02/03

Contact: **INCERT** No. 10, Sirur Park B St. Seshadripuram, Bangalore – 560020. Tel: 080-23364142 / 23364682.

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Praveen Bhargav. Wildlife First see above.

Proposed Chamrajnagar - Mettupalayam rail link to ruin undisturbed elephant habitat

It is feared that the proposed railway line project to connect Chamrajnagar in Karnataka with Mettupalayam in Tamil Nadu will ruin one of the most important elephant habitats in southern India. The project which hopes to open a shorter route to Kerala and other parts of southern India will pass through the Bandipur-Mudumalai-Wynad forests of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The dormant project received a new lease of life when the Union Minister for Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution announced recently that work on the 149 km long broad gauge rail line was to be taken up in a couple of years.

This region has been identified by the Asian Elephant Research and Conservation Centre (AERCC), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore as the 'best hope' for the survival of elephants in the wild. A GIS database for conservation of Project Elephant reserves published by the AERCC has pointed out that pressures from development projects, including the proposed railway line through the Moyar valley and the steep slopes of the Eastern and Western ghats near Talamalai would effectively separate the elephants of the eastern and western ghats. Tiger conservationists too have identified the region as vital for the survival of the tiger.

The project has gone to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests for the mandatory environmental clearance and it is being hoped that the MoEF will turn in down.

Source: K Krishna Kumar. 'New rail line will ruin undisturbed habitat', *The Hindu*, 26/12/02.

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

Tourism development project in Kokrebellur

Kokrebellur, the small village that has become famous for its efforts for the conservation of the heronary within the village is soon to be placed on the tourism map of the Government of Karnataka. Painted storks and pelicans regularly nest on the trees within the village and the villagers have traditionally protected both the birds and these trees.

The state government now plans to put the village on to the tourism circuit through a new

programme called 'rural tourism', that aims to showcase little known, but important rural places in the state. A Rs. 75 lakh budget has been drawn up for this entire programme and about two-thirds of it is to come from the Central Government.

Source: 'A tryst with rural tourism', *The Times of India*, 22/12/02.

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KERALA

Police firing in Wynad

A number of people were killed and injured in police firing on a group of adivasis that forcibly occupied the Wynad WLS. The incident occurred on February 19, about a month after a group of adivasis led by the leaders of the Adivasi Gothra Sabha forcibly the sanctuary. The main reason given for the forcible occupation was that the promises made by the state government for the allotment of lands to the tribals more than a year ago were not being met. Following the firing the leaders of the Adivasis CK Janu and M Geetanandan were also arrested a few days later on February 22.

The initial report was that two people had been killed, but according to other estimates the number of deaths was at least 20. There is still no confirmation on this. The United Democratic Front govt has refused to institute a judicial inquiry to find out the number of people who were actually killed.

The state government had put out reports essentially justifying the police firing. This was however rejected by the National Human Rights Commission, which said that it would prefer an enquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) instead.

Source: R Madhavan Nair. 'Two killed as tribals, police clash', *The Hindu*, 20/02/03.
'Probe sought into firing on adivasis', *The Hindu*, 21/02/03.
'Police action on tribals condemned', *The Hindu*, 23/02/03.
'Janu Geetanandan arrested', *The Hindu*, 23/02/03.
'Muthanga: UDF rejects probe demand', *The Hindu*, 24/02/03.

'NHRC rejects Kerala govt. reports on tribal firing', *The Times of India*, 21/03/03.

Project with 50 year perspective proposed at Sabrimala

The Kerala Chief Minister recently announced that the state government had entrusted the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) with the task of preparing an exhaustive project for providing basic facilities to Sabrimala pilgrims with a long term perspective for the next 50 years. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 320 crores. This would be done after consultations with various government departments and non governmental organisations who work here. He said that the government would share 30% of the total project estimate and the construction of concrete structures would be discouraged. He further added that priority would be given to the cleaning up of the Pamba River that flows here.

The CM also later held a meeting with the Union Minister for Environment and Forests (MoEF), Mr. TR Baalu, who agreed in principle to provide Central assistance to clean up the Pamba and to include the project under the National River Conservation Programme (NRCP).

It has been reported that the ecological status of the Sabrimala region within the Periyar Tiger Reserve was fast deteriorating. The River Pamba was highly polluted with the coliform bacteria count going up in some parts to 2 lakh per 100 ml as against the norm of 10,000 per 100 ml. There have also been cases of the death of wild elephants because of ingestion of decaying food and plastic. (Also see *PA Updates* 40, 34, 30, 27, 24, 23 & 21).

Reports in February however indicate that the Pamba Action Plan might be delayed because the Detailed Project Report (DPR) based on the guidelines of the NRCP is yet to be submitted by the state to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). Along with the DPR the other prerequisite for the sanction of the project is the constitution by the state government of a number of committees. These include citizens monitoring committees in every town where the project is to be executed, a divisional review committee and a monitoring committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister of the state. None of this has happened yet.

The State is yet to decide on the implementing agency for the project besides making it clear how it will raise the 30% of the project costs

that have to be borne by the state. 70% of the expenses will be provided by the centre.

Source: Radhakrishnan Kuttoor. 'TDB to prepare project for Sabrimala', *The Hindu*, 14/12/02. 'Central aid likely to clam up Pamba river', *The Hindu*, 20/12/02. GK Nair. 'Pampa action plan to be delayed', *The Hindu Business Line*, 07/02/03.

Contact: **Equations**, 198, II nd Cross, Church Rd., New Thippasandra, Bangalore 560 075 Karnataka. Tel: 080 - 25282313 / 25292905. Fax: 25282313. Email: liyakhat@equitabletourism.org
Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudaacad, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-322217 / 204896. Fax: 325804.

MADHYA PRADESH

Joint MP, Maharashtra tourism project in Pench

A joint tourism development project is being taken up by the MP and Maharashtra governments at the Pench National Park, that is spread across the boundaries of the two states. This was announced at a press conference held in November 2002 jointly by the Chief Ministers of the two states. Water sports facilities are to be developed as a part of this project, which the MP Forest Minister claimed would be the first of their kind in any national park in the country

Source: 'Maharashtra, MP for tourism deal', *The Pioneer*, 19/11/02.

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

MAHARASHTRA

NHSS takes up rehabilitation of those displaced by Sanjay Gandhi NP

The Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS) has decided to take on the responsibility for the housing construction project for the rehabilitation of those recently evicted from the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Mumbai. The project will come up at Chandivli on land that belongs to Sumer Corporation. Earlier there were reports that NHSS and the Sumer

Corporation were to jointly undertake this project (see *PA Update* 39).

As per the latest details, as many as 16500 families will be accommodated in a township to be developed on 1.89 lakh sq. metres of land. The Sumer Corporation had reportedly approached the NHSS with this offer from a total land of about 3.6 lakh sq. metres that is in their possession. The balance cannot be used as it is in the no-development zone.

The Corporation, will in return, get transfer of development rights (TDR) which it could sell in the open market. There were some questions about the legality of the TDR, but the NHSS has also said that the TDR was being given as per government policy and there is no illegality involved.

Source: 'Shabana's NGO takes up resettlement plan', *The Times of India*, 07/02/03.

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

A tigress and four cubs electrocuted in Melghat

A tigress and four cubs have reportedly been electrocuted near Sipna river in the Harisal region of Melghat Tiger Reserve. The bodies were discovered on February 3, four days after the incident. The cubs were reported to be only a few days old. A post mortem report confirming the electrocution was pending.

Following extensive investigation by the staff of Melghat Tiger Reserve led by the Field Director Mr. Ramanuj Chaudhari, four persons were arrested on February 6. They confessed to have laid the live wire on January 30, with the intention of electrocuting deer. They also admitted that they had earlier killed many animals using the same technique. The police department and Nature Conservation Society, Amravati assisted the Forest Department in the operations. The FD has also seized the wire, hooks, axe and other material, and is following leads gained from these poachers to get to the bottom of the entire network. Another gang of four had also been subsequently detained

In the last two decades, Maharashtra has recorded the largest number of cases of poaching by electrocution using power lines running through forests (55 out of a national figure of 202). In the last six months alone, Maharashtra has lost at least six

tigers, four in and around the Tadoba Tiger Reserve and two in Pench, among the instances that been recorded

Source: 'A tigress and four cubs electrocuted in Melghat Tiger Reserve', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 05/02/03
'Poachers nabbed in Melghat', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 07/02/03.

Contact: **Field Director**, Melghat Tiger Reserve
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Gobar gas plant installed in village rehabilitated from Melghat

Three *gobar* gas plants were recently installed in the Bori village that was moved from the Melghat Tiger Reserve a couple of years ago.

Care for Wild India and the Satpura Foundation financially assisted the *gobar* gas project. The installation was done with the help of the Srushti Tribal Welfare Society.

Contact: **Kishore Rithe**. See above

Notification issued declaring Matheran as eco-sensitive

The Union Ministry for Environment and Forests (MoEF) issued the final notification on February 4, declaring the hill station of Matheran and its surrounds as an Eco-Sensitive Area (ESA). The notification came just two days before the end of the stipulation period of one year from the draft notification that was issued in February 2002 (see *PA Update* 36).

The ESA will be spread over 215 sq. kms and will cover areas in the jurisdiction of the Matheran Municipal Council as well as the surrounding areas in Raigad district and 19 villages in Ulhasnagar in Thane district. The notification has been promulgated under the Environment Protection Act (EPA) - 1986.

The initial proposal was for the ESA to cover an area of 498 sq. kms, but there had been opposition to that. The Maharashtra State Government itself had recommended that the ESA be limited to only 117 sq. kms (see *PA Update* 40).

The implementation of the notification is to be now supervised by a 10 member committee headed by an environmental expert and convened by the District Collector of Raigad.

Source: Prafulla Marpakwar. 'Matheran declared eco-sensitive region', *Indian Express*, 20/02/03.
'Matheran also gets eco-sensitive tag', *The Times of India*, 20/02/03.

Contact: **Samir Mehta**, Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG), 4, Kurla Industrial Estate, LBS Marg, Mumbai – 400086, Maharashtra. Tel: 022 – 25798638. Fax: 25771459. Email: samir@beag.net

Forest land diverted for resettlement of villagers from Koyna WLS

The Central Government has agreed to the diversion of 413.06 hectares of forest land for the rehabilitation of persons who have moved out from the Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary. Additional details are however not available.

This land is part of a total of 6145.01 hectares of forest land in Maharashtra that has recently been diverted for conversion of forest villages into revenue villages. This includes 4073.95 hectares of forest land for conversion of 73 forest villages to revenue villages in Nandurbar district, diversion of 1658 hectares of forest land for the regularisation of agrisilvi plots in the same district, and that for rehabilitation from Koyna WLS.

Source: 'Centre okays State plan on forest land', *Indian Express*, 28/12/02.

People's Marine Turtle Conservation Project in Ratnagiri district

The *Sahyadri Nisarg Mitra* (SNM) based in the Chiplun town of Ratnagiri district has launched an informal 'Marine Turtle Conservation Project' for the protection of the Olive Ridley Turtles that nest on the coast here in small numbers. The initiative was launched in the wake of the rising incidence of poaching of the turtles and the destruction of their eggs and hatchlings in this Konkan belt.

During the turtle nesting season that has just ended, the SNM took its project to 45 villages in the district. They now want to spread their campaign along the entire Konkan coast. The group has also been involved in conducting status surveys of the White Bellied Sea Eagle along the Ratnagiri and

Sindhudurg coasts and had also helped the local police in the operation to prevent the destruction of the nests of the edible nest swiftlets in south Konkan.

Source: Neil Pate. 'Chiplun group comes to the aid of Olive Ridleys', *The Times of India*, 22/03/03.

Bund construction near Bhimashankar WLS stopped

The Pune Wildlife Division has issued an order to stop work on the construction of a water bund in Kondhwal village, on the periphery of the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary. Construction work on the Rs. 3 crore bund with a water storage capacity of 1707 TMC (thousand cubic metres) was started in 2001. Rs. 33 lakhs have already been spent towards mining, earthwork, masonry and primary construction of the bund.

The Forest Department has said that the work was stopped because permission had not been taken under forest regulations. Further it is reported that at least six hectares of prime forest land will be submerged once the bund is ready. 2000 medium sized trees and some paddy land belonging to the villagers will also be submerged. According to the Irrigation Department, however, the construction work is outside the boundary of the sanctuary and that work was stopped because of a paucity of funds.

The Ekjoot Sanghatana, which has been working in this area for nearly two decades too has tried to bring up the matter with the FD. They have expressed concerns that the farmers who will be losing land will not be fairly compensated.

Source: Neil Pate. 'Construction work in Kondhwal bund halted', *The Times of India*, 22/01/03.

Contact: **Kusum Karnik**, Shaswat, PO Manchar, Dist Pune 410503, Maharashtra. Tel: 02133-24107. Fax (C/o) 23690 / 23696

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MANIPUR

Committee set up to implement programme of the LDA; NEC to give Rs. 38 crores

The Manipur State Forest & Environment Department has constituted a 16 member Committee

for the implementation of the 10 point program of the Loktak Development Authority (LDA) announced earlier (see *PA Update* 40).

The committee will be headed by the LDA Minister, W. Leima Devi. The Additional Chief Secretary in charge of Forest & Environment will be the Vice-Chairperson. Other members are the Addl. Chief Secretary (Finance), Secretary (Law), Directors of Planning, Agriculture, Horticulture, Tourism, Fisheries, Youth & Sports Affairs, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Chief Engineer (Roads & Bridges), Chief Engineer (IFCD), Deputy Commissioner Bishnupur, Superintendent of Police Bishnupur and the LDA Project Director.

The responsibility of the committee is to look into the implementation of the 10 point program of LDA and to monitor the proceedings, to have monthly sittings, and to coordinate the different departments involved in the program. The 10 point program of LDA includes the following (1) To draft a Loktak Protection Act, (2) To construct a Ring Road around the entire periphery of the Loktak lake, (3) To utilise the vegetation mass Phumdi as manure and for bio-gas production, (4) To construct a water sports complex in Loktak lake, (5) To construct a Loktak Guest House on a hillock near lake, (6) To conduct mass afforestation in catchment hills, (7) To introduce tourist motorboats in the lake to attract tourists, (8) To encourage floriculture and pisciculture, (9) To conduct awareness programs to save Loktak lake, and (10) To construct Tourist Rest Houses in lake area.

The North Eastern Council will be providing Rs. 38 crores to the LDA under the 10th five year plan for the development of the Loktak lake. Wetlands International South Asia, New Delhi has been approved at the consultant to prepare a detailed project report for conservation of Loktak and other adjoining wetlands like Pumlun, Khoidum, Kharung, and Ikop. The report will be submitted in July later this year. Work on the commercial utilisation of phumdi vegetation by converting to manure too has started at Ningthoukhong. 50 metric tonnes of manure were reported to be available for use.

Source: 'Committee set up to implement 10 point programme of LDA', *The Poknapham Daily*, 13/12/02.

'NEC to provide 38 crores', *The Poknapham Daily*, 04/01/03.

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Two sangai poachers caught

Volunteers of the Environmental Social Reformation & Sangai Protection Forum (ESRSFP) apprehended two poachers on the night of January 19, 2003, with the meat of freshly killed *sangai*. Both the poachers were fishermen and they admitted that they had caught the deer inside the Keibul Lamjao National Park and then butchered it on the banks of the River Ithai Turel. Both the poachers were identified, but they managed to make good their escape.

The volunteers of the ESRSFP then handed over notices to the families of the two individuals, following which they surrendered to the local forest office a couple of days later (also see *PA Update* 36). A criminal case against them under section 50 (1c) of the Wildlife Protection Act - 1972. They were then released on bail the next day by furnishing a PR bond of Rs. 10,000 each.

Source: 'Two sangai poachers handed over to police', *The Poknapham Daily*, 23/01/03.

Sangai poachers shot at by RPF

In another incident in early February, cadres of the underground, Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) gave a harsh warning to wildlife violators by shooting in the legs of two *sangai* poachers. Prior to the shooting the RPF / People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Division No. 6 paraded the two poachers before the press. The PLA is the armed wing of the RPF. The RPF has reportedly set itself an agenda of protecting and preserving the *sangai* and other fauna in the region. They have said that the *sangai* is symbolic of Manipuri identity and punishment to the poachers was meant to be a warning to all who would dare to hunt the animal. Earlier in the week Division No. 6 had also rescued some waterfowl from the hands of some other alleged poachers

Source: 'Sangai poachers shot', *The Poknapham Daily*, 06/02/03.
'Waterfowl handed over', *The Poknapham Daily*, 03/02/03.

ORISSA

Govt. takes steps to prevent *akhand shikar* in Simlipal

The Orissa Forest Department has taken a number of steps this year to prevent *akhand shikar*, the annual hunting ritual of the tribals in and around the Simlipal forests. The ritual observed according to the Hindu calendar, starts this year on April 14.

The FD has sounded a high alert across wildlife populated areas of the forests. There has been an attempt to seal off the forests and three platoons of police forces are being put into service. 15 former defence officers were also being employed to form anti poaching squads that would be stationed at various camps, in addition to mobile anti-poaching squads that would be constantly on the move. Specially trained tribal informers are members of these anti-poaching squads. 20 Green Brigades that will keep a close watch on the periphery villages of the park have also been formed in the Mayurbhanj district

Similar attempts at preventing the mass hunting and also to educate the tribals have been made in the past, but apparently with not much success. (Also see *PA Updates* 26, 21 and 17).

Source: 'Orissa moves to end tribal hunting ritual', *Navhind Times*, 07/04/03.
'Hunter, cops gear up for hide and seek', *The Pioneer*, 12/04/03

New tiger reserve at Satkosia-Basipalli

The Project Tiger Steering Committee has reportedly cleared a proposal to set up a tiger reserve in the Satkosia-Basipalli wildlife sanctuaries spread across the districts of Angul, Nayagarh, Boudh and Athamallik in Orissa. This will be the 2nd tiger reserve in the state after Simlipal. The NGO Wild Orissa, has for a while been campaigning for the inclusion of these forests into Project Tiger (See *PA Update* 30)

They have also suggested that the Hatidhara reserved forests of Athamallik division, Mundesar reserved forests of Boudh division and Taleipathar reserved forests of Athamallik division should be included in the reserve as these areas still have excellent forests and tiger movement is regularly reported from here. The NGO has further demanded that the two platoons of the Orissa State Armed Police, which were recently withdrawn from these

areas, be redeployed immediately to check poaching and illegal logging.

Source: New Tiger reserve at Satkosia - Basipalli, Orissa', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 29/01/03.

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

Prawn gheries in Chilka being destroyed

Starting February 2003, the state government has started destroying prawn *gheries* inside the Chilka lake. 500 labourers were engaged in the activity that was supervised by senior officials led by an executive magistrate.

The drive was taken up following a meeting of the 'estimate committee' of the state assembly which was authorised to take a decision with regard to fishing activities in the lagoon. Majority of the committee members felt that fishing by erecting large scale *gheries* was the major source of water pollution besides posing a serious challenge to aquatic life in the lake. (Also see *PA Updates 27 & 25*).

Source: Aksuaya Kumar Sahoo. 'Fishing in Chilka lake? Not possible anymore', *The Asian Age*, 20/02/03.

Italian technology to de-weed Chilka lake

The Orissa government proposes to use Italian technology to de-weed Chilka lake. Silting and overgrowth of weeds have resulted in a rapid reduction of the lake's area. The area under weeds which was about 20 sq. km in 1972 had risen to 52.sq. km. in 2000. The lake's average depth has decreased from 2.4 m in 1924 to 0.5-1.6 m in 1991.

According to the Chilka Development Authority, the Orissa government has invited Carlo Sanzanni, an Italian expert to explore the technical feasibility of using Italian technology and equipment as part of a comprehensive integrated long-term approach to combat the weed menace. A local company, Kalinga Engineers, will collaborate with Cosma Sas from Italy to mechanically de-weed other water bodies, including those in Sambalpur and Puri districts.

Source: 'Italian technology might be employed to de-weed Chilka lake' www.sanctuaryasia.com, 14/02/03.

Contact: **AK Patnaik**. CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485. Email: ajitpatnaik@hotmail.com
Website: www.chilka.com

Japanese fund likely for development of Chilka

The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has decided to extend financial help for the development of Chilka lake. The agency will be sending an expert committee to study various aspects of the lake and prepare a project report to decide the quantum of financial assistance.

Representatives of JICA held a meeting with the State Science and Environment minister in February and have also promised to provide technical assistance and consultancy for the all round development of the lake.

Source: 'Aksuaya Kumar Sahoo. 'Fishing in Chilka lake? Not possible anymore', *The Asian Age*, 20/02/03.

Fewer birds in Chilka this season

Figures from the census carried out in Chilka in January revealed that the number of migratory birds visiting the lake have been falling over the last couple of seasons. While 15 lakh birds were estimated to have visited the lake last year, this winter the number has been only about 4.5 lakhs.

In the year 2000, nearly 10 lakh birds were counted inside the Nalabana Sanctuary. The number dropped to six lakhs the next year, to 2.33 lakhs in 2002 and only about 1.7 lakhs in early 2003.

One of the explanations offered by a State Wildlife Department official is insufficiency of food. He pointed out that after a new mouth was opened to raise the salinity of the lake, the freshwater vegetation would have died, adversely affecting food supply for the birds.

Source: Siba Mohanty. 'Chilka too sees fewer birds', *Indian Express*, 22/01/03,

Chilka birds served for VIP dinner party

Meat of migratory birds from the Chilka lake was reportedly served during a dinner party hosted at a prominent Bhubaneswar club in January. The party was attended by 60-70 guests including senior government officials and businessmen.

The birds which included pochards and pintails were procured from local bird poachers.

Biswajit Mohanty of the Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO) and the Orissa Coordinator of the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN) has demanded a probe by the Central Bureau of Intelligence (CBI) into the whole episode.

Source: 'Chilka birds on a dinner platter', *The Statesman*, 20/01/03.

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

Boat propeller kills another dolphin in Chilka

Another Irrawady dolphin was found dead on January 2 near Satpada on the shores of the Chilka lake, killed by the hit of a boat propeller.

Over the last couple of years a large number (fourteen) of these extremely endangered animals have been killed by the propellers of tourist boats that have multiplied in the lake. (See *PA Updates* 36 & 29). The estimated population of this dolphin in Chilka is only around 50.

Source: Biswajit Mohanty. Email dated 09/01/03.

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, See above.

Mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles begins on Orissa coast

Mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles is reported to have started on the Orissa coast in the first fortnight of March. An estimated 10,000 turtles nested at Pentha beach in the Gahirmatha Sanctuary from March 5 to March 7. About 50,000 turtles were then counted on Rushikulya nesting beach near Kantiagada village on the evening of March 9.

There had been no mass nesting in Orissa during the previous turtle season of 2001-02 at any of the three important nesting sites of Nasi Islands in Gahirmatha, Devi River mouth and Rushikulya River mouth, and this year too no nesting has been reported from the Nasi Islands in the Gahirmatha sanctuary.

Due to uncontrolled illegal mechanised fishing - particularly by trawlers from Andhra Pradesh - in prohibited zones of Rushikulya river, more than 2,235 dead olive ridleys have been counted on the Chilka mouth to Bahuda river stretch during the current turtle season (from November 2002 to February 2003). The Rushikulya river mouth faces an

additional threat from the proposed Crude Oil Terminal project of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited at Kantiagada village. It is feared that if this project becomes a reality, the Rushikulya turtle mass-nesting site will be lost forever

Source: 'Turtles arrive at Rushikulya for mass nesting', www.sanctuaryasia.com, 10/03/03.

Contact: **Biwajit Mohanty**, see above.

Central Empowered Committee issues directive to protect nesting olive ridleys

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) in the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) that has been appointed by the Supreme Court (SC) of India in the Godavarman case has issued directions aimed at protecting the nesting olive ridley turtles and their nesting sites on the Orissa coast.

The directions that were issued on March 7, were for the following: establishment of permanent camps at mouths of Devi River and the Rushikulya river before March 22; ensuring communication equipment tented accommodation and a sea worthy boat for the employees involved in the turtle protection activities; at least 10 armed police officers from the Orissa State Armed Police to be posted at each camp to patrol restricted area with forest and fisheries department employees; requesting the Coast Guard to intensify patrolling in the next three months and to arrange to establish boat stations between Paradeep and Rushikulya which will facilitate shallow water patrolling.

Coast Guard officials have additionally been empowered to seize and impound trawlers operating in restricted zones, while the fisheries department has been asked to suspend licences of all boats not using Turtle Excluding Devices (TEDs).

Source: 'Ministry directives to save Olive Ridleys', *The Statesman*, 26/03/03.

Goats biggest threat to wildlife and forests of Orissa

A survey by the Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO) has said that goats are the biggest threats to the forests and wildlife in Orissa, including in PAs.

The survey reported that Mayurbhanj district which encompasses the 2800 sq. kms Simlipal Tiger Reserve had the highest number of these animals, as goat rearing is very popular here. There are presently 65 villages inside Simlipal TR,

all of which rear goats. An estimated 7000 goats from the villages inside the park and another 70,000 from the peripheral villages of the sanctuary grazed every day inside the park, destroying the rich flora. This was also adversely affecting wild herbivores like sambar, deer, barking deer, wild boar and gaur, all prey species for the tiger. Besides there was also the fear of the increased possibility of diseases being transmitted from cattle and goats to wild animals.

A similar situation was seen in other protected areas like the wildlife sanctuaries of Chandaka, Sunabeda, Kuldiha and Satkosia.

Further, it has been estimated that the total number of goats entering the forests of the state for illegal grazing was between four to five lakh every day.

Source: 'Are goats the biggest threat to Orissa forest and wildlife?', *The Assam Tribune*, 09/02/03.

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, WSO, see above.

Chandka elephants kill, injure villagers near Bhubaneswar

A herd of seven elephants from the Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary was reported, in the month of December, to have killed one and injured four people on the outskirts of Naharkanta Village near Bhubaneswar city. The irate villagers then blocked the Chennai-Kolkata National Highway demanding a permanent solution to the elephant menace here. A similar incident had also occurred in 2001.

The problem of human -elephant conflict has aggravated around Chandaka since 1996-97, with 11 people being killed here by elephants since then.

According to Biswajit Mohanty of the Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO), the main causes for this are rapid loss of habitat and fodder due to a combination of factors like cattle grazing, encroachments, timber smuggling, charcoal making and fuel wood extraction. Every day an estimated 5000 cattle and goats graze inside the sanctuary.

Five hamlets of Gadjit village comprising of 455 families were supposed to be shifted from the area after it was declared a sanctuary. Rs. 70 lakhs were deposited for this with the Cuttack District Collector more than a decade ago. However nothing much has happened on that front. Only about 85 families have shifted out till date. Further the Forest Department is understaffed and as a result timber smuggling is continuing unabated.

Human elephant conflict has intensified a lot in Orissa in the last few years, with more than 40 people having been killed in the year 2001 alone. (See *PA Updates* 39, 34, 32 and 29.)

Source: Biswajit Mohanty. 'Why are the elephants from Chandaka coming out?' Press note from the WSO dated 16/12/02.

Court order to protect state mangroves

The Orissa High Court has recently passed an order, asking for the immediate cancellation of unauthorised leasing of forest land and the eviction of encroachment from mangrove forests in the state. The orders came in response to a public interest litigation filed in the matter in 1998 by the Wildlife Protection Society of India and Biswajit Mohanty.

The court has suggested to the state government that it could seek assistance from the Central Government and also ask for paramilitary forces for the purpose.

Source: Jatindra Dash. *Indo-Asian News Service*, 16/03/03.

Contact: **Arup Nayak**. Email: bravo_123@satyam.net.in

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PUNJAB

Concern about proposal for temporary emptying of Harike lake

The Dept. of Irrigation of the Govt. of Punjab had planned to close the Harike Reservoir from January 6 –20, 2003 for repair and maintenance and to plug leakages in the barrage. This was proposed in view of the fact that water requirement in Rajasthan is minimum during this period. During the closure there would be a stoppage of the release of all water from dams upstream of the lake.

Some questions were raised regarding the environmental implications of a step of this kind by Dr. SA Hussain. The questions raised included: a) what could be the consequence of such a closure on the ecological profile of the ecosystem, b) What could be effect of this closure on biological diversity and migration of birds to the wetland?, and c) what

would be appropriate period for such repair and maintenance works for any such wetland? .

Information received later indicated that the concerned authorities had postponed the work to March 3. What prompted this decision is not known and neither is the latest situation in Harike.

Contact: **Dr. SA Hussain**, Anekere Road, Karkala – 574104, Karnataka. Tel: 0825 – 734748 / 730140. Email: sahbird@sancharnet.in

Govt. officers on hunting spree in Harike

A group of influential persons, led by an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to a former Chief Minister of Punjab, reportedly went on a hunting spree in Harike towards the end of December 2002.

The group of more than six persons was armed with weapons, and accompanied by a dog squad to assist in the hunt. FD employees were then reportedly, approached by aides of the former CM, with a request that no action be taken against the offending hunting party.

More details are however not available.

Source: 'Hunting in Harike with impunity', *The Tribune*, 27/12/02.

TAMIL NADU

First state level ENVIS centre in the country

Tamil Nadu is slated to become the first state in the country to have its own Environment Information System (ENVIS). It would collect and disseminate biodiversity related information on the flora and fauna of the state to universities, registered societies, private agencies and government organisations.

The ENVIS centre would be set up by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and the nodal agency for it will be the Environment Department of the Tamil Nadu Government based in Chennai.

Source: 'State to get first biodiversity database', *The New Indian Express*, 05/12/02.

Law to be amended to save coastal biodiversity

The Tamil Nadu Government has proposed the amendment of the Tamil Nadu Marine Regulation Act 1983 to deal with the devastation that has been

wreaked by large mechanised trawlers along the coast here.

The proposed amendments would bring in regulations regarding the size of the fishing nets and the dimensions of the holes apart from making turtle excluder devices (TEDS) mandatory for all deep sea fishing vessels. It will also prohibit the indiscriminate dumping of juvenile fish on the shore by the trawlers when they dispose off the day's catch.

Source: Vani Doraiswamy. 'TN to amend law to save coastal diversity', *The New Indian Express*, 21/02/03.

Conflict over feral horses in Point Calimere

A conflict has arisen between the Tamil Nadu Forest Department (FD) and the local traders over the ownership of 26 feral horses found in the Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary. While the local traders have claimed that the horses belong to them, the FD says that they are wild and therefore belong to the department. Many years ago these horses were partially domestic. The local traders, trading in salt and other commodities would catch them during the trading season and once the season was over let them back into the wild. This has not happened in over five decades now and the horses have turned feral.

One of the local traders had even taken the matter of the ownership of the horses to the court. Though he lost, he plans to take the matter further. Another trader from Puddukotai town has said that he has grazing rights for the horses dating back to more than 35 years, but the FD says that now the case has no legal standing. Recently the FD made an effort to catch and tame one of these horses. Not used to domesticity, it withered away and died.

The horses here have a very interesting history and little is known about them or how they got here in the first place. There are various theories regarding this. There is also an ongoing debate whether these animals should be classified as wildlife. The FD reportedly views them as a nuisance, saying that they dirty water holes and are also a competitor species for the blackbuck.

Source: Prerna Bindra. 'Dispute on horses goes wild', *The Pioneer*, 13/12/02.

Contact: **Clement Francis**, No.11/38, Andrea Villa, Behind J S Industries, K K Halli, Thomas Town PO, Bangalore - 560084, Karnataka. Tel: 080 - 5460531. Email: clement.francis@wipro.com

Littering problem in Ervikulam

Unconcerned tourists are creating a major waste problem in the Ervikulam National Park, thoughtlessly discarding plastic water bottles, bags and other garbage. The problem is compounded by the fact that there is a huge tourist rush, with a number of vehicles visiting the park that has been declared a plastic free and no smoking zone.

This has had adverse impacts on the wild fauna of the park. Elephants, Nilgiri Tahr and jackal have been seen ingesting plastic while rummaging for food from the tourist left overs. A few years ago, the post mortem conducted on an elephant conclusively established that the animal had died a premature death because of ingesting plastic.

The Forest Department (FD) is trying to enforce the rules of the plastic free zone and local NGOs too are trying to popularise paper and cloth carry bags as an attempt to deal with the growing problem.

Source: George Netto. 'Litter bugs are driving away all other wildlife', *Indian Express*, 11/01/03.

UTTARANCHAL

Van Gujjars threaten to go back to Rajaji NP forests

Van Gujjars from the Rajaji National Park who were resettled at Pathri near Haridwar have said that they will go back to the forests of the park if the government fails to keep the promises made to them nearly a decade ago. The statement was made during a two day meeting of the leaders of the community that was held in December in the Dehradun.

They had threatened that they would re-enter the forests in the month of March. Latest details are however not known. A meeting with the Uttaranchal CM, Mr. ND Tiwari had also been planned for the month of January.

It was pointed out that the houses given to the 511 Van Gujjar families in the colony at Pathri were in a deplorable condition with no cattle sheds, water or electricity. The leaders of the community further added that the government was now forcing the Gujjars who were still living inside the forest to move to another resettlement colony at Gaindi Khatta despite orders from the National Human Rights Commission to the contrary (see *PA Updates* 29 and 20). They also pointed out that 27 villages, railway

stations and an army cantonment were still present in the park but nobody dared to talk about their eviction.

Source: 'Keep your word, or we shall march back to forests', *Indian Express*, 30/12/02.

CEC puts curbs on tree felling for Tehri -Meerut power line

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) set up by the Supreme Court to look into matter related to the Godavarman ('Forest') case has asked the Power Grid Corporation and the state Forest Department (FD) to restrict felling of trees for the construction of two 800 KV transmission lines from Tehri to Meerut. This transmission line also passes through the Rajaji National Park and it had been reported earlier that a large number of trees were to be cut in the park for the purpose (see *PA Update* 36).

Approval had initially been sought for the cutting of 50,000 trees; permission was given only for 14000, and the committee has expressed the opinion that even this number can be brought down. It has recommended that felling be done only in three strips of four meters each below the conductors, instead of felling the entire 85 metre corridor. Two, it has suggested increasing the height of towers to reduce the number of cut trees. In the Rajaji NP too, the committee has directed to first cut trees in spots where the tower foundation is to be laid and then mark the conductor spots. The committee has also asked for the enumeration of sal trees in the area. Regeneration of these trees is supposed to be difficult and an attempt is being made to save as many of them as possible.

The issue of the tree cutting had been first brought up by the Himalayan Chipko Foundation who have argued that the cutting through dense forest was technically unnecessary and contrary to existing guidelines.

Source: 'Curbs on tree felling for Meerut-Tehri power line', *The Times of India*, 02/02/03.

SC asks state to submit new plan for Corbett road

The Supreme Court, in the first week of March, asked the Uttaranchal Government to submit within two weeks to the Centre, a new plan realigning the proposed Garhwal Kumaon link road to avoid its passing through the Corbett Tiger Reserve. The counsel for the state submitted to the court that the plan for the realignment had already been worked out

and it was pending with the Chief Minister for approval. The court posted the matter for hearing after eight weeks and it is supposed to come up in the month of May.

The matter had been first brought to the notice of the apex court through a public interest litigation (PIL) raising concern that the road was to be constructed within the national park and if constructed would make it much easier for poachers and timber smugglers to operate here. (Also see *PA Update* 36)

Source: 'Uttaranchal govt gets two weeks time to approve Corbett Road', *Daily Excelsior*, 08/03/03.

UTTAR PRADESH

Genetic hurdles for Dudhwa rhinos

Genetic problems are undermining efforts to boost the rhino population in the Dudhwa National Park. Presently the rhino population here has gone up to 19 animals. Eight of these are males and the problem is that six among them are from the same genetic order.

Though Dudhwa was part of the original range of the Asian Rhino, a combination of factors had led to its extinction from this region. A rhino introduction programme was initiated here in 1984. The project began with two males and one female rhino being brought here from Kaziranga. One of the males died leaving only one to procreate. Later five females were imported from Nepal and one male was brought in from Lucknow zoo. This animal too found its way back to the zoo.

The CWLW of the state, Mr. RL Singh has said that there is a desperate need for at least one or two more male rhinos in Dudhwa, but it was proving difficult to procure them. Repeated requests to the Centre have failed to yield any concrete results so far.

Source: 'Genetic hurdles for Dudhwa rhino', *The Times of India*, 14/02/03.

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

WEST BENGAL

State sets up new committee to monitor wetlands

The West Bengal Government has decided to set up a new monitoring committee headed by the Chief

Secretary for the conservation and restoration of wetlands in the state. It will comprise representatives from the Pollution Control Board and municipalities spread across the wetland area, as well as the departments of agriculture and environment.

The committee which is to start functioning from April 2003, will be empowered to restrict any activity that might jeopardise the ecological balance, and no developmental projects in wetlands can be taken up without its permission.

Source: Kaushik Ghosh. 'New committee to monitor wetlands', *The Statesman*, 06/02/03,

Three week dolphin survey in the Sundarbans

A three week dolphin survey starting February 27, 2003 was conducted in the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. The survey was co-ordinated by the Kolkata based NGO Pugmarks and was led by experts from the US based World Conservation Society (WCS) and the 'Species Survival Cetacean specialist group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The scope of the survey covers 'technical specifications' like the exact species and distinguishing marks and 'environmental parameters' like water temperature and food fish species available in the area. A similar survey had been done in the Bangladesh Sundarbans last year.

Volunteers and forest department staff were also to be trained in techniques of the survey. It is hoped that these surveys will help put in place a 'common transboundary conservation programme'. The Sundarbans is home to four species of dolphins and porpoises: the Ganges River Dolphin, the Irrawady Dolphin, Finless Porpoise and the Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin, all of which are reported to be threatened species.

Source: Sankar Sridhar. 'Sundarbans survey to track dolphins', *The Telegraph*, 17/02/03.

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

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NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Panel proposed to hasten environmental clearance for projects

To end the problems faced by project promoters in obtaining environmental clearance from the MoEF, the Govindarajan Committee on 'Reforming Investment Approval and Implementation Procedures' has suggested the setting up of an empowered committee for forest clearance. The proposed panel will have representation from the concerned government departments and agencies for the disposal of the cases.

According to the committee, environmental clearance 'perhaps' takes the longest time and causes maximum delays to projects. It has further pointed out that cumbersome procedures for environmental clearance, submission of incomplete information and poor quality of environment impact assessment (EIA) reports, disproportionate details required with applications, delays in meeting of the expert committees and site visits are the major reasons for the delays.

The committee as part of its recommendations for procedural changes, has suggested that instead of the present procedure under which the various stages of clearance by the Ministry are undertaken, the MoEF should evolve a procedure to take up the activities in parallel. The Ministry should also examine whether it is necessary for the applicant company to submit all the documents that are required at the time of filing the forest clearance application and that investment limits as well as the list of projects requiring clearances should be made co-terminus with the Plan periods, necessitating a review every five years.

Source: 'Panel proposed to hasten eco nod for projects', *The Hindu Business Line*, 18/12/02

GIS based maps for Tiger habitat areas

The Union Ministry for Environment and Forests (MoEF) has proposed the use of the Geographical Information Service (GIS) to prepare maps of forests and protected areas with prominent tiger populations.

Satellite data will be used and classified into vegetation and land use maps on a 1: 50,000 scale with digital data related to contour, villages, roads, drainage, administrative boundaries and soil characteristics. The spatial layers will be attached to data on human population, livestock population, meteorological data and agricultural information. Old Survey of India maps will be used as baseline maps.

The first set of maps, which will cost about Rs. 25 lakhs each are likely to be available in a year's time. The tiger habitats that are likely to be covered include Anamalai and Mudumalai WLSs (Tamil Nadu), Parambikulam WLS (Kerala), Udanti, Sitanadi and Achanakmar WLSs (Chattisgarh), Satkosia WLS (Orissa), Dandeli WLS and Anshi NP (Karnataka) and the Kaziranga NP (Assam).

Source: Sonu Jain. 'Next on Project Tiger: maps on lines of Eicher', *Indian Express*, 20/02/03

Contact: **Rajesh Gopal**, Director, Project Tiger.

E-mail: dirpt@envfor.delhi.nic.in

Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Award for 2002

Dr. RS Chundawat of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) was awarded the Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Award for the year 2002 for achieving excellence in scientific research on the tigers of the Panna National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

In addition, the Carl Zeiss Roll of Honour was also awarded to the following four recipients for their commitment to wild tigers, wildlife and wilderness areas in India: Dr. PK Malik, Wildlife Institute of India; Mr. D Yatish Kumar, DCF and Director, Bhadra Tiger Reserve, Karnataka; Mr DV Girish, a coffee planter in Chikmagalur, Karnataka; and Mr. GS Khandekar, Range Forest Officer, Pench Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra.

Source: 'Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Award for 2002', *Tigerlink*, February 2003.

Environmental courts likely in India

India may soon have environmental courts. This is likely to happen once the 16th Law Commission completes its review of the country's environmental laws. The Commission headed by Justice M Jagannandha Rao is presently in the process of conducting this review. This review follows the judgement of the Supreme Court of India in AP Pollution Board Vs Prof. MV Naidu (Retd.) and others in 2000, in which the apex court had said, "in

as much as most of the statutes dealing with environment are by parliament, we would think that the Law Commission could kindly consider the question of review of the environmental laws and the need for constitution of Environmental courts with experts in environmental law, in addition to judicial members in the light of experience in other countries".

The review will not be done on all the environmental laws at one go. The Commission is first reviewing the National Environment Tribunal Act and the National Environment Appellate Authority, with the intention of setting up a single authority/tribunal with a broad mandate, rather than the different authorities which presently exist and which have a very limited mandate.

The other members of Law Commission are Mr. T K Viswanathan- Member Secretary and Adv. N M Ghatate- Member

Source: 'Environmental courts likely in India soon', *The Times of India*, 24/01/03.
'Law Commission to study laws on ecology', *Hindu Business Line*, 25/01/03.

Contact: **Law Commission of India**, Room No 730; 7th Floor, 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi 110001
Environmental Justice Initiative, See section on Opportunities

11 new wetlands declared as Ramsar sites

11 new Indian wetlands (covering a total area of 453,686 hectares) were recently designated as Ramsar sites.

These are the East Kolkota Wetlands (West Bengal), Ashtamudi Lake, Sasthamkotta Lake and the Vembanad Wetland (all in Kerala), Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu), Kolleru Lake (Andhra Pradesh), Bhitarkanika Mangroves (Orissa), Bhoj Wetlands (Madhya Pradesh), Pong Dam (Himachal Pradesh), Tso Morari (Jammu & Kashmir) and Deepor Beel (Assam).

The total number of Ramsar sites in India is now 19. (For the full list see *PA Update* 40).

Source: '11 Indian wetlands declared Ramsar sites', *The Statesman*, 26/12/02

Indigenous turtle excluder device unveiled

The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) has recently unveiled an indigenously developed

turtle excluder device (TED) for the shrimp trawling industry to deal the problem of sea turtles getting enmeshed in the fishing nets.

The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) had jointly launched an exercise for networking and coordinating TED manufacture and promotion, particularly along the eastern coast of the country. Studies have shown that incidental deaths of turtles during trawling operations was nearly 75000 in the last twelve years. Studies have also shown that use of the TED does not adversely affect the shrimp catch, with reported losses being only between 1.2 to 7.9 %.

The TED has been priced at Rs. 1260 and the MPEDA was reported to have already distributed 1000 TEDs so far. It has been estimated that out of the 47000 mechanised boats, including trawlers, that operate off the Indian coasts, 23000 need to be equipped with the TED. Various states and union territories have made the use of the TED mandatory and earlier this season special efforts were made by the state governments on the eastern coast along with other agencies like the Coast Guard to ensure that turtle mortalities due to trawling operations were reduced (see *PA Update* 40).

More recent reports however indicate that this has not been successful and this year too, nearly 8000 olive ridley turtles were washed ashore dead after being trapped in trawling nets.

Source: Amit Mitra. 'CIFT device to save sea turtles from shrimp nets', *The Hindu Business Line*, 12/12/03.

New Forest Conservation Rules issued

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has issued new rules under the Forest (Conservation) Act on 10th January, 2003. The rules can be viewed at the following website:

<http://www.envindia.com/pmac/news.php>

SACON study calls for community participation for wetland protection

The joint United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) project for formulating a protected area network for wetlands in the country has recommended that community participation is necessary for their protection.

The study which was carried out by the Coimbatore based Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (see *PA Update* 34) covered all states besides Goa, Kerala and Orissa. Wetlands that are already protected were included in the study that was conducted in a participatory mode, with a local coordinator leading the local communities.

510 wetlands across the country were studied and the parameters taken into consideration were the total number of birds, number of species, the status of the species, plants and fish. The wetlands identified and listed were of a maximum size of 56 hectares and a minimum of 2 hectares.

Source: Sunny Sebastian. 'Community network for saving wetlands', *The Hindu*, 08/02/03.

Contact: **Dr. Arun Kumar**, Addl. Director, ZSI, 218, Kaulagarh Road, Dehradun – 248195, Uttaranchal. Email: zsisiwal@sancharnet.in
Dr. N. Prasad, SACON, Annaikatty, Coimbatore 641108 Tamil Nadu

South Asia

BANGLADESH

Sundarbans Biodiversity Conservation Project questioned

The Sundarbans Biodiversity Conservation Project (SBCP) Watch Group, an environmental group of four Bangladeshi NGOs has questioned the entire SBCP saying that the ongoing project will lead to a negative outcome if it is not reviewed immediately. The SBCP Watch Group which is made up of ActionAid Bangladesh, Rupantar, JJS and Lokaj has said that the US \$ 77.5 million project funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has failed to identify the root causes of poverty and biodiversity destruction and has instead blamed the local people for the same.

One of the main concerns is that the SBCP has not taken into account the industrial shrimp cultivation happening in the region and the impacts that it is having on the local livelihoods and environment. Shrimp aquaculture has reportedly displaced traditional occupations of share croppers, agricultural labour, small and marginal farmers, and fisherfolk. Shrimp fry collection now remains the only viable option available, and large numbers of people have been forced to turn to collection of shrimp fry, fish and crab in a way that even they find unsustainable. There is a decrease in availability of rice straw for thatching, resulting from the decrease in agriculture. This has resulted in an over

exploitation of grasses from within the Sundarbans. Further, an increase in salinity is killing vegetation, increasing the pressures on forests for fuelwood.

The Watch Group has argued that while one of the main aims of the project is the eradication of poverty of the people living in the 'impact zone', those very people have not been consulted at all. The local people, in fact, want the shrimp industry to shut down, and there has been a long people's struggle for this in this region as well.

Further the Watch Group has also put forth a set of recommendations to the ADB for an immediate review of the activities and design of the SBCP. It has asked that the rights of the poor people to the common natural resources must be recognised, and that a ban should be imposed on oil and natural gas exploration in area of Block 5 and 7 of the Sundarbans. (Also see *PA Updates* 27 & 36).

Source: 'Bangladesh: Sundarban Biodiversity Conservation Project questioned', *WRM Bulletin* 66, January 2003.

NEPAL

New fund to assist wildlife victims

A new fund, 'Relief Fund for Wildlife Victims' (RFWV) has been established to assist wildlife victims killed or injured by wild animals. It works closely with the Nepalese Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), other national and international conservation agencies and the private sector.

The goal of the fund is to provide productive assistance, but not dependence, to the people affected by wild animals and to enable them to lead a park friendly life. The work done by the RFWV includes action-oriented research and the creation of a database on human casualties by wildlife. It devises various measures, which would help provide relief and reduce and resolve the conflict between human and wild animals. The fund also undertakes public awareness campaigns, and support for various preventive and curative programmes. The fund is seeking support for its various programmes.

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Nepal govt. slashes funds for environment

The cash strapped Nepalese government has slashed this year's environment budget by 14%. It has decided to stop financing new environment programmes and divert the money instead to worker salaries and other overhead costs. The total money to be given to the Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE) is now US \$ 670087, of which a major chunk is for population control.

Already, seven years of insurgency has had a devastating impact on Nepal's environment, triggering massive deforestation and a spurt in timber smuggling, rhino poaching and exploitation of medicinal plant resources. There has been large diversion of personnel from environment protection duties to security operations and in many places thousands of rangers and other forest officers have ceased patrolling the forests due to fear of attacks by the rebels. It is feared that this year's budget cut will only compound the already serious problem.

According to forest department officials, the Maoist rebels have destroyed 271 offices of the department including district level offices, area posts and training centres apart from nine offices of national parks.

The affected areas include the Durbani forests in the eastern district of Bara, and the remote Dhorpatan hunting reserve in the west which is famed for the very valuable medicinal plant, *yarsagumba*, in addition to rare animals like the snow leopard and the musk deer. There are also some reports that the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) too has seen a spurt in rhino deaths since the declaration of emergency by the government.

Source: Sanjaya Dhakal. 'Devastated Nepal cuts funds for environment', *Yahoo News*, 14/02/03.

Visitor Centre inaugurated at Koshi Tappu

The newly built Visitor Centre at the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve was inaugurated by the Nepalese Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation, Land Reforms and Management during a function held in December 2002.

The centre which has been supported by IUCN Nepal was built at a cost of Rs. 1.5 million. It is furnished with a topographical model of the wildlife reserve and various informative materials depicting wetland ecosystems and their relationship,

along with the culture and livelihoods of indigenous people.

Koshi Tappu supports populations of a number of rare and endangered species of fauna including the last remnant population of the Asiatic Wild Water Buffalo, Gangetic Dolphin, Gharial and their habitat. The reserve lies within the alluvial flood plains of the Sapta Koshi River and was designated a Ramsar site in 1987.

Source: 'Visitor centre handed over', *IUCN Nepal Newsletter*, September 2002.

Contact: **IUCN Nepal**, PO Box 3923, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: # 977-1-528781 / 528761 / 526391. Fax: 536786. Email: info@iucn.org.np. Web: http://www.iucnnepal.org

10 new bird species found in Barandabhar region of Chitwan

Nine new species of birds have been recently found in the Barandabhar corridor located to the north of the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP). Barandabhar is the only remaining forest belt providing a link between the northern Mahabharata and southern Chure ranges. The birds spotted included four warblers, two buzzards, a minivet, a flycatcher and a Fulvetta. The sightings were made during a survey jointly conducted in the month of March by the Sauraha based Bird Education Society (BES) and Resources Himalaya, a wildlife research agency based in Kathmandu. Recently the barn owl was also recorded here for the first time.

The total number of birds recorded in Barandabhar region is now 198 and that for the entire RCNP over 500. The earlier bird survey conducted in Chitwan in 1998 had put the total number of birds species found here at 401.

Source: Bhimsen Thapaliya. 'Ten new bird species found in Chitwan', *The Rising Nepal*, 19/03/03.

Slack tourism hits conservation work around Chitwan

The continued downward trend in the number of visitors to the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) has badly affected the conservation programmes in its buffer zone. Revenue generated from tourism here during the year 2001-02 was Rs. 38 million, which is a decline of 47% as compared to the previous year.

For the first six months of the year 2002-03 the revenues generated too had declined by another 38% as compared to the same period in 2001-02.

Revenues generated from the national park contribute 30 to 50% of the total resource mobilised for running the programmes in the buffer zones as per the regulation here. The decline in resources now has affected activities like crop insurance, compensation for inundation and awareness generation.

The government had announced RCNP affected 232 wards of 35 Village Development Committees (VDCs) and two municipalities of Chitwan, Makawanpur, Parsa and Nawalparasi districts as a buffer zone in 1996 and the Buffer Zone Development Council (BZDC) has been running various programmes here since 1997.

Source: Prabhakar Ghimire. 'Slack in tourism affects buffer zone conservation', *The Kathmandu Post*, 28/02/03.

10 rhinos to be translocated from Chitwan to Bardia

10 rhinos were to be translocated from the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) to the Royal Bardia National Park (RBNP) in western Nepal in the month of March. This is part of the rhino translocation programme that was initiated in Nepal in 1986. 77 rhinos have already been moved from Chitwan as part of this programme, 73 to Bardia and four to Sukhlaphanta.

The translocation is being carried out by the Department of National Park and Wildlife (DNPWC) with technical assistance from the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) and financial assistance from WWF-Nepal.

The population of the rhinos in Bardia will reach 100 now. The total population of rhinos in Nepal now stands at 612, with 544 in RCNP alone. This compares very favourably with a number of less than a 100, just about 40 years ago.

Source: '10 more rhinos to be translocated', *The Himalayan Times*, 20/01/03.
'More rhinos to be moved to Bardia', *The Kathmandu Post*, 18/02/03

Floods in Chitwan affect grasslands and birds

Floods and swelling of rivers and streams inside the Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP) in July 2002 badly affected the grasslands and in turn the bird

fauna here. Flooding of the Rapti and Budhirapti rivers and streams like the Dhungre stream resulted in about 500 hectares of grasslands and 50 hectares of forests being water logged and also covered in sand, preventing birds from breeding here.

Animals like the rhino, deer and the elephant were also reported to have been adversely affected by the depletion of the grasslands in the park. This also resulted in increased conflict as the animals started raiding fields on the outskirts of the park in search of food.

Source: 'Depleting of grassland in Chitwan park endangers birds', *The Kathmandu Post*, 23/10/02.

Hydro-electric project inside Langtang NP opposed

The Nepalese Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation has objected to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report of the Kantipur Hydropower Company (KHC) for the 10 MW Langtang Khola Hydroelectric project which is proposed in the heart of the Langtang National Park. The KHC has reportedly already completed the Detailed Project Report, has spent Rs. 20,000,000 and has also got financing partners by hiring Chinese technicians for the project. They have also signed a power purchase agreement with the Nepal Electricity Authority.

The authorities have said that such a project cannot be allowed in a national park as it is violative of the National Park Act 2029 and the Himali National Park Regulation 2036. The KHC meanwhile says that it has prepared the EIA report in accordance with the Environment Protection Regulation 2054 with its first amendment 2055 under the provisions given in the Environment Protection Act 2053.

Source: 'Project opposed to save biodiversity', *The Himalayan Times*, 12/11/02

INTERNATIONAL

New multilateral agreement for marine turtle conservation in the Indian Ocean and South East Asian Region

The first meeting of the signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats

OPPORTUNITIES

of the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia was held in Bangkok in the last week of January, 2003. The meeting was attended by representatives and observers from 20 countries from around the region. The agreement has been signed under the auspices of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), an international treaty linked to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It puts in place a conservation and management plan that focuses on reducing threats, conserving critical habitat, exchanging scientific data, increasing public awareness and participation, promoting regional cooperation and seeking resources for implementation. It has been designed to reverse the decline in populations of the loggerhead, olive ridley, green, hawksbill, leatherback and flatback turtles.

The management plan that has been put in place contains 24 programmes and 105 specific activities. UNEP provided an initial start-up grant for the secretariat of the new agreement, which will be based in Bangkok, alongside its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and East Asian Seas Regional Coordinating Unit. Major financial support has come from the United States, Australia, France, and United Kingdom along with its parent Convention on Migratory Species. Douglas Hykle, the current Deputy Executive Secretary of the CMS, was appointed to the post of Coordinator/Senior CMS Advisor. He has facilitated the negotiation of the memorandum over the past three years.

The signatories to the agreement include, Australia, Cambodia, Comores, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Myanmar, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Vietnam, United Kingdom and the United States of America. The other Range States for the Memorandum whose turtle populations face similar threats -- are Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Egypt, Eritrea, France, India, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mozambique, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

India, Indonesia, Maldives and Thailand informed the meeting that their Governments had initiated processes to sign the memorandum in the near future.

Contact: **Tim Higham**, Email: higham@un.org;

Douglas Hykle, Email:
dhykle@cms.unep.de

Website : www.unep.org/GoverningBodies/GC22/

Vacancies for veterinarians at the WTI

The Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) has invited applications for four positions for Veterinarians. The positions are initially based in North-east India, although transferable throughout India.

The candidates should have proven wild animal handling and treatment skills to provide and oversee comprehensive clinical veterinary services to rescued wild animals, which include mammals, birds and reptiles and liaise with WTI's regional rehab center near Kaziranga NP. The ideal candidate will have a BVSc / BVSc & AH with at least one year's experience in a zoo or a protected area. Masters specialization in veterinary medicine or surgery or wildlife sciences will be desirable. Ability to drive an ambulance/jeep is essential. Fluency in speaking and writing northeastern languages like Assamese, Khasi, and Garo will be an asset.

Contact: **Director (Administration), WTI, P. O.**
Box - 3150, New Delhi -110003. Email:
info@wti.org.in

Assistant conservation officer for the BNHS

The Bombay Natural History Society has advertised for the post of an Assistant Conservation Officer. The main job will be to assist the Conservation Officer of the society in various conservation activities, undertake independent field surveys as assigned by the Conservation Officer/Director, interaction with government offices and NGO networking, organizing seminars/workshops/ training programmes related to conservation, and deliver lectures/presentations on conservation issues.

Qualifications: Basic post graduate degree in Life Science/Zoology/Botany (graduate with exceptional skill will be preferred). Experience: 3 years of field experience in nature conservation, familiarity with various acts and legislation related to conservation, good writing and communication skills; knowledge of computers and programmes like PowerPoint, excel, page maker. Valid driving license for four-wheeler would be considered additional qualification. Age: around 30 years.

Contact: **Director**, BNHS Hornbill House, S B Singh Road, Mumbai-400023. Tel: 022 - 22821811.

ATREE-Eastern Himalaya Programme needs natural resource scientists

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)-Eastern Himalaya Programme seeks two natural resource scientists to coordinate the community based biodiversity conservation and micro-enterprise development programs. The position is based at Bagdogra. The applicants should either have a M.Sc. or Ph.D. along with experience and publications in ecology, forestry or related disciplines. Preference will be given to candidates from Eastern Himalayas/North East India. One position is for a person having experience in GIS and ability to work at multiple spatial scales.

Contact: **Regional Director**, ATREE-Eastern Himalaya Programme, Bungalow No.2, Bhujiapani, PO: Bagdogra - 734422, West Bengal. E-mail: atree@sancharnet.in

Job Opportunity with the Environmental Justice Initiative

The Delhi-based Environmental Justice Initiative (EJI) needs a person for tasks that involve networking with various groups and government agencies working on the environment, research in various environmental issues, and coordinating the Environmental Impact Assessment programme of the EJI. The candidate should be willing to travel and should have good writing and communication skills

Contact: **EJI**, 65, Masjid Road, Jungpura, New Delhi - 110014. Email: ejl@vsnl.net

UPCOMING

Course in Tropical Conservation Biology for senior undergraduate and post graduate students

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has announced a 15 day field based course on conservation biology for students with a first class in BSc. The course will be conducted in the 2nd week of June and will emphasise sound scientific principles underlying the practice of conservation. It will provide students with an opportunity to learn the basics of conservation

science from some leading conservation biologists from India and abroad and will provide rigorous training in tropical conservation biology.

The course comprises a set of 16-18 lectures that will be complemented by 7-8 days of fieldwork at ATREE's field station in Biligiri Rangan Hills and other sites in the Western Ghats. Topics to be discussed include: distribution and status of biodiversity, conservation of biodiversity at species and community levels, threats to biodiversity, approaches to conserve biodiversity, the role of protected areas in conserving biodiversity, conservation planning, and policies and institutions to conserve biodiversity. This is the 5th such course by ATREE. The course fees and all expenses of selected candidates will be borne by the organizers.

Contact: **Dr. T. Ganesh**, (ATREE) No. 659, 5th A Main, Hebbal, Bangalore 560 024, India. Telephone: 080-23533942 Fax: 23530070 Email: tganesh@atree.org

Symposium on Asian Raptors

The Asian Raptor Research and Conservation Network (ARRCN) is organising its 3rd Symposium on Asian Raptors in the Kenting National Park, Taiwan, from October 10 to 13, 2003. The symposium is being hosted by the Raptor Research Group of Taiwan (RRGT). An added attraction of the symposium is the fact that 1000s of raptors migrate through this area every year in October.

Contact: **RRGT**, Taiwan, 12 F., No.309, Fu-Hsin N. Road, Taipei 105, Taiwan, R.O.C. Tel: 886-2-87706470. Fax: 886-2-87706469. Email: rrgt@seed.net.tw;

PA UPDATE MATTERS

PA Update now available on CD

All issues of the Protected Area Update, are now available on CD, priced at Rs. 150 (Please add Rs. 50 for postage and outstation cheque charges. Hard copy versions from Issue No 20 onwards are also available in a hardbound format for Rs. 150. For receiving the Protected Area Update in its electronic form write to **Pankaj Sekhsaria**. Email: kvriksh@vsnl.com

New Publication from Kalpavriksh

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By

Neeraj Vaghlikar, Kaustubh Moghe and Ritwick Dutta

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Contact: **Swati** at the editorial address

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The PA Update can be accessed on the following websites as well

www.indianjungles.com & www.sanctuaryasia.com

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