

PROTECTED AREA Update

(Formerly JPAM UPDATE: News on Action towards Joint Protected Area Management)

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EDITORIAL

There's good news and bad. After much campaigning by local and national NGOs, the Chikhaldara Pumped Storage Project, which would have drowned forests and valleys adjacent to the Melghat Tiger Reserve (See NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES, Maharashtra), has been recommended for rejection by the environmental appraisal committee for river valley's of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The Ministry can still over-rule it, but will find it difficult to go against its expert advice.

There is other good news, from Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh in India, and from Sundarbans in Bangladesh. But there are also the usual dark linings: denotifications proposed in Haryana and Karnataka; 'developmental' threats in most states in India and in the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Sri Lanka; and continued confusion and conflicts created by the Supreme Court order on settlement of rights.

This last issue has featured regularly in the *Update*, till we are beginning to sound like a stuck record. However, this time around, at least we can highlight what seems a most sensible decision taken by the Karnataka state government. From available reports, it appears to have decided to transfer the inhabited areas of Anshi National Park to the adjacent Dandeli Sanctuary, and to add uninhabited areas from Dandeli to Anshi (See NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES, Karnataka). The reason: to avoid having to shift out the few villages that inhabit Anshi, and thereby also avoid unnecessary conflict. The move could well be based on the bold stand taken by the DFO of Anshi/Dandeli, that these villages were his major allies against poaching and illegal felling, and should on no account be displaced. This only reinforces our stand that as far as possible, provisions of the Wild Life Act that allow people's survival rights to continue, should be utilised in the process of settlement, and a situation of conflict turned into one of cooperation and joint management. One wishes many more forest officers would take such pro-active positions.

Perhaps such a stance would have helped avoid the unnecessary and unfortunate controversy that has come up with regard to Goa's new

sanctuaries (See NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES, Goa; see also *Update* 21). Not having taken local villagers into confidence, not having assured them that eviction was not on the cards, wildlifers have opened themselves to allegations of wanting to take away the rights and perhaps even displace these villagers. It is, of course, an open secret that most of those behind the opposition to these sanctuaries are politicians and mine-owners whose commercial interests are at stake. But nevertheless, once again a top-down conservation strategy is back-firing. One only hopes that Goa's wildlife officials can move quickly to dispel false notions, and can bring in a genuinely participatory form of sanctuary management into these areas. We can all do without new conflicts erupting.

We would like to dedicate this issue to the memory of S. Deb Roy, an extraordinary conservationist who lived and breathed wildlife till the end. We may have had our differences with him on strategies of achieving conservation, but we were also inspired by his single-minded devotion, and affected by his pain at the mindless ecological destruction around us. May he find the same peace now that he must have at one time, while living amidst the wondrous natural environs of Manas and other reserves.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

Eviction drive stopped in Kaziranga NP

A massive eviction drive in Kaziranga National Park in the Sonitpur district in July had to be stopped midway, after resistance by local people who were allegedly being supported by politicians trying to gain mileage for the present elections. The eviction drive was being conducted by the police and district authorities of Sonitpur along with officials of Kaziranga NP in response to the Guwahati High Court order dated 29/06/99 and the Supreme Court interim orders dated 22/08/97 and 17/07/99. MLAs in the state had also appealed to the Chief Minister of the state to stop the eviction drive.

Source: Bibhab Talukdar. 'The Current Status of Eviction in the Kaziranga NP: A report' received by email in August 1999.

Contact: **Bibhab Talukdar**, Aranyak Nature Club, Samanwoy Path (Survey) PO Beltola, Guwahati-781028, Assam. Tel / Fax: 0361-566087. Email: bibhab@gw1.dot.net.in

GOA

New PAs opposed

The recently notified sanctuaries in Goa (See *Update 21*) have come in for strong opposition from various quarters in the state, particularly many political parties. The Bhartiya Janata Party had made the issue a part of their election manifesto and promised to denotify selective areas. The former Chief Minister of Goa, Pratap Singh Rane, who reportedly has large properties in the now notified areas, too has opposed the sanctuaries saying that they would have disastrous effects on the people living there.

Environmental groups across the country have however opposed these demands to denotify these areas. They have also written letters of support to the state administration for their decision to declare the new sanctuaries. Groups like Kalpavriksh have urged, that a participatory model should be adapted for the management of these PAs, as otherwise it would lead to conflicts.

Source: Sanjay Banerjee. 'Goa's protected wilds evoke growls', *The Times of India*, 23/09/99.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden - Goa**, Junta House, 3rd Floor, Panaji-403001, Goa. Tel / Fax: 0832-224747.

Durgesh Kasbekar / Vishweshwar Madhav, 1, Matruchaya, off Gulmohar Cross Road No.6, JVPD Scheme, Mumbai – 400049, Maharashtra, Tel: 022-6250262. Email: vishum@bom3.vsnl.net.in

GUJARAT

Poaching at the Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary

Taking a serious view of the poaching of birds in the Nal Sarovar, the Gujarat Forest Department decided to take action against three local staff members and also transferred the administrative control of the sanctuary from the Gandhinagar circle to the Ahmedabad circle.

The FD has also decided to augment the protection measures in the sanctuary. It is proposed to increase the present strength of the local forest staff at the sanctuary, create a fool – proof wireless communication system, and introduce new mobile vans and patrol boats

Source: Bashir Pathan. 'Three face action in bird poaching case', *Indian Express*, 10/06/99.

SC panel on Narayan Sarovar WLS

The Supreme Court (SC) has ordered the appointment of a 10 member independent expert committee to look into the importance of the Narayan Sarovar Sanctuary, in the context of its earlier denotification allowing Sanghi Cement to quarry limestone. It is estimated that 1200 to 1500 chinkaras are found in this sanctuary, apart from other rare and endangered wildlife.

The state assembly had reduced the sanctuary to 444.23 sq. kms. from its original 765.79 sq. kms in 1995. The present case was filed in 1996 in the SC. The sanctuary area has always been eyed by industry since it accounts for roughly 10% of the total limestone deposits of the state, and many industrial houses have shown interest in setting up their plants here to take the benefit of the soft limestone found here.

The committee was chaired by PK Sen, Director, Project Tiger, and has recently submitted its report to the court, a copy of which was not available at the time of going to press. (See *Updates 9,10,11*)

Source: Shyam Parekh. 'SC panel to study chinkara sanctuary's importance', *The Times of India*, 22/05/99.

Sarbani Sarkar, Centre for Law and Environment, 15B Gangaram Hospital Rd., New Delhi-110060. Ph: 011-5744002
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Marine National Park Denotification?

The Marine National Park located in the Gulf of Kutch, already affected by oil spills and haphazard industrial development (including the Oil India and Reliance refineries; See *Update 21*), is now facing the threat of denotification. It seems that the Prime Minister's office is putting pressure on the state government to denotify those parts of the Park through which the proposed Bharat-Oman pipeline is to be laid. The pipeline will take oil coming from Oman, off-loaded at the terminal near Jamnagar, to Bina in M.P. and Allahabad in U.P. The state Forest Department is believed to be opposed to this move.

In letters to the Prime Minister, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Kalpavriksh, and other NGOs have expressed concern, noting that the pipeline would violate the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) regulations and the Forest Conservation Act, (FCA) 1980. BNHS has appealed for support from other NGOs in the matter.

Sources: Shyam Parekh. 'Oil spills threaten to choke marine park', *The Times of India*, 27/07/99. 'Centre favours partial denotification', *The Times of India*, 31/08/99.
JC Daniel, Letter dated to 22/09/99 to the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Contact: **S. Asad Akhtar**, BNHS, Hornbill House, Mumbai – 400023, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2821811. Fax: 2837615. Email: bnhs@bom4.vsnl.net.in
Harshad Kumari, INTACH-Gujarat, Pratap Vilas Palace, Palace Road, Jamnagar-361008, Gujarat. Tel: 0288-558746.

Water shortage affects Gir NP

Gir National Park is facing a serious water shortage. All the seven rivers flowing through it have started drying up, and there is no water in the four major dams and 200 check dams across the 1,412 sq. kms area of the park.

There are reports that wild animals including lions and spotted deer are already moving out of the park in search of water. Chances are, the lions that migrate to the periphery of the park might get poisoned by scared villagers. Water shortage has already led to the death of one lion cub near Devalia and officials have said that more cubs have died elsewhere. The Forest Department is planning to dig some 600 artificial water holes to deal with the situation, under a master plan which commenced on October 1.

The FD is also worried about the spread of diseases from domestic cattle to the wild animals. In a similar drought condition in 1989, a large number of wild animals died due to foot and mouth disease spread from domestic cattle left behind by their owners. As a precautionary measure, the forest authorities have already started vaccinating the cattle in the human settlements that border the park.

In another development the Gujarat Govt. is believed to have put its foot down on any move to shift to Madhya Pradesh some of the lions as part of the lion relocation project that is being planned in the Kuno Palpur Sanctuary. The state is also believed to be looking at Barda forest near Porbandar as another lion relocation site within the state. (For more information on various issues of Gir see *Updates* 5,6,10,11,14,16,17 19, and 20).

Source: Manas Dasgupta. 'Gir animals threatened by water crisis', *The Hindu*, 21/09/99.
Manas Dasgupta. 'Gujarat Govt. against move to shift Asiatic Lions', *The Hindu*, 22/09/99.
Janyala Sreenivas. 'Saurashtra's summer sends thirsty lions out of Gir', *Indian Express*, 23/09/99.

Contact: **Mahesh Singh**, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Division, Sasan, Junagadh-363125, Gujarat.

HS Singh, Gujarat Ecological Education and Research Foundation (GEER), G1, 194 / 3, Sector 30, Gandhinagar-382030, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-21385 / 20560.

For more information on the lion relocation project contact **Ravi Chellam**, Wildlife Institute of India, PO Box 18 Chandrabani, Dehradun-248001, UP.

Conflict over water in Thol Sanctuary

A severe drought situation in the Mehsana district has created a conflict over release of water from the Thol reservoir which was declared a bird sanctuary in 1998. Thousands of farmers marched to the Thol reservoir demanding that water be released to save the parched crops.

There had been an understanding between the irrigation and forest departments that water would not be withdrawn from the reservoir below a level of four feet. Presently the water level was below one-and-a-half feet. However considering the pressure from the large number of farmers the water had to be released.

Thol plays host to thousands of waterfowl, but this year, the number is expected to be much less.

Source: **Prerna Bindra**. 'Thol sanctuary water released for farming' *The Times of India*, 05/10/99.

Contact: **HS Singh**, GEER (See above)

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

HARYANA

Chhilchhila Lake Sanctuary to be deleted?

The Chhilchhila Lake Bird Sanctuary in the Kurukshetra district of Haryana is faced with a typical problem, the solution of which could mean the sanctuary may be denotified.

The area of the lake belongs to the village panchayat which had leased it to the State Forest Department for a thirty year period. The lease is coming to an end and the villagers do not mind if the lake remains a sanctuary if they can be provided cash compensation for the land. However, according to the authorities the department does not have enough cash for this and the only option left may be to completely delete the sanctuary.

Source: Letter dated 24/09/99 to *PA Update* from Suresh Sharma and Vincent Van Ross.
Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden - Haryana**, C-18, Forest Complex, Sec- 6, Panchkula, Haryana 134109. Tel: 0172-561224 / 561213.
Suresh Sharma and Vincent Van Ross, Sonipat Garden Society, Gokul Nagar, Rohtak Road, Sonipat- 131001, Haryana.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Plan for the Hemis NP

The J&K government has formulated a Rs. 1.36 crores project for the Hemis National Park, which is situated 40 kms. south-east of Leh in one of the coldest regions in the country. The park is home to a number of rare mammalian species including the blue sheep, known locally as the bharal.

Source: 'Funds for J&K park', *Down to Earth*, 30/09/99
Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden - J&K**, T.R.C., Srinagar 190001, Jammu and Kashmir. Tel: 0191-544575 / 0194-452469.

KARNATAKA

Controversies in Nagarhole National Park

Controversies continue to dog Nagarhole NP. On 20/09/99, Roy David of the Coorg Organisation of Rural Development (CORD) and S Sreekant of DEED were arrested by the police on charges of assault against some Forest Department officials. The incident occurred when the two were in Nagarhole to extend solidarity and support to the ongoing dharna of the tribals at Nagarhole against plans to evacuate them from the park. According to the FD they had assaulted the forest staff when the latter were trying to take pictures of the tribals staging the protest. David and Sreekant have said the cases filed against them are false and they have demanded a judicial enquiry into the incident. They are also demanding unconditional bail and suspension of the forest officials and the Sub-Inspector of the police station, who they alleged had registered the false case.

A communication received from the Living Inspiration for Tribals (LIFT), another local NGO that claims to be helping tribals who want to relocate from the Nagarhole NP, has criticised the role of CORD and DEED in trying to prevent the development of the tribals. Some organisations of the adivasis themselves, such as the Nagarhole Budakattu Janara Hakkustapana Samithi, have protested against the arrests.

Source: Emails dated 20/09/99 and 22/09/99 from CORD.
'NGO leaders continue fast in jail, say its a false case', *The Times of India*, 24/09/99
Email dated 26/09/99 from LIFT
Contact: **CORD**, 119 / 1, 4th Block, Kushalnagar-571234, Karnataka. Tel: 08276-74487 / 73287. Fax: 74091. Email: david@giasbl01.vsnl.net.in
LIFT, Kabbinagade Girijana Colony, Rangasamudra Village & PO via Kushalnagar-571234, Karnataka. Email: lift_nhole@hotmail.com

Forest fires in Nagarhole National Park

Pictures taken by the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite (IRS) have shown that the fire that broke out in Nagarhole in the period March- April earlier this year has affected over 90 sq. kms. of the of the park. The forest department had claimed that the area affected was only in the range of 1000 acres. It will also be recalled that the state forest minister had asserted that the damage was not extensive and that it was the handiwork of some of the NGOs working in the area. (See *Update* 21).

The satellite picture shows that at least 10.84 sq. kms. of the forest show signs of severe damage, another 53.03 sq. kms. have suffered moderate destruction and in the remaining 26.18 sq. kms. the damage is comparatively minor.

Source: Vinay Madhav. 'Forest fires: Satellite picture nails Govt lie', *Indian Express*, 05/08/99.

Taj resort inside Nagarhole National Park

The land at Murkal inside the Nagarhole NP, which had been leased to the Gateway Hotels and Resorts Ltd., has still not been taken over by the forest department in spite of court orders as well as the directions given by the Principal Forest Secretary of state and the Chief Conservator of Forests (Central) in 1998.

On the contrary, in May 1999, the State Forest Minister had written to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests suggesting that the government should consider again the proposal for the setting up holiday resorts. The Hubli based Jan Vikas Andolan (JVA) has written to the Union Minister criticising the state Forest Minister's stand in favour of the Taj group. They have urged the Union Minister to direct the Karnataka government to take over the said land inside the park, reject the misleading letter of the state Forest Minister, and initiate immediate prosecution of involved officials.

Source: 'Minister's letter over holiday resorts to Centre raise hackles', *The Times of India*, 16/09/99.
'Prosecute officials in Nagarhole scam: Greens', *Indian Express*, 16/09/99.
Letter written to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests, Suresh Prabhu by the JVA dated 12/09/99.

Contact: **SR Hiremath**, Samaj Parivartana Samudaya, Ashadeep, Jayanagar Cross, Saptapur, Dharwad-580001, Karnataka.

Proposal for new sanctuary and interstate biosphere reserve

The Karnataka State Forest Department has proposed the creation of a new wildlife sanctuary (Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary) and a biosphere reserve encompassing forests in Belgaum, Uttara Kannada, Goa and parts of Maharashtra. There is also a proposal to convert the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary into a national park. The proposal for the biosphere reserve has been sent to the Indian Man and Biosphere (MAB) committee for approval. Several national and international NGOs had been lobbying for the creation of the Bhimgad Sanctuary. This includes the Nature Lover's Club, Belgaum, the Bombay Natural History Society, WWF- India, Flora and Fauna International, UK, and Bat Conservation International Inc., Texas.

Other groups, including the National Committee for Protection of Common Land Resources (NCPCLR), Dharwad, Centre for Tribal Conscientization, Kalpavriksh and Econet (all Pune) had recently appealed to the Ministry of Environment and Forests to declare areas of the western ghats bordering the states of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra as an eco-sensitive zone under the Environment Protection Act (EPA) and also as a biosphere reserve.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Biosphere Reserve to ensure wildlife protection ensured', *The Hindu*, 20/09/99.

Letter from NCPCLR dated 19/08/99.

Contact: **Durgesh Kasbekar / Vishweshwar Madhav**, (see above Goa, New PAs opposed)
Nature Lover's Club, C/o GS Science College, Tilakwadi, Belgaum-590006, Karnataka. Tel: 0831-480353 / 21193. Fax: 022-6253969. Email: natureclub@hotmail.com
SR Hiremath, (See above)

Boundary rationalisation at Anshi NP and Dandeli WLS

The Karnataka Forest Department has proposed to rationalise the boundaries of the Anshi National Park and the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary in an effort to minimise the conflict with the local inhabitants residing inside the national park. The process would entail transfer of inhabited areas coming under Anshi National Park to Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, and transfer of some uninhabited areas of Dandeli to the Anshi NP. This would now entail a displacement of only four hamlets comprising 17 families or khatedars (owners of patta land), and acquisition of 48 acres of land.

The boundary rationalisation will affect 250 sq. kms of the total forest area but the net forest area of Dandeli (475 sq. kms.) and Anshi (250 sq. kms.) will remain unchanged.

This proposal of the FD is to be now put up before the Boundary Rationalisation Committee. It is not clear if it will have then to be ratified by the state assembly and the Indian Board for Wildlife, since these steps are necessary only for areas already fully notified under the Wild Life Act.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Boundary rationalisation at Anshi, Dandeli national parks mooted.', *The Hindu*, 02/10/99.

Foot and mouth disease in Bandipur NP

Carcasses of deer and sambhar recovered in the Gundre forest range of the Bandipur National Park indicate that the park is affected by the deadly foot and mouth disease which is transmitted to wild animals by domestic cattle. The Conservator of Forests has said that steps had been taken to check the spread of the disease by innoculating the cattle. Aggravation of the disease in Bandipur has also caused concern among the Tamil Nadu forest officials since wildlife from Bandipur crosses over into the adjacent Mudumalai National Park.

Source: 'Foot and mouth disease reported in Bandipur National Park', *Indian Express*, 24/09/99

Poll boycott in Kudremukh National Park

Nearly 20,000 people in the Kudremukh National Park in the Chikmagalur district decided to boycott the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections protesting against the threat of their being evicted from the park. This was a joint decision of six organisations, the Karnataka Vimochana Ranga, the Adivasi Girijana Hitarakshana Samithi, the Nellibeedu Samrakshana Samithi, the Belthangadi Refugees association, the Karnataka Rajya Raith Sangh and the Girijana Mahila Sangh. The main demands included that the inhabitants would not be evicted from the park and

that permission for mining to the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited be withdrawn.

The boycott call had some success in the Sringeri taluk, but in other areas the response was not very good. According to the Environment Support Group, based on information from Shamanna Benekal, a leading dalit activist working in Chickmagalur district, the initiative of raising the issue was not with the genuine interest of the tribals. Most of the leaders involved were individuals with large land holdings which have now been threatened because of the declaration of the park. The tribals have only small land holdings and will be more affected by the socio-economic repercussions of displacement rather than by the loss of land.

It has also been reported that one farmer with 30 acres of land committed suicide last year on receiving notice for acquisition of land as part of the national park declaration exercise.

Source: 'Poll: 20,000 in Kudremukh plan boycott', *The Hindu*, 04/09/99.

Contact: **Environment Support Group (ESG)**, Reservoir road, Basavanagudi, Bangalore 560004. Telefax: 080-6657995. Email: admin@leo.ilban.ernet.in; esg@bgl.vsnl.net.in; Website: http://www.cfar.umd.edu/~venu.

Mining in Kudremukh National Park

The Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited (KIOCL) has applied to the state to exclude areas leased to it by the government, from the Kudremukh National Park. It may be recalled that a temporary extension had been given to KIOCL to continue mining for a year or until final notification of the national park, whichever is earlier (See *Update* 21).

The Forest Department is opposed to the exclusion of the mine from the park. NGOs are also considering legal intervention in the matter.

Source: Naazreen P Bhura. 'Don't include mining land in national park: KIOCL', *The Asian Age*, 02/10/99.

Contact: **Environment Support Group** (See above)

(General contact for Karnataka)
Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, Aranya Bhavan, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore-560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993, Fax: 3346389.

KERALA

Multi-crore scam in construction work inside PAs

The Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau has recommended the prosecution of the present Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. PK Surendranathan Achary and seven other top Forest Department Officials in the multi-crore scam relating to the construction of 115 buildings in various sanctuaries including Peppara and Neyyar.

The scam involved the alleged diversion of Rs. 15 crores from the World Bank funds meant for a social forestry project.

Source: N Narendran. 'Kerala sits on ACB report on forest scam; officials roam free', *Indian Express*, 05/05/99.

MADHYA PRADESH

Plan to declare largest tiger habitat in the country

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests is planning to declare the largest tiger habitat in the country covering more than 5000 sq. kms in central India. It has been suggested by the Ministry to declare the Satpura NP, and Bori and Panchmari Sanctuaries, in Madhya Pradesh, as a tiger reserve (TR), thereby providing an important link between Melghat TR in Maharashtra and the Kanha TR in MP. The other PAs to be included are the Achanakmar and Phen Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Bandhavgarh National Park.

Source: 'MP Govt. plans forest corridor for tiger protection', *The Hindu*, 31/05/99
Satyen Mohapatra. 'Forestry Ministry planning to create largest tiger habitat', *The Hindustan Times*, 11/08/99.

Contact: **P.K. Sen**, Director, Project Tiger. MoEF, Annexure No. 5, Bikaner House, Shah Jahan Road, New Delhi-110001. Tel: 011-3389645. Email: dirpt@envfor.delhi.nic.in

Bustard numbers increase in Ghatigaon

After many years a large number of Great Indian bustards were sighted in the Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary in Ghatigaon near Gwalior.

In June, earlier this year, at least eight of these highly threatened birds were seen. This 512 sq. kms sanctuary has been in the news in the recent past for the strong opposition it has faced from the local villagers, who have complained that they are forced to face hardships because of the PA. (See *Update* 20, Whats Available, *Sonchiriya ka atank*)

Source: 'Save-bustard efforts pay off, eight sighted', *Madhya Pradesh Chronicle*, 18/06/99.

Contact: **Dr. Asad Rahmani**, Director, BNHS (See above, Gujarat, Threats to Marine National Park).

Part of Madhav NP deleted

2062.05 hectares (20.6 sq. kms.) of land falling on the western bank of the Sindh river, have been deleted from the Madhav National Park to make way for the Mohini Sagar Irrigation Project. The order was passed on March 18 earlier this year by the Sub-Divisional Officer, Revenue, in Shivpuri district. The Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and the Director of the Madhav NP have reportedly stated that the exclusion of this forest area would not adversely affect wildlife.

Source: 'Row over legal status of forest land', *The Hindu*, 21/04/99

(General contact for Madhya Pradesh)
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Van Bhawan, Tulsi Nagar
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MAHARASHTRA

Meet on tribal issues

The Maharashtra Tribal Forum, a platform for voluntary groups working in adivasi areas of Maharashtra, organised a symposium on tribal issues in Maharashtra, at Chikhaldara, bordering Melghat Tiger Reserve, on August 29-30, 1999. Participants included representatives of various NGOs, social activists, researchers, journalists and government officials. Among the issues discussed were – malnutrition and related child mortality, tribal self rule with respect to the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996, issues related to protected areas, nistar rights and joint forest management, Land Acquisition Act and the rehabilitation policy.

The discussion on protected areas primarily focussed on the issues of people in Melghat Tiger Reserve—the settlement of rights process, displacement etc. Besides the social and wildlife groups working in the region, also participating in this discussion were Mr. Patki, Field Director, and Mr. Wankhede, Deputy Field Director, of the Tiger Reserve. There was some disagreement on whether people in most of the 22 villages inside the sanctuary wish to move out or not. To better understand this situation, all participants have agreed to meet with the residents of one or more village on October 30, 1999.

Contact: **Neeraj Vaghlikar**, at the editorial address
Maharashtra Tribal Forum, c/o KHOJ,
Shivkrupa, Near Govind Lodge, Gujri
Bazar, Paratwada-444805, District
Amravati, Maharashtra.

High Court orders related to Borivili NP

The Bombay High Court ordered the setting up of three committees to monitor the rehabilitation of those who have encroached the Sanjay Gandhi National Park at Borivili. The first committee will monitor and ensure the relocation of the slum dwellers who are eligible for relocation, the second committee will function as a grievance redressal committee, and the third would monitor and submit a report every two months about the progress of the implementation of its order. The order was passed following a public interest litigation which was filed by the Bombay Environment Action Group (BEAG) in 1995, challenging the large scale encroachments in the park (See *Update* 15). In addition, the state government has finally identified the land for rehabilitation and started infrastructural development.

In another case related to the park, the Court has asked the state government for details of the proposed Nisarg Vihar Kendra within the park at Mulund. The court said that though the project was laudable, no construction activity can take place till the plans are detailed and approved. The order was in response to a petition filed in the Bombay High Court by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) against the construction of the Nisarg Vihar, which is proposed to be built over 50 acres on the Mulund side of the park (See *Updates* 20 & 21).

Source: "Court prods govt. on Borivli park settlers", *The Times of India*, 10/07/99.
'HC orders panels to monitor resettlement of park encroachers', *The Times of India*, 17/07/99.
'HC asks state for exact plans of nature centre in National Park', *The Times of India*, 23/08/99.

Contact: Divisional Forest Officer, Sanjay Gandhi Rashtriya Udyan, Borivli (E), Mumbai-400066, Maharashtra.
Bombay Environmental Action Group, 4 Kurla Industrial Estate, LBS Marg, Mumbai-400086, Maharashtra. Email: debi.beag@softhome.net
WWF – I, Maharashtra State Office, 204, National Insurance Building, 2nd Floor, Dadabhoy Naoroji Road, Fort, Mumbai – 400001, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2048105

Chikhaldara Project recommended for rejection

The Chikhaldara Pumped Storage Project which envisaged the construction of two dams just outside the Melghat Tiger Reserve has been recommended for rejection. The decision was taken on August 27 by the River Valley Project Appraisal Committee of the Ministry of Environment and Forests. The project would have destroyed prime forest areas and vital habitats for many endangered species including the tiger.

Source: Email dated 28/08/99 from Bittu Sahgal
Contact: **Bittu Sahgal**, Sanctuary Magazine, 602
Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point,
Mumbai – 400021, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-
2830061 / 81, Fax: 2874380. Email:
bittu@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in

Tourism development in PAs in Vidarbha

A master plan is being prepared to develop basic facilities at 14 tourist destinations in the Vidarbha region. Protected areas on this list include Navegaon NP, Tadoba NP, and the Nagzira WLS. It has been suggested that once the facilities have been developed, they would be handed over private parties for operation. Grants have been sanctioned by the Central government for this purpose.

One wonders whether Vidarbha's PAs can actually take this new pressure?

Source: '14 Vidarbha tourist spots identified for revamp', *Indian Express*, 02/07/99.

Pench Tiger Reserve

About 257.26 sq. kms of forests in Maharashtra on the Maharashtra Madhya Pradesh border were brought under Project Tiger on June 29 this year, creating the first inter-state tiger reserve. Already 758 sq. kms. of the Madhya Pradesh area of the forest had been declared a tiger reserve in 1992-93, with the creation of the Pench Tiger Reserve.

Source and Contact: **Shree Bhagwan**, Conservator of Forests (WL), Near Govt. Press, Zero Miles, Civil Lines, Nagpur, Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-528953 / 539226. Fax: 552518. Email: cf@wildlife-vidarbha.org

(General contact for Maharashtra)
Chief Wildlife Warden - Maharashtra,
Jaika Building, Civil Lines, Nagpur-440001,
Maharashtra. Tel: 0712-526758 / 530126

ORISSA

Solidarity march in Chilka

Representatives of the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) along with other friends and supporters held a march from August 11 to 15 through the villages of Chilka to express their solidarity in the fight against the illegal prawn mafia. The march culminated on 15th August in the village of Sorona, where four persons from the fishing community were shot dead and 22 were injured in police firings on May 29. (See *Update* 21). A huge public meeting was held.

In related developments, the promise made by the state Chief Minister to the public and before the Assembly House Committee, that all prawn farms would be banned, has still not been fulfilled. Encouraged by this, the mafia has continued its reign of terror, by snatching boats, beating and even kidnapping fisherfolk.

The NFF has also declared the World Fisheries day (21st November) as Save Chilka Day.

Source: World Forum of Fish – harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF) on Email dated 21/08/99 and letter dated 15/09/99.

Contact: **Thomas Kocherry**, WFF, Velankanny Junction, Valiathura, Thiruvananthapuram – 695008, Kerala. Tel / Fax: 0471-501376. Email: nff@md2.vsnl.net.in
Chief Wildlife Warden - Orissa, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar 751007. Tel: 0674-513134 / 515840. Fax: 512502.
Banka Behary Das, Orissa Krushak Mahasangh, 14, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751009, Orissa.

RAJASTHAN

Threat to Sambhar Lake

A status report on the Sambhar lake prepared by Harkirat Singh Sangha of the World Wide Fund for Nature – India (WWF-I), Rajasthan has warned that the lake is under severe threat from commercial activities like salt making and the construction of various checkdams on the rivers, particularly Mendha and Rupengarh that drain into the lake. The salt making units here are also digging up the clay from the main lake to spread over their salt pans. As a result the lake which was absolutely flat till 1992, has hundreds of clay pits now.

The report notes that the disturbance of the watershed, along with overgrazing and removal of the forest cover, pose a serious threat to the lake.

Sangha points out that in February this year the lake had completely dried up while even in the late 1970's it would remain wet throughout the summer.

He also warned against schemes that are being suggested for the construction of a dam on the main lake bed to retain the water for a longer period in order to prolong the stay of the flamingoes.

The study recommends that the proposed and ongoing schemes on the rivers Mendha and Rupengarh should be reviewed and the removal of clay from the lake bed must be stopped. (See *Update* 21)

Source: 'Threat to eco-system of Sambhar Lake', *The Hindu*, 03/05/99.

Contact: **Harkirat Singh Sangha**, C/o WWF-I, Rajasthan State Office, Anokhi Premises, Tilak Marg (C-Scheme), Jaipur-302005, Rajasthan. Tel: 0141-380539 / 48817 / 46129

Tiger-Watch and Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve

Following the report on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the NGO Tiger-Watch and Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, we have received the MoU of from Tiger-Watch. There had been controversy of the nature of the MoU and it had been reported in various sections of the press, that the Tiger Reserve had been handed over to NGO (See *Update* 21). It is clear from the MoU that this is not the case and that Tiger-Watch will financially assist the Forest Department for the purposes of the preservation and protection of the tiger and its habitat in the park. Activities that Tiger-Watch would support include training for personnel, villagers and nature guides, supply of uniforms and equipment, rewards to forest staff and villagers for their work in the field, rehabilitation and economic upliftment of the Mogiya tribe, development of an education and interpretation centre, anti-poaching activities, establishment of a volunteer legal cell for the reserve, insurance scheme for the forest staff, cattle and crop compensation schemes and cattle breed improvement programmes.

The MoU is also clear that all the activities will be implemented only after gaining approval from the Govt. of Rajasthan; separate agreements will be signed for each project; they would be executed transparently under the supervision of the Field Director of the reserve and that it will not give Tiger-Watch any right of ownership, management etc. of the Tiger reserve or its part.

Contact: **AK Mahadevia**, Tiger-Watch, 16-17, Hansaraj Damodar Bldg., 12/14 Goa Street, Ballard Estate, Mumbai-400001,

Maharashtra. Tel: 022-2674191 / 2666295. Fax: 2671043.

Chief Wildlife Warden - Rajasthan, Van Bhawan, Vaniki Path, Deorali, Jaipur-302005, Rajasthan. Tel: 0141-380832. Fax: 380496.

TAMIL NADU

Habitat development in Karaivetti – Vettakudi Bird Sanctuary

Extensive habitat development work has been undertaken in the Karaivetti – Vettakudi Bird Sanctuary, located in the Perambalur district. A proposal of Rs. 25 lakhs for eco-development and eco-tourism has been submitted by the state Forest Department to the Ministry of Environment and Forests for Central funding. The proposed work would include tree plantation, watch towers, view points, and cemented benches.

Source: 'Habitat development in bird sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 22/07/99.

Shipping canal threatens Gulf of Mannar NP

Environmental groups have opposed the plan for the construction of the Sethu Samudran Ship Canal Project that will pass through the Gulf of Mannar National Park. In a letter to the Prime Minister the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has warned that the project will not only destroy the livelihood of the thousands of people living along the coast here, it will also adversely affect the unique marine ecosystem of the park through constant dredging and other activities related to the shipping lane.

This area which supports many endangered sea creatures like the dugong and sea turtles is also a marine biosphere reserve, and already under severe stress from the increasing number of industries on the coast which includes the Tuticorin Thermal Power Station, and the Tuticorin Salt Marine Chemicals.

The BNHS has appealed to all concerned groups to protest against this proposal.

Source: Letter to the Prime Minister by JC Daniel, BNHS, dated 12/08/99

Contact: **S.Asad Akhtar**, (See above, Gujarat, Threats to Marine National Park).

(general contact for T.N.)

Chief Wildlife Warden - Tamil Nadu, 6D, Panagal Building, Jeenu Road, Saidapet, Chennai-600002, Tamil Nadu. Tel: 044-4321738.

UTTAR PRADESH

Eco-development plan for UP

In response to the conflicts around protected areas, the UP State Forest Department has expanded the eco-development programme being implemented under the World Bank aided state Forestry Project.

So far the department has prepared micro-plans for eco-development along the boundary of the following PAs: Corbett, Dudhwa and Nandadevi National Parks, and Binsar, Hastinapur, Katerniaghat, Chambal, Kaimur Sanctuaries. In the current year, the target of 224 microplans is to be reached.

To aid in this, the state has issued a Government Order (GO), in mid-1999. This GO will make it possible to extend the programme to areas other than those covered by the U.P. Forestry Project. Operational guidelines are being issued for use by village level Eco-development Committees and forest staff, and an ambitious capacity-building exercise has been undertaken for NGOs, villagers, and staff.

Source: 'UP formulates eco-development plan', *Madhya Pradesh Chronicle*, 26/06/99.

Letter from Rajiv Bhartari, IFS, 07/10/99.

NGO project around Corbett Tiger Reserve

Operation Eye of the Tiger – India (OET- I), a Dehradun-based NGO has recently launched a programme around Corbett TR to reduce the dependence of the surrounding villagers on the park. 238 families on the northern boundary have been given a one time assistance of Rs. 1000 each to get LPG connections to meet their fuel needs. OET- I has also organised free medical camps for the villagers.

Source: 'Doon-based NGO working in Corbett Tiger Reserve in Kumaon', *Indian Express*, 05/07/99.

HC orders return of land to Corbett T R

In response to a public interest litigation filed by the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), the Lucknow High Court ordered that the Irrigation Department should hand back 800 hectares of land to the Forest Dept. that had been taken from the Corbett TR for the Kalagarh dam in 1966. The court has ordered that the removal of the encroachments and the transfer of land should be completed by 15/11/99.

Source: Aqueel Farooqi on email dated 13/08/99
Contact: **WPSI**, Thapar House, 124 Janpath, New Delhi - 110001 Tel: 011 - 6213864 / 6238710. Fax: 6464918. Email: wpsi@nde.vsnl.net.in

Aqueel Farooqi,
aqueelfarooqi@hotmail.com

Operation Monsoon in Corbett Tiger Reserve

A three month drive to control poaching was launched during the period starting July 15, during the closed season for tourists. Called Operation Monsoon, it is aimed at keeping a stringent check on poachers, who earlier used to take advantage of the time the park was left unguarded.

Source: 'Operation Monsoon in Corbett Reserve', *Indian Express*, 24/07/99.

Contact: **Director**, Corbett TR, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Ramnagar-244715, Dist. Nainital, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 05947-85489. Fax: 85376.

(General contact for UP)

Chief Wildlife Warden - Uttar Pradesh, 17, Rana Pratap Marg, Lucknow-226001, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0522-283864. Fax: 283868.

WEST BENGAL

Insurance cover for damage by wild elephants

Villages in the vicinity of the Garumara National Park in the Dooars of the Jalpaiguri district have insured their lives and properties against killings and destruction of their hutments by elephants.

Only 15 days after the insurance, six hutments were damaged by wild elephants at Hajipara village. The New India Assurance Company, after assessment had agreed to release the money in the last week of September. This endeavour is the first of its kind in North Bengal, and there is the possibility that it can be replicated all over North Bengal, where about 50 people are killed and 1000 hutments are destroyed every year.

Source: 'Insurance cover for (destruction by) elephants', *Indian Express*, 28/09/99.

Tree cutting inside Singalila NP

The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council has been found guilty of cutting 10 silver fir trees in the southern range of the Singalila National Park, at Molley. The place is located on the Sandakphu–Rimbick trekking route and the cutting of the trees was apparently for the construction of a trekker's hut here.

Illegal felling has already posed a major threat to this park, particularly during the Gorkhaland agitation when felling was at its maximum.

Source: Niraj Lama. 'DGHC flouts SC order, fells trees', *Statesman*, 04/05/99.

Contact: (general contact for West Bengal)

Chief Wildlife Warden - West Bengal,
Bikash Bhavan (North Bengal), 3rd Floor
Salt Lake City, Calcutta – 700091, West
Bengal. Tel: 033-3346900 / 3583208. Fax:
3345946 Email: wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in.

Obituary: S. Deb Roy

Sanjay Deb Roy, member of the steering committee of Project Tiger, the Indian Board for Wildlife and one of India's best known and respected wildlife officials, passed away recently in New Delhi. He was 65 and is survived by his wife and two sons.

Mr. Deb Roy was Field Director of Kaziranga and Manas National Parks in Assam. He was Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam until 1989, when he came to the Central Ministry of Environment and Forests as the first Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife). He continued his active involvement in wildlife conservation even after he retired in 1992, including with the group Corbett Foundation.

Kalpavriksh members would like to express their shock and sadness at Mr. Deb Roy's departure, and their heartfelt condolences to his family members.

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Govt. proposes 'green guards' for forests

The Centre has proposed to constitute 'green guards' in villages surrounding protected areas to enable active involvement of local people in the protection and maintenance of forests. The Union Minister for Environment and Forests, Mr. Suresh Prabhu said that suitable amendments would be made to the Wild Life (Protection) Act to involve local people in the protection of the forests.

The Minister was speaking after launching the 'Wildlife Watch Programme' launched by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – India and the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatan (NYKS) on the eve of World Environment Day (June 5, 1999) in Delhi.

Source: 'Govt. proposes 'green guards for forests', *The Observer of Business and Politics*, 05/06/99.

Database on corridors for the Asian elephant

A Geographical Information Systems (GIS) database for conservation of Project Elephant reserves has identified the Sathyamangalam forest division, the Indira Gandhi Sanctuary (Tamil Nadu), the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and the Hunsur forest division (Karnataka) as having high elephant distribution areas and 'conservation values'. The database has been brought out by the Asian Elephant Conservation Centre (AECC) at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore.

The elephant habitat spread across the Nilgiris and Eastern Ghats abutting the borders of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, spread over 12,000 sq. kms., has the single largest elephant population unit in Asia: between 6,300 to 10,400 elephants. Within this zone the GIS has identified four important areas – the Brahmagiri hills covering parts of Karnataka and Kerala (Wynad north division), the Nagarhole, Bandipur, Wynad, Mudumalai protected areas and the Nilgiri north division, the Biligiri Rangaswamy Sanctuary, Karnataka, and a 100 kms. tract along the Cauvery river spread across Kollegal, Hosur and Dharmapuri divisions of Karnataka.

The report also noted that the Wynad Sanctuary in Kerala was a critical area as a refuge for wildlife from the adjacent sanctuaries during the dry period from January to June.

Source: R Krishna Kumar. 'Database on corridors to protect Asian elephants', *The Hindu*, 22/07/99.

Contact: **AECC**, C/o Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore-560012, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3092786. Fax: 3311280. Email: aecc@ces.iisc.ernet.in

NEWS FROM SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

No oil and gas exploration in the Sundarbans

Following discussions between the Energy ministry, and oil companies Shell, Unocal and Petrobangla, it has been decided there will be no exploration in the areas of the Sundarbans that have been declared as a World Heritage site. This includes areas of Block 5 and Block 7. As per the discussions Shell will not explore oil and gas within 20 kms of the protected forest termed as 'impact area'.

Source: 'Shell, Unocal, Bangladesh government agree on Sundarbans', *The Daily Star*, 01/09/99

PAKISTAN

Gas exploration threatens Kirthar NP

The Kirthar National Park in the southern Pakistani province of Sindh is threatened as natural gas exploration is to be allowed here. The park is one of the last homes of the reclusive Sindh Ibex. Besides the area also supports a quarter of a million pastoral people who are refusing to give up their way of life.

It was in July 1997 that the Pakistani government decided to open up the park and invited the British Premier Oil to search for the gas that is supposed to be trapped here in the porous rocks. Later in 1998, Premier Oil merged with Shell Oil. Earlier the World Conservation Union (IUCN) had opposed the proposed gas exploration but subsequently the opposition has been toned down with IUCN joining a committee that would be looking into ways to explore gas with minimum damage to the park's environment.

In May, earlier this year the Governor of Sindh also reiterated that gas exploration would go ahead in the park and the government would even change laws if needed.

Source: 'Natural gas plant endangers wildlife park in Sindh', *The Sentinel*, 10/06/99

SRI LANKA

Teak trees to be cut in national parks

A committee appointed by the President of Sri Lanka has suggested that the government could earn Rs. 2.5 billion (US\$ 35 million) by cutting and selling the teak from inside the national parks of the country. The committee has also recommended that the laws should be changed to allow the felling of 70% of the teak trees in the parks. Environmentalists have been vehemently opposing the proposal.

Source: Dilshika Jayamaha. 'Cash starved Sri Lanka to cut teak trees in national parks', *The Times of India*, 01/09/99

UPCOMING

Nature education camps in PAs

A number of organisations and groups regularly conduct nature education camps in various PAs across the country. The Nature Club of Sabar, Ahmedabad has sent information of its nature camps which are as follows.

- Panchmari. 11/11/99 to 19/11/99
- Nalsarovar. Jan- Feb, 2000

Contact: **Manish Vaidya**, Nature Club of Sabar, B-60, Harshnagar Society, D Cabin, Sabarmati, Ahmedabad-380019, Gujarat. Tel: 079-7509174. Fax: 7508252

Global Biodiversity Forum, South Asia

A regional session of the Global Biodiversity Forum, a series of workshops which are held in conjunction with important international meetings related to biodiversity, is being held in Colombo, on October 24-26, 1999. Parallel workshops will discuss Ecosystem Approach to Conservation; Sustainable Use; Alien and Invasive Species; Biodiversity-friendly Technologies; and National Biodiversity Action Plans.

Contact: **P. Balakrishna**, GBF-SSEA, IUCN –World Conservation Union, 48, Vajira Road, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka. Fax: 94-1-580202; Email: pbala@slnet.lk.

National consultations on ecodevelopment

WWF-India in association with other groups is planning to organise two national level consultations on the future of ecodevelopment, one in Delhi and the other in Bangalore. These are slated for October and December.

Contact: **S.S. Rizvi**, Consultant, WWF-India, 172 B Lodhi Estate, New Delhi 110003. Tel: 011-4693744; Fax: 4626837.

Consultation on foreign funding for conservation

With increasing funding coming in for forestry, wildlife, and ecodevelopment projects, there is a need to critically assess its impacts. This meeting is slated for late November 1999, in Delhi.

Contact: **Gautam Bandopadhyay**, Ekta Parishad, O3, Anupam Nagar, Shankar Nagar, Raipur-492007, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0771-421926. Fax: 510465

WHAT'S AVAILABLE?

- *Melvyagraha*

Quarterly newsletter of Melghat Tiger Project, Maharashtra, with news and views in English and Marathi. Edited by the Field Director, Melghat.

Contact: **Field Director**, Project Tiger, Melghat, Amravati-444602, Maharashtra. Tel: 0721-662792 / 662680. Fax: 0721-662792.

- Ghate, Rucha. 1998. Socio-Economic Study of six villages in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

The report has detailed socio-economic data of the six villages in the Tadoba-Andhari TR. The information was collected by the Nagpur based organisation 'Shodh'. The data collected has been tabulated and analysed, and people's dependence has been quantified in monetary terms.

Contact: **'Shodh'**, 134, Ramnagar, Opp. Corporation School, Nagpur-440010, Maharashtra. Email: ruchaghate@hotmail.com.

- Report of the Joint Mission on Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project, September 1999

The report is based on the findings of the Mission that comprised of representatives of the World Bank, Madhya Pradesh tribal organisations (MTOs) and the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (MPFD). The mission had its first meeting in Bhopal on 20/03/99 and made field visits during March and May to sites selected by the MTOs in the districts of Hoshangabad, Betul, Badwani, Khandwa, Shehdol and Sidhi. It visited the Satpura National Park, Bori Sanctuary, Bandavgarh National Park, and the Sanjay National Park. According to Ekta Parishad, this was to be a consensus report of the joint team, but the Bank has backed out of signing it at the last minute.

Contact: **Gautam Bandopadhyay** (see above, UPCOMING).
Sunil, Kisan Adivasi Sangathan, At / PO Kesla, via Itarsi, Hoshangabad-461111, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07572-72171
World Bank, 70 Lodi Estate, New Delhi 110003. Tel: 011-4617241/4619491; Fax: 011-4619393.

CORRESPONDENCE

Name change: Several people have written in supporting our change of name from JPAM Update to PA Update, noting that it reflected the somewhat larger ambit of news and views we are carrying.

News veracity: Critical comments also came with regard to the veracity of information we are carrying (pl. see box "Verification Problems" below).

Cattle compensation scheme: Arun Jindal from Rajasthan writes: "It was reported in the *PA Update* 21, that the WWF- Tiger Conservation Program's cattle compensation scheme has been extended to the Kailadevi Sanctuary. I want to clarify that the cattle compensation scheme has not yet been extended to Kailadevi. I would however like to appeal that the scheme be extended to Kailadevi WLS."

Contact: **Arun Jindal**, Society for Sustainable Development, Shah Inayat Khirkiya, Karauli-322241, Rajasthan. Tel / Fax: 07464-21065.

All such correspondence is eagerly solicited by the editors.

APPEAL

Support / Funds needed for the Update

The *PA Update* has grown substantially in the last couple of years, both in terms of its reach and also the news and information that we are able to provide. It also goes out to all interested free of cost and has survived so far on the infrastructure and resources provided by Kalpavriksh and some funding from the WWF. We are however in urgent needs of funds to sustain the effort and are seeking financial support for it. Two kinds of funding is solicited:

1. **Grants** and donations of any amount.
2. A **life subscription** of Rs. 1000.

Those interested are requested to send in their drafts, drawn in favour of Kalpavriksh, at the editorial address below.

Verification Problems

Update 21 evoked some concern from a couple of our readers, regarding what was seen as the publication of unverified and false information. It was pointed out that the closure of the Ranthambhore National Park was not for the BBC shoot as was reported in *PA Update* 21 and also that the allegation that the Wildlife (Protection) Act –1972 had been violated was incorrect. M.G. Gogate, Chief Wildlife Warden of Maharashtra, noted that several items related to this state gave the impression that the wildlife officials were breaking wildlife laws (Nisarg Vihar in Sanjay Gandhi National Park), opening up PAs for commercial use (Melghat denotification), or taking a back-seat while NGOs initiated anti-poaching measures (Melghat arrests). He expressed concern that the sources used in the *Update* were inaccurate, biased, and lacked professional ethics.

We are thankful to them for raising these issues and conveying them to us. There are undoubtedly errors that creep into the *Update* while relying on newspaper reports or oral accounts, which we have to. There are those that we should be able to notice (such as 'arrests of poachers by NGOs in Melghat'), and it is our carelessness if we don't. The editors would like to extend the most sincere apologies to those who may have been wronged by these mistakes.

Ideally, all stories that are reported by us should be verified and cross-checked, especially when we would know independent sources who can do this. We need to be more careful about this in future. However, there are limits to the extent this is possible: very often, verification from official sources or from grassroots sources takes inordinately long, and would endanger the timeliness of the *Update*. It is for this reason that we strive not to put our own bias into the reporting, and make it a point to always cite the original source and give relevant contact addresses.

One final clarification. This newsletter is not an NGO mouthpiece. News is reported equally, whether it comes from official sources or NGOs, from conservation agencies or social activists. For instance, in the same issue in which some state Forest Departments appeared to have been portrayed in a bad light, there was news critical of the mass hunt by tribals in Bihar. This could have evoked a reaction from tribal rights activists there (though it didn't). The problem is, some actors are simply not as communicative as others, hence tend to get under-represented. The more transparent all sources of information will be, the more they will get reflected in the *Update*.

Any suggestions on how we can reduce our margin of error and bias would be most welcome. In particular, we would welcome offers from readers, to be independent sources of information and verification for particular states, regions, or thematic areas.

Millennium Awards

Sanctuary Magazine announces a series of awards:

Lifetime Service Award: An individual whose life has been devoted to protection of wildlife species/ habitats on the Indian subcontinent. Award: Rs. 1,00,000.

Wildlife Service Award: Individuals working in the field, who have displayed extraordinary courage, dedication and determination in the field of wildlife conservation. Five awards: Rs. 15,000 each.

Wildlife Photographer Award: Images taken in the wild. 1st Prize: Rs. 25,000; 2nd: Rs. 15,000; 3rd: Rs.10,000.

Natural History Writer Award: An original essay, between 1,000 to 2,000 words, titled Call of the Wild. 1st Prize: Rs. 25,000; 2nd: Rs. 15,000; 3rd: Rs.10,000.

Nominations and entries are invited (by December 31) on a given format, which can be obtained from: Sanctuary Millennium Awards, 602 Maker Chambers V, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021. Fax: 022- 2874380. E-mail: sanctuary@vsnl.com.

PROTECTED AREA Update is produced by **Kalpavriksh** every two months as a follow-up to the workshop on Exploring the Possibilities of Joint Protected Area Management (JPAM), organised at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi, in September 1994.
PA Update 22 was prepared by Pankaj Sekhsaria and Ashish Kothari.

Illustrations by: Pankaj and Peeyush Sekhsaria, Sushruti Santhanam.

Several news items were accessed from Centre for Science and Environment's *Green File*, but have been credited to their original sources.

PA Update is also available on the following websites:

<http://www.iucaa.ernet.in/~yogesh/jpamhome.shtml>; gopher://lists.princeton.edu:70/11/nathistory-india

<http://www.ee.princeton.edu/~vivek/indian-birds.html>; <http://www.ee.duke.edu/~achandra/asci.html>

<http://wild.allindia.com>

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

KALPAVRIKSH

Apartment 5, Shri Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411 004, Maharashtra, India.

Tel/Fax: 020-5654 239 Email: ashish@nda.vsnl.net.in