

# PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

No. 54

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<b>EDITORIAL</b>
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**The crisis of the tiger, the elephant, the  
turtle, the dolphin, the wetland, the ...**

Just as we go to press, newspaper reports tell us that the Central Bureau of Investigation has confirmed that Sariska Tiger Reserve has no more tigers. Other reports also tell us that action has been taken. Eight officers, including senior ones like the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state have been placed under suspension and security and patrolling are being intensified; just what the doctor ordered. The door we are being told, is now, tightly bolted. The birds may have flown, the tigers no longer prowl, and the poachers have already moved elsewhere, but no problem – the door has been bolted.

The last few weeks have seen an unexpected glut of tiger reports in our media, reports on the crisis of the tiger – Sariska, Ranthambhore, Panna, Bandavgarh and many believe this might be only the tip of the iceberg. The media responds to glamour and to crisis; and when the two come together like in Sariska we have the headlines. When

they were alive, and when it should have mattered, few bothered. All the bothering now, all the headlines...does it matter anymore?

It could, and if one looks around a bit there is the sinking realization that the tiger is not alone. The elephants, the turtles, the dolphins, the forests and wetlands; the fundamental systems, the very mechanisms that create and support life, are all under unprecedented threat.

Many of the 100 odd elephant deaths reported in and around the forests of the Nagarhole NP (see report below) in the last 10 years have been ascribed to unnatural reasons including poaching and electrocution. In Rajasthan, one of the worlds' best known wetlands and bird habitats is left thirsting for water. In Orissa, nearly 65 Irrawady Dolphins have been killed by boat propellers in Chilka Lake in only the last four years, and thousands of olive ridley turtles continuing to be washed ashore, dead, on the coastline there.

A recent report of the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) has painted an equally grim picture of the wetlands of the country. Almost all the wetlands they studied in 14 states are polluted and all 1249 specimens of fish drawn from 115 water bodies either had pesticides or heavy metals. In Mumbai, Ratan Tata, Chairman, Tata Sons, joins corporate captains in signing support to wildlife conservation only a few days after signing the death warrant of Orissa's olive ridley turtles through the Dhamra port. Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries also signs the same pledge and at the same time receives an order from the Dahanu Taluka Environment Protection Authority to furnish a Rs. 300 crore guarantee to prevent pollution from its power plant. And the National Board for Wildlife, the country's apex body, meets a full 17 months after its last meeting! Something seems amiss somewhere!

A tiger reserve without tigers, an unique wetland with neither water nor birds, and beaches that nesting turtles might be forced to abandon.

The door it seems, has indeed been bolted!

## NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

### ANDHRA PRADESH

#### **Rs. Eight crore blackbuck relocation project from Rollapadu, adjoining areas, to go to private contractors**

The State Government's Rs. Eight crore 'Operation Blackbuck', meant to capture blackbuck from the Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary and other areas in Adoni (see *PA Update* 53) is to be handed over to private contractors for its execution.

Lobbying by the contractors to get the project, particularly for the transportation of the animals to a deer park in Nagarjunsagar, reportedly resulted in the state government stopping the release of Rs. Two crores for the forest department as part payment to complete the task. The DFO of the area was also recently transferred, in spite of expert suggestions that officers involved in the project should not be transferred.

It had been earlier reported that experts and officials were not sure whether more blackbuck could be moved to the Nagarjunsagar Srisailem TR, as one such transfer of about 140 blackbuck had already taken place in 2004 (see *PA Update* 53).

The decision for this translocation project has been taken following an appeal made to the Chief Minister of the state by farmers in the region to save their crops.

Source: 'Contractors eye black buck project', *Deccan Chronicle*, 25/02/05.

Contact: **CWLW**, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, Saifabad, Hyderabad - 500004, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: 040-23230561 / 23232668. Fax: 337889

### ASSAM

#### **Friends of Kaziranga Forum formed**

A large number of well known people from India and abroad have come together to form the Friends of Kaziranga Forum to ensure preservation and promotion of this well known habitat of the one horned rhino. The Forum was formed on the concluding day of the Kaziranga Centenary Celebration on February 17, and presently has 149 people on it.

Members of the forum include prominent Indian businessmen like Mukesh Ambani, Adi Godrej and Peter Mukherjea, Maharani Gayatri Devi, Don Brown of the US Embassy, Richard H Emsile, African rhino specialist, and VB Mathur of Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun

The Forum resolved to maintain and enhance the ecological integrity of the existing protected area network of the north-eastern region of the country, as well as draw national and international attention to the inextricable link between the preservation and ecological viability of Kaziranga.

Experts on the rhino and bio-diversity resolved to ensure exchange of traditional and scientific knowledge and technological innovations for conservation and sustainable development of Kaziranga. The resolution also promised to mobilize support for seeking an alternative route to the proposed express highway by expansion of the existing National Highway-37 passing across Kaziranga, to ensure safe movement of wildlife here.

Additionally, the members have planned necessary steps to support creation of a data bank on the bio-diversity and ecological parameters of Kaziranga and apply this knowledge for stepping up vigil and awareness on environmental impacts of economic development projects in the region.

Source: 'Friends of Kaziranga Forum formed', *The Sentinel*, 28/02/05.

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

## Poachers attack forest guards in Pobitora

In an incident that occurred on February 21, several frontline forest personnel of the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary were brutally attacked by miscreants who were fishing within the boundaries of the sanctuary. Three of the forest personnel were seriously injured and were admitted to the Guwahati Medical College Hospital.

The incident took place in the middle of the night, when the lightly-armed forest personnel tried to check the intruders from fishing in Hadut beel, well known as a habitat for fish and avifauna. The personnel, were trying to reason with the offenders, when they were attacked by some forty people, with sticks and machetes.

Unable to face the wrath of the large number of people, the personnel had to blank fire, alerting and enabling other personnel to come to their aid. By the time more people could come to their rescue, the miscreants had fled from the scene. The injured forest personnel reported that most of the people who were responsible for the attack were residents of Kukari, and Kuranibari villages.

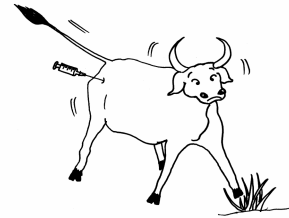
The episode is said to have created unease among a section of forest personnel in Pobitora, who feel that poachers are taking undue advantage of their lack of weapons and manpower. Environmental groups like Aaranyak have demanded that action against the guilty should be taken immediately, otherwise it would adversely affect the morale of those men engaged in protecting Pobitora.

Responding to the incident, Y Suryanarayan the Conservator Wildlife, and other forest officials visited the site where the incident took place, and an FIR was also filed at the Mayong Thana.

Source: 'Poachers attack forest guards in Pobitora', *The Assam Tribune*, 22/02/05.

## Cattle vaccination camp at Pobitora

The NGO, Early Birds recently conducted a day long cattle vaccination camp around Pobitora wild



life sanctuary. The camp was conducted in the first week of February and was the 17<sup>th</sup> such camp held here by the NGO.

The beneficiaries were from the Bura Mayang area. 183 cattle were vaccinated against Foot and Mouth Disease and free medicines to supplement the effort were also distributed. (Also see *PA Updates* 40, 34, 33)

Contact: **Moloy Baruah**, Early Birds, 26, Surujmukhi, Chandmari, Guwahati – 3, Assam. Tel: 0361 - 2661524/2597624. Email: [baruahm@iocl.co.in](mailto:baruahm@iocl.co.in)

## First Manas Biosphere Celebration

The Manas Biosphere Conservation Forum (MBCF) is organizing the First Manas Biosphere Celebration on April 4 & 5 at Ultapani in Kokrajhar district.

The aim of the celebration is to provide a platform for interactions among different stakeholders as well as others concerned by sensitizing public opinion for effective conservation of the reserve. The MBCF is a consortium of various NGOs in Assam that was formed in September 2003 to work for the conservation here (see *PA Update* 45).

Contact: **Nature's Foster**, PB No. 41, Shastri Road, PO & Dist. Bongaigaon – 783380, Assam. Tel: 09435020087. Email: [natures@sancharnet.in](mailto:natures@sancharnet.in)

## BTC to celebrate Manas centenary

The Bodo Territorial Council (BTC) has announced that it will be celebrating the centenary festival of the Manas Tiger Reserve

in November later this year. This is to be modeled on the celebrations that were held recently in Kaziranga. The BTC is reported to be peeved at the step motherly treatment received by Manas from the state government, because, they say, both Kaziranga and Manas were declared reserved forests under a similar notification in 1904.

According to Bisiram Narzary, Executive Member in charge of the Forest, Soil Conservation and Library Service Department of the BTC, the main objective of the centenary celebrations would be to make the people of the villages adjoining the park aware about the benefits of forest and wildlife conservation and also promote tourism in the region.

Narzary also expressed concern over the financial problems plaguing the BTC due to non-release of government funds in time. The Central Government's fund of Rs 1.58 crore for the ten-year working plan of the Manas Tiger Project had been released to the state government but had not yet reached the BTC authorities. Other funds against the plan heads for the year 2004-'05 were also reported to be pending.

It has been pointed out that one of the biggest bottlenecks to the celebrations in Manas would be the poor condition of the roads to the park, including the 22 kms stretch between Barpeta Road and Basbari, and the roads from Patarkuchi to Basbari via Salbari and from Nathkuchi to Simila via Kokrabari.

Narzary also said that the process was already on to create a separate website for the Manas National Park. A committee will also be formed soon, to chalk out the details of the centenary celebrations.

Source: 'Now BTC to celebrate Manas centenary', *The Sentinel*, 18/02/05.

### **Community based eco-tourism project in Manas**

Residents of Kokilabari under the Bhuyanpara range on the eastern fringe of the *Protected Area Update 54*

Manas National Park have reconstructed a 40 kms stretch of road inside the park to enable the work of the forest department and are also part of a new community based ecotourism initiative in the region.

The initiative has been taken up jointly by the Chapaguri-Kokilabari unit of the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), the Maozigendri Eastern Manas Eco-Tourism Society, the Siliguri-based Help Tourism and Ashoka Holidays. A special tour package, Manas-100, has been launched, too. It includes jeep safaris, exploration of forest trails, elephant rides, visits to Hornbill Point and a Bengal Florican survey.

The activities lined up in the nearby villages include treks, functions showcasing folk culture and an introduction to traditional weaving and methods of distilling country liquor. ABSU's office has been converted into a dormitory where tourists can stay. There is also a proposal to start home stays by October and 10 houses are expected to be readied for this by then. The project is expected to cover 57 villages in eastern Manas. (Also see *PA Updates* 50, 46 & 45).

Source: 'Villagers pave protection path', *The Telegraph*, 04/03/05.

Anuradha Sharma Lakhotia. Bodos give up the gun to conserve and promote wildlife sanctuary', *The Telegraph*, 10/03/05.

Contact: **Mr. Abhijeet Rabha**, IFS. Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, Barpeta Road – 781315, Assam. Email: [abhijitrabha@hotmail.com](mailto:abhijitrabha@hotmail.com)  
**Help Tourism**, 143 Hill Cart Road, Malati Bhavan, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, PO Box 67, Siliguri – 734401. Tel: 0353-2535893 / 2433683 / 09434146891. Email: [helptourism@sancharnet.in](mailto:helptourism@sancharnet.in)

### **Community participation and initiatives for Golden Langur conservation in Shankarghola**

A public meeting on "Community Participation in Conservation of Golden Langur" was organized by Aaranyak at Shankarghola, about 35 km southwest from Bongaigaon town in Assam in November 2004. The meeting was

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presided over by Mr. Ramani Kanta Rabha, Gaonburha of Shankarghola. It was attended by a number of people from nearby villages viz. Pallir tal, Balapara, Ganakghuli, Manikjhora, Barjuli, Majipara, Karaiguri, Ghilaguri and by teachers and students of the Birjhora Mahavidyalaya, Bongaigaon and Abhayapuri College, Abhayapuri.

Others who took part in the meeting included members of Aaranyak; Director of the Manas National Park, Mr. Abhijit Rabha and Mr. Bob Horwich, Community Conservation, USA.

Shankarghola is part of the Bhairabchura proposed reserve forest and is an abode of endangered Golden Langur. Local people of the area have been protecting a small patch of the forest of their own. As a result there is good forest cover here that also houses a number of the endangered golden langurs.

Later, in December 2004, a three day workshop for in situ conservation of the langur was also held at Shankarghola. Those participating included educated village youth from Shankarghola and adjacent villages, 13 students of the local Birjhora Mahavidyalay and Abhayapuri College, and two students from the Department of Wildlife & Conservation Biology, North Orissa University

The survey conducted revealed that the forests here that have been protected by the local community have at least 35 golden langurs spread over five troops. Additionally the survey also collected scats of leopard, wild boar, porcupine and barking deer and documented the presence of 35 species of resident as well as migratory birds

Mr. Mrigendra Kalita, Deputy Commissioner Bongaigaon distributed the certificates on the concluding ceremony on January 1, 2005.

Contact: **Hillojyothi Singha** Zoology Dept.  
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Barpara, Bongaigaon - 783 380 Assam.  
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Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden** – Assam,  
Rehabari, Guwahati – 781008, Assam. Tel:  
0361-2566064. Fax 2547386

## GUJARAT

### Six new 'Wetlands of National Importance'

Six wetlands in Gujarat have been recently been accorded the status of 'Wetlands of National Importance'. These are the Little Rann, the Greater Rann, Pariyej (Anand) (see *PA Update* 52), Wadhvana (Vadodara) (see *PA Update* 47) Thol (Saurashtra), and Khijadia (Jamnagar). These are in addition to Nal Sarovar which was already in this category.

The six were selected from a list of eight sites in the state that had been recommended for inclusion in December 2004. The recommendation had been made by a team comprising experts from the Zoological Survey of India, the Botanical Survey of India, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests and the state Forest Department.

The wildlife officials in the state are hoping that declaration of these wetlands as having national importance will mean larger funds from the government and a more prominent place on the national wildlife and ecological map of the country.

Source: 'Six wetlands now at par with Chilka',  
*Indian Express*, 20/01/05

Contact: **CWLW** - Gujarat, Block 14, Dr. Jivraj  
Mehta Bhavan, Old Sachivalaya,  
Gandhinagar-382010, Gujarat. Tel: 02712-  
230007. Fax: 221097.

## HIMACHAL PRADESH

### Himachal plans 'butterfly gardens'

The Wildlife Wing of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department is said to be finalizing a project for the creation of 'butterfly gardens' in Kufri, Renuka Lake, the Pong Wetlands and Kullu.



A detailed study on the flowers and plants that provide food and nectar to butterflies was undertaken by the FD and the project report was to have been readied by the end of January. The FD has in fact proposed to hand over the project to an NGO for its implementation. More details are, however, not presently known.



Source: Baldev Chauhan. 'Himachal to have butterfly gardens soon', *The Asian Age*, 21/01/05.

Contact: **CWLW**, Government of Himachal Pradesh, Dept. of Forest Farming & Conservation Mist Chamber, 1st Floor, Khalini, Shimla – 171001. Tel: 0177-223038. Fax -224192/223038

## JAMMU & KASHMIR

### Migratory birds throng Gharana Wetland Reserve

A large number of migratory waterfowl, including about 4000 bar headed geese have been reported from the Gharana Wetland Reserve located 35 kms south of Jammu. The total number of birds in the reserve was estimated at about 20,000.

This compares very favourably with the couple of thousand birds that have been reported here annually since 2001, when military activity in the region reached a peak (see *PA Updates* 34 & 25).

The number of birds here has increased on account of the completion of the demining operations along the entire border as also the year long ceasefire along the Line of Control (LOC).

The Forest Department is now planning to construct facilities including a guesthouse to encourage visitors to come here for watching birds. An attempt will also be made to encourage students from different universities and institutions and pilgrims to the Vaishnodevi temple to visit the wetland,

which would be developed into a tourist resort.

Villagers in the area, however, are unhappy as damage to crops in fields surrounding the wetland has increased following the return of the birds. They have complained of substantial damage to standing crop and have demanded for compensation from the state government.

Source: ML Kak. 'Migratory birds find Gharana', *Tribune*, 14/01/05.

Contact: **CWLW**, Government of Jammu & Kashmir, Tourist Reception Centre (TRC), Srinagar – 190001. Tel: 0191-544575, 0194-452469/ 476261. Fax: 0191-544575, 0194-4524690

## KARNATAKA

### Conservationists oppose KIOCL request for mining lease extension

Officials of the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited (KIOCL) reportedly met the Karnataka CM recently with a request for more time to wind up its mining operations in the Kudremukh National Park. The company is said to have asked for 54 hectares of land for slope stabilization and safety and another 370 hectares for continued mining.

Conservationists have opposed the move and have submitted a memorandum to the state government arguing that the plea be rejected and that allowing it will be a violation of the Supreme Court orders.

A months ago, the Supreme Court too had turned a request by the company to review its earlier order for the closure of the mining here by the end of 2005 (see *PA Update* 52). (Also see *PA Updates* 34, 30-25 & 23-20).

Source: "KIOCL extension will breach SC order", [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 18/03/05.

Contact: **S Murari**, Chairman, KIOCL, 2nd Block, Koramangala, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore-560034, Karnataka. Tel: 080-5531322 Fax: 5521584.

## Fires inside Bannerghatta NP

Fire tenders were put to service to deal with large-scale fires that affected the Bannerghatta National Park in the month of February. Grass in several parts of the park caught fire because of the dry spell for over a week. Trees covering 20 acres of land in the park too were reported destroyed

Several lions, bears and other wildlife in the park had to be moved to safer places. No animal or human casualty was, however, reported.

Source: 'Fresh incidents of fire in park', *Deccan Herald*, 21/02/05.

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



## Fires affect Bandipur

More than 250 acres of forest in the Bandipur National Park were said to have been badly affected in fires in the first half of February. The fires were reported from more than 40 different places and the hand of poachers, particularly those collecting antlers, in starting the fires was not ruled out.

Areas affected included Yedeyale, Karyamangala, Kaniyanapura, Laxmipura and neighbouring villages.

Source: 'Wildfire at Bandipur causes extensive damage', [www.starofmysore.com](http://www.starofmysore.com), 6/02/05,

## Efforts to reduce pressure on Bandipur

Various efforts have been initiated along the boundary of the Bandipur National Park in an effort to reduce pressure on the forests and

also deal with the problem of increased human – animal conflict.

The initiatives include the digging of nearly 197 kms of trenches along the boundary of the park. This is part of a comprehensive Rs. 115 crore project that also includes laying of service roads along the periphery of the forest and erecting solar electric fences to prevent wild animals, especially elephants, from straying into the nearby villages.

Free LPG connections are also being distributed to villagers living along the park, as part of a Rs. 55 lakh project sanctioned to Namma Sangh by the Central Government. The Namma Sangha was set up in 2003, as a registered body by the national park authorities to provide cooking gas connectivity for each of the families living on the forest boundary with an intention to reduce the demand for firewood from the park. A pilot project in 150 villages in the periphery of the park had revealed that nearly 2.5 lakh kg. of firewood was being extracted from the Bandipur forests daily to support nearly 1.5 lakh people and an equal number of livestock.

As part of the project, a total of 25,000 families in 171 villages have been identified. During the first half of June 2004, 2,000 families were provided with LPG connections. As of now already 3,400 families have been provided with LPG connections and the cylinders are being delivered to their doorsteps through an auto rickshaw.

16,000 families will receive the LPG connections by the end of two months. The rest will be provided the connections with a one-year period.

The DFO, Bandipur NP, Mr. Yatheesh Kumar has said that Namma Sangha had received a overwhelming response from the villagers in the park's periphery, and encouraged by the response Indian Oil Corporation had sanctioned one more LPG agency at B. Matakere to service the people residing in the region.

He also said that basic monitoring of firewood consumption by 50 families in four villages has shown a drastic decrease from an



average of 10 kg a day per family to less than a kg a day per family. Additionally he felt that this initiative had also helped in making the relationship between the villagers and park authorities increasingly cordial.

Source: 'Plan to dig trenches around Bandipur National Park', *The Hindu*, 10/03/05.

Contact: **Director**, Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Ashokpuram, Mysore-570008., Karnataka.  
**Deputy Director and DCF (WL)**, Forest Department Bandipur National Park, Gundlupet, Chamrajnagar - 571 111, Karnataka.

### **Poachers arrested in Cauvery WLS**

The CID, Forest Cell, Bangalore, recently arrested 12 poachers who were allegedly in the process of killing deer and wild boar in the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary that is spread over the three districts of Mandya, Chamrajnagar and Bangalore.

Two muzzle loaders and large quantity of gun powder from them was also confiscated from those arrested.

Source: '12 poachers arrested', *Deccan Herald*, 12/03/05.

Contact: **Inspector General of Police**, CID, Forest Cell, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, KHB Building,, Cauvery Bhavan, Bangalore – 560 009.

### **Confusion regarding scheme for buy back of land from villagers in Shettihalli WLS**

There is a lot of confusion regarding the proposed scheme for the buy back of land from people living in the Shettihalli WLS and Sharavathi Reserve Forests in an effort by the FD to free these areas from human interference. The scheme had been opposed by some of the local people (see *PA Update* 53), but it now transpires that there was no scheme of this kind in the first place. Following is the reported chain of events:

The news of the buy-back proposal was first reported in the media in November 2004, following which residents here,

particularly in the Sharavathi Reserve Forest area immediately constituted the Sharavathi Forest Residents Anti Land Buy-Back Forum and started a series of protests. The Shantaveri Gowda Samajwadi Adhyayana Kendra Trust (see *PA Update* 53) too had opposed the scheme in the interests of the residents of the Shettihalli WLS. Many of those protesting were those who had already been displaced twice in the past; first for the construction for Hirebhaskar dam and later for the Sharavathi hydroelectric project.

Towards the end of November 2004, a senior official from the Wildlife Division of the State Forest Department stated that residents of the area would have to leave in the interest of wildlife of the region. It was suggested that if people did not leave voluntarily, force would have to be used.

This was followed by protests, resulting in elected representatives assuring the people that there was no such move. Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) GAN Karkikar had on December 3 made a statement to the *Deccan Herald* saying that there was no buy-back scheme had been proposed. He repeated the statement again on December 17 during a press conference and also said that since the forest department had not sanctioned any land to the people residing in the reserve forests, there was no question of buying it back. On December 24, he again reaffirmed the same in an official letter to the Forum saying that there was no proposal to buy back land from the people in the first place.

A month later, on January 24, however, Minister Gurupadappa Nagamarapalli stated that the government was indeed examining the buy-back proposal. A meeting between the Forum and the Minister revealed that the FD had, allegedly, wrongly informed the minister about the existence of the scheme. Following this and taking into account the opposition expressed by the forum and people in the area, the Minister assured the State Assembly on February 4 that the scheme was being withdrawn.

*(Editors' note: Complete confusion!)*

Source: 'Officials' double talk: forest dwellers on tenterhooks', *Deccan Herald*, 11/02/05.

### **Elephant depredation; compensation claims increase around Nagarhole NP, Brahmagiri & Pushpagiri WLS**

Wild elephant caused crop damage and loss of human life is said to be increasing in the areas adjoining the forests of the Nagarhole National Park and the Brahmagiri and Pushpagiri Wildlife Sanctuaries in the district of Kodagu. There has also been a corresponding rise in compensation claims by villagers and appeal letters to the forest department. Most of the damage is said to be caused during the rainy season when the elephants from these protected areas enter the human settlements in this region

The Forest Department (FD) had received a total of 373 applications in 2002-03 seeking relief for elephant attack. The FD, had in turn, distributed a total of Rs 12.13 lakh as compensation. The number of applications for the year 2003-04 increased to 557 applications and the total compensation paid was Rs 21.08 lakh. For the period from April 2004 till December 2004, the FD received 702 claims, of which 671 were related to crop loss. Till the end of December the FD had already released Rs 10.09 lakh as relief for 436 cases.

As far as human casualties are concerned, four persons were killed by the elephants in 2002-03, while 12 died in 2003-04 and two for the year 2004-05 (until December). The FD has received 31, 14 and 15 applications during the last three years respectively for loss of cattle and seven, seven and 13 applications respectively for injury to human beings.

In addition to paying compensation, the authorities have also planned a number of other steps to deal with the increasing problem. This includes the construction of a 20 km long fence in the Madikeri division to prevent 'trespassing' by the elephants. Additionally a Rs 7.58 crore plan has been drafted and submitted to the Principal Protected Area Update 54

Conservator of Forests, Bangalore for the repair of protective fencing, digging elephant proof trenches (EPT), constructing tanks in the forests, and setting up teams to train elephants and for the desilting of tanks.

Source: 'Jumbo attacks', *Deccan Herald*, 22/02/05.

### **Over 100 elephants dead in 13 years in and around Nagarhole NP**

Forest Department statistics have revealed that over 100 elephants have died of various reasons in the two forest divisions of Kodagu and the Hunsur Forest Division in the Nagarhole National Park area between 1991-92 and 2004-05.

Madikeri Division in the Kodagu Forest Circle has recorded the highest number of 46 deaths. As many as 39 elephants have died in the Virajpet Forest Division of Kodagu and 18 in the Hunsur Forest Division falling under the Nagarhole National Park

Over 65 male elephants died during the period, 25 of which were victims of poaching. Tusks were recovered in 49 cases while in 11 cases the tusks were reportedly stolen.

Two cases of Anthrax-related deaths were reported in February 2002 from the Anechowkur range in Hunsur. Liver damage, gastro-related problems, electrocution (Kushalnagar range in Madikeri Division in August 2002), getting crushed under falling trees (Thithimathi Range in Virajpet Forest Division in May, 2003), getting mired in slush and death because of starvation (Kallahalla Range of Hunsur in March 2003), death because of drinking of illicit hooch (Virajpet Range in June 2003), respiratory infection (Thithimathi Range in Virajpet in August, 2004), and old age were some of the other reasons for the deaths of elephants.

Thithimathi Range in Virajpet Division, Somwarpet and Kushalnagar Ranges in the Madikeri Division have recorded the highest number of deaths in the Kodagu Circle.

The number of deaths was high in 2001-02 during which 28 elephants died. Fifteen elephants were reported dead in the

April 2005

Hunsur Division during the year and 10 elephants died in the Madikeri Division. D.B. Kuppe Range in the Hunsur Division recorded nine deaths and five occurred in the Somwarpet Range.

There were five deaths in 1991-1992, all in the Madikeri Division. Eleven deaths were recorded in 1992-93 and seven in 1993-94. Four deaths were reported in 1995-96 and two each in 1996-97 and 1997-98. There were eight deaths in 1998-99 and it came down to four in the following year.

The toll went up again in 2000-2001 when 12 deaths were reported. There were 10 deaths in 2002-03. During 2003-04, seven deaths were recorded, with Virajpet Division accounting for five and the rest in the Madikeri Division. In 2005, four deaths have already been reported of which three are from the Virajpet division.

There is a huge stock of tusks recovered that have been recovered and these have been shifted to the "Gandhadakoti" in Mysore. In the absence of sale of ivory in public or private, what steps are being initiated to dispose of the ivory stock is not known

Source: K Jeevan Chinnappa. 'Over 100 elephants dead in 13 years', *The Hindu*, 24/03/05.

### **Ulvi festival inside Dandeli WLS; plea to not damage the forests**

The annual "Jatra" of the Veerashaiva pilgrim centre Ulvi located inside the Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary was held from February 15 to 26. The festival attracts an estimated one lakh pilgrims every year from neighbouring districts and even other states.

Traditionally the visiting pilgrims take forest products like cane and wood with them. Many people come in tractors and bullock carts and indulge in large scale and indiscriminate tree felling. The Forest Department had appealed to the pilgrims to abstain from any such activity. It had also organized to supply certain forest products at

concessional rates to the pilgrims in the temple premises.

The details of what actually transpired during the period of the festival are not presently known.

Source: 'Devotees asked to desist from unholy act at Ulvi festival', *Deccan Herald*, 10/02/05.

### **NGO criticises package for village relocation from Kudremukh NP**

The Kudremukh Rashtreeya Udyana Virodhi Okkota (KRUVO) has criticised the Rs 23 crore package announced by the State government for those who wish to relocate from the park voluntarily.

The government has claimed that 201 families living inside the park had given their consent for relocation. Accordingly, the package created for the purpose includes Rs. 18 crore for rehabilitation, 23 crore for providing basic facilities and one crore to the district for forest development. The KRUVO has questioned the claim that people had agreed to move out and demanded to know who had carried out the survey to ascertain the views of the people.

It was also pointed that the government figures of people in and around the park were grossly underestimated.

Source: 'Okkota rejects package', *Deccan Herald*, 26/02/05.

### **Proposal to renew mining license in Bhadra WLS rejected**

The National Board for Wildlife has rejected a proposal to renew the license for mining in 31.25 hectares of the Bhadra Wildlife sanctuary in Kemmangundi by the Bhadravati based Visveswaraiah Iron and Steel Limited (VISL).

Accordingly, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has issued directions for stopping all mining operations at Kemmangundi and notices to vacate the

company colony have also been issued to nearly 100 persons.

Source: 'Proposal to renew mining license rejected', *Deccan Herald*, 01/01/05.

Contact: **DCF**, Bhadra Wildlife Division (Bhadra Tiger Reserve) Chickmagalur - 577 101, Karnataka. Tel: 08262-234904. Fax: 08262-232799 /235385

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

## KERALA

### **TDB asks for 500 acres of land in Periyar TR for Sabarimala pilgrim centre**

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) that manages Sabarimala has requested for 500 acres of forestland of the Periyar Tiger Reserve for the development of the pilgrim centre here. The request has been endorsed by Members of Parliament from Kerala and the state Chief Minister, Mr Oommen Chandy. In response the Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, is said to have entrusted the job of looking into the matter to his Principal Secretary, Mr. TAK Nair.

Mr Nair, heading the team consisting of senior officials from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, was expected to go into the request in detail besides exploring various other options.

The Centre is not said to be very enthusiastic about handing over such a vast stretch of forestland in the Periyar Tiger Reserve. Ecologists and environmentalists have also warned that this will cause further deforestation here and in the other surrounding hills, resulting in serious ecological and environmental degradation. Already, it has been pointed out, the 63 acres of forestland given to TDB at Sabarimala have been transformed to a concrete jungle.

One of the options been suggested by the Pamba Parirakshana Samithi to deal with

the request of the TDB is to develop the 250 acres of land, presently held by the State Farming Corporation at Nilakkal near Pampa. The suggestion is to scientifically develop the land into 10 compartments of 25 acres each with all facilities that can accommodate the pilgrims here. This in turn will reduce the crowding/congestion at Pampa apart from arresting the pollution of the holy river.

Nilakkal which is just a few kms from Pampa also has perennial water sources. It been further pointed out that the toilet complexes and the large number of hotels and shops currently functioning on the sand bed of the river are not only the main cause for polluting the river but also it denies the pilgrims of their right to perform the rituals at Pampa. Hence shifting of all these activities to Nilakkal would make the sand bed available to the pilgrims for performing the rituals as per the traditions.

The samithi has also expressed concern over the continued deforestation in the region and asked for urgent afforestation measures. (Also see *PA Updates* 47, 44, 41, 40, 34, 30, 27, 24, 23 & 21)

Source: 'Central team to go into plea for Sabarimala forestland', *The Hindu Business Line*, 19/03/05.

Contact: **Field Director**, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Aranya Bhavan, Forest Complex, S.H. Mount P.O., Kottayam - 686 006

## MADHYA PRADESH

### **Conservation reserve proposed for Bhopal's Upper Lake**

A consultative meeting organized recently by the Madhya Pradesh State Biodiversity Board and Van Vihar has proposed the declaration of a large area of the Upper Lake of the Bhoj Wetland as a conservation reserve. The meeting that was organized in March in Bhopal unanimously agreed that declaring a sanctuary here would not be a good idea and that any success for the conservation of the wetland

would be possible only through peoples participation and adopting an inclusive approach that could be facilitated by declaring a conservation reserve.

The meeting was held to evolve a long-term strategy as a follow up of the Bhoj Wetland Avifauna Study conducted by the Kaustubh Sharma of the Bombay Natural History Society. Mr. Sharma pointed out that 204 bird species and over 35,000 birds were sighted during peak migrating season during the avifauna study in 2000-2001. He suggested that the Upper Lake could be developed systematically as a potential site in Central India for bird-oriented tourism and research. As a follow-up to the Avifauna study, he also suggested the creation of a volunteer programme called Sarus Watch Group which could take up various research and awareness related activities that could be institutionalised through collaboration with schools and colleges.

Source: 'Bird reserve along Upper Lake mooted', *The Hindu*, 18/03/05.

### **CEC report on Bandavgarh**

The Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) recently made a tour of the Bandavgarh National Park following complaints about several irregularities and the poaching of six tigers and leopards here. The report of the CEC that was recently sent to the state Chief Secretary has asked the Madhya Pradesh Government to further strengthen security arrangements in the park.

The report says that 200 forest crimes were recorded in the park between April and December 2004. This includes six incidents of poaching, something that the State Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Mr. RN Saxena has contested as being incorrect and not based 'on facts'.

The CEC officials were reported to have taken serious note of tourists' cigarette packs, empty plastic water bottles and dirty spots in the Tala area's Bhaitan jungle. The park managers were 'advised' not to let such situations recur. It was directed that the toilet and canteen within Bhaitan be shifted out of the park's limits. The team also objected to logging of bamboo and some trees for widening Khitauli area's Damdama Munari road to 36 ft. The CEC officials also took exception to the alleged neglect of Magdi, Katwa and Khitauli areas. Tourists are not allowed in these zones.

Source: 'More security for Bandavgarh mooted', *Central Chronicle*, 19/03/05.

Contact: **Director**, Bandavgarh TR, Umaria – 484661, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07653-22214. Fax: 07653-22214/22648

### **State wildlife census held in January**

A week long annual census of wildlife in Madhya Pradesh was held from Jan 3 to 9, 2005. The census was conducted in the nine national parks and 25 sanctuaries in the state as also in the forests outside the PA network.

The Director of the Kanha National Park was appointed as the Chief Co-ordinator of the Census while the 16 territorial forest conservators helped co-ordinate the counts in the areas under their divisions including in protected areas.

The results from the census are not yet available.

Source: 'Annual census of wild animals begins', *Central Chronicle*, 04/01/05.

### **Fauna of Pench Tiger Reserve**

The Jabalpur based Central Regional Station (CRS) of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has recently published its checklist of the fauna of the Pench Tiger Reserve. The checklist is based on extensive surveys carried out from June to December 2001.

The study reports, among others, the presence in the reserve of 24 species of dragonflies and damselflies, 45 species of butterflies, 56 species of moths, 50 species of freshwater fish belonging to 16 families (33 are new records), seven species of toads and frogs (four being new additions to the fauna of the park), 31 species of reptiles, 242 species of birds belonging to 52 families and 39 species of mammals.

The study has also indicated that the major constraints for wildlife conservation in the reserve include: illegal cutting of trees and extraction of non-timber forest produce; poaching activities and illegal fishing in the Totladoh reservoir; live stock grazing and accidents involving wild animals on National Highway 7.

Source: 'Fauna of Pench Tiger Reserve', *Envis Newsletter*, ZSI, January 2005.

Contact: **Dr. Kailash Chandra**, CRS-ZSI, 424, New Adarsh Colony, Kamla Nehru Nagar, Jabalpur – 482 002, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 0761 – 2416592. Fax: 2416021. Email: [crszsijb@sancharnet.in](mailto:crszsijb@sancharnet.in)  
**Field Director**, Pench Tiger Reserve, P.O. Barapathar, Dist. Seoni - 480 661. Tel: 07692-250794/250594. Fax: 250794/221180. Email: root@trpench.ren.nic.in

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

## MANIPUR

### **Six underground camps destroyed inside Keibul Lamjao NP**

The state police, acting in concert with the army, busted six underground (UG) camps located inside the Keibul Lamjao National Park, and recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunitions following a brief encounter in the last week of February.

The operation was launched after midnight by a combined team of state police commandoes, 2nd IRB personnel, and Army

troops of the 73rd Brigade located at Bishenpur and Assam Rifles troops following reports of the presence of the camps. It was conducted after cordoning off the areas of Keibul Lamjao, Chingmei, Kumbi, Khordak, Arong and Laphupat Tera. It is estimated that a total of about 150 people may have been staying at the camps at the time of the operation.

Source: 'Police backed by Army troops bust six UG camps at Keibul Lamjao', *Imphal Free Press*, 26/02/05.

Contact: **Salam Rajesh**, Sagolband Salam, Leikai. PO: Imphal-1, Manipur. Tel: 0385-222395, Email: [salamrajesh@rediffmail.com](mailto:salamrajesh@rediffmail.com); [salraj\\_imp@yahoo.com](mailto:salraj_imp@yahoo.com); [salraj\\_imp@yahoo.com](mailto:salraj_imp@yahoo.com)

**Chief Wildlife Warden** - Manipur, Sanjenthong, Imphal - 795001, Manipur. Tel: 03852 - 220854 / 285385

## ORISSA

### **Proposal to increase area of Mahanadi Elephant Reserve**

The Mahanadi Elephant Reserve Stakeholders Advisory Committee, consisting of nine Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs), has recommended the increase of the Elephant Reserve Area from the existing 1,058 sq kms to 8,036.35 sq.kms. The divisions which fall under the reserve are Angul, Athmallik, Athagarh, Satkosia, Nayagarh, Dhenkanal, Boudh, Cuttack and Mahanadi Wildlife Division. There are an estimated 4,820 elephants in the reserve, most of which are found in Satkosia and Athagarh divisions.

The meeting of the Reserve Advisory Committee was held under the chairmanship of Reserve co-ordinator and the conservator of Angul circle Mr RN Reddy at the Rangers College in Angul in January 2005.

The advisory committee also decided not to enforce any additional laws in these areas where 1,130 revenue villages are situated over the 4,361 acres of land. An effort will also be made to train the villagers by the forest



officials on the way to deal with wild elephants.

Source: 'More space for tuskers proposed', *The Statesman*, 20/01/05.

### **Dolphin deaths in Chilka on the rise**

At least seven Irrawady Dolphins were reported to have died because of mechanized tourist boats in Chilka Lake in month of February 2005 alone. All the deaths were reported from Mahisa in the Satpada zone of the lake. The current deaths have taken the toll to 13 since April 2004 and 50 since 2003. This is addition to the 15 dolphins that were killed in a similar manner between 2001 & 2003 (see *PA Updates* 41, 36 & 29).

The total population of the dolphins in the lake is estimated to be about 130 (see *PA Update* 52 & 49) and they are mostly seen in the lake's outer channel near Mahisa-Berhampura, Alupatna, Magarmukh and Rajhans in the southern sector. After the opening of the new mouth of the lake (See *PA Updates* 52, 30 & 26), and increase in salinity level in the lake, the dolphins are nowadays also sighted at Balugaon, Nalabana, INS Chilika and Rambha areas.



The Orissa government's promotion of eco-tourism in Chilka Lake has resulted in the rise of tourists over the last few years. Most of the fishermen of Satpada and Balugaon become tour operators during winter and take boatloads of tourists to the lake to show them the dolphins. During the peak tourism season from October to March, more than 600 tourist boats, fitted with "noisy and polluting engines", are used to take the tourists to where the dolphins stay.

Mr Biswajit Mohanty, Secretary, Wildlife Society of Orissa (WSO) has pointed out that the tourist boats are actually fishing boats, running on Lombardi engines, which, unlike the outboard motor engines (OBMs), have six-foot propellers jutting out of the rear of the boats. These boats usually keep circling the animals till the tourists get a good view. The panic-stricken mammals get injured by the propeller blades in an attempt to swim away and later succumb to their injuries.

The WSO has made a number of suggestions for "sustainable and regulated tourism" in Chilka which will help deal with this serious problem of dolphin deaths. The suggestions include use of OBMs by the boat operators, restriction on the number of boats allowed to take out tourists at a time, employment of a Forest Department patrol boat to keep watch and strict instructions to boat operators against chasing the dolphins.

Source: 'Dolphin death toll on the rise, thanks to 'unregulated tourism'', *The Statesman*, 21/02/05.

Contact: **Biswajit Mohanty**, Wildlife Society of Orissa, Shantikunj, Link Road, Cuttack – 753012, Orissa. Tel: 0671 – 334625. Fax: 610980. Email: [biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in](mailto:biswajit@cal.vsnl.net.in); [bmwildlife@hotmail.com](mailto:bmwildlife@hotmail.com)

**DFO (WL)**, Chilka, 1865/66 Nuasahi, Nayapalli (near Sub PO), Bhubaneswar – 751012. Orissa. Email:

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**AK Patnaik**, CDA, BJ-45, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Fax: 0674 – 434485. Email: [ajitpattnaik@hotmail.com](mailto:ajitpattnaik@hotmail.com)

Website: [www.chilika.com](http://www.chilika.com)

### **Poor health condition of forest staff at Bhitarkanika NP**

The general health condition of the forest staff employed for turtle protection work at Bhitarkanika National Park and Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary is said to be rather poor. The average age of the staff is more than 50 years and they are reportedly unable to handle the rigour of the job in the inhospitable conditions that they have to work.

The recent deployment of police from the Orissa State Armed Police (OSAP) (see story below) had been welcomed because quite a few forest department officials, deployed at the sea and at the nesting grounds, were unwell, reportedly due to their prolonged stay there.

53 forest guards have been working as part of the turtle vigil operation here since November 1, 2004 and most of them have gone on without any leave. More than a dozen of the 53 forest guards suffer from fever, nausea and vomiting, a condition linked with prolonged exposure to seawaters and saline atmospheric condition.

In spite of this the staff is forced to continue as the department is understaffed. There are 24 vacant posts in Bhitarkanika and requests to fill them up have not yielded positive action.

Source: 'Turtle savers fall sick', *The Statesman*, 01/03/05.

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

### **Police support for protection of olive ridley turtles**

The Orissa State Government, has recently deputed armed police support for the forest personnel engaged in protection of breeding Olive Ridley turtles in Gahirmatha. The decision was made in response to a request by the FD for armed support to intercept trawler intrusion into the turtles' congregation sites.

Two sections of the Orissa State Armed Police (OSAP) unit were dispatched to Gahirmatha, bringing the total number of units there to three.

The immediate provocation for the same appears to be the incident on February 24 when senior forest officers were hostage by fisherfolk when on surveillance duty. The defence personnel of Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) at the Wheeler's Island rescued the stranded forest

officials near Babuballi Island off the Bay of Bengal coast.

The Central Empowered Committee had earlier made the joint forest-police patrolling mandatory in the turtle nesting grounds of the state. The CEC had also called for permanent round-the-clock deployment stations of armed police in Gahirmatha, and the rookeries at the mouths of River Devi and River Rushikulya.

Source: 'State lends cop muscle to protect olive ridleys', *The Statesman*, 28/02/05.  
'Turtle savers fall sick', *The Statesman*, 01/03/05.

### **NGOs oppose proposal to declare sanctuaries at Devi and Rushikulya**

The recently formed Orissa Marine Resources Conservation Consortium (OMRCC), a group of fisherworkers' unions, NGOs, turtle experts and conservation organisations, have expressed their opposition to the proposal of the Orissa State government to declare sanctuaries at the mouths of the Devi and the Rushikulya rivers, which are major nesting grounds for the Olive Ridley Turtle.

The OMRCC has argued that the setting up of the sanctuaries would adversely affect the livelihoods of the local communities here and would not benefit conservation in the long run either. Regret was also expressed over the fact that the state government had not yet made efforts to include local fisherfolk in the conservation efforts even in areas where they had expressed interest in participating.

The OMRCC is an informal body comprising various members from civil society, including fishworker unions, conservation organisations, development NGOs, turtle biologists and individuals interested in sea turtle conservation measures and in the welfare of fisheries in Orissa. The OMRCC and its support group comprise of biologists from the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) Bangalore, national and local conservation

organisations such as the World Wide Fund for Nature-India, Greenpeace, Operation Kachhapa, the Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee (RSTPC), Green Life Rural Association, Sea Turtle Action Programme, and fishworker support organisations such as the United Artists Association and the Orissa Traditional Fish Workers' Union (OTFWU) and several interested individuals from the State and across the country.

The consortium, in a press release issued in the last week of February, expressed concern over the continued mortality (total numbers exceed 100,000 turtles over the last decade) of olive ridleys in Orissa due to mechanised fisheries and trawling operations, non implementation of the provisions of the Orissa Marine Fisheries Regulation Act - 1982 (see *PA Update* 53) as also the recent directions of the Supreme Court appointed Central Empowered Committee to strictly enforce regulations on mechanized fishing.

Source: Press statement issued by the OMRCC, 25/02/05.  
'Fishermen frown on turtle project', *The Statesman*, 26/02/05.

Contact: **K. Alleya**, Coordinator, OMRCC, At: Sana Aryapali, PO: Bada Aryapali, Via: Ganjam - 761020, Orissa. Tel: 06811-262286. Fax: 254314. Email: offwu@hotmail.com

### **Nearly ten lakh migratory birds visit Chilka**

A census conducted in January, earlier this year, has reported over 9.48 lakh migratory birds in Chilka Lake. The census was jointly conducted by the wildlife wing of Orissa Forest Department, the Chilka Development Authority (CDA) and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

Foreign ornithologists participated for the first time in the exercise that also saw the first use of the global positioning system (GPS). The bird experts from abroad

included four from Russia, two each from Germany and UK and one from Japan.

As per the census, of the 9.48 lakh winged visitors, 2.36 lakh were seen in the Nalabana bird sanctuary inside the lake. The rest were found in different places like Mangalajodi, Bhusandapur and Sorana.

Source: 'Lakhs of migratory birds visit Chilka Lake', *Deccan Herald*, 16/01/05.

Contact: **AK Patnaik**, CDA, see above

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

## **RAJASTHAN**

### **SC orders release of water in Keoladeo**

Following a report submitted by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC), a Bench comprising Justice Sabarwal, Justice Pasayat and Justice Kapadia has issued a notice to the Government of Rajasthan to release water in the parched Keoladeo Ghana National Park. The CEC report came in response to a petition filed by Harsh Vardhan, of the Tourism and Wildlife Society of India seeking the Court's intervention in the matter.

Senior Advocate and *Amicus Curiae*, Harish Salve in his report suggested that the Gambhir River is the only source of water to the Park, and that it was absolutely necessary for water to be released from the Panchna Dam. The Supreme Court was asked to intervene and take immediate action and look at long-term solutions by preserving the wetland-heritage for both its wildlife and dependent people.

Source: 'SC orders release of water in Keoladeo', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 12/03/05.

Contact: **Director, Keoladeo Ghana NP**, Forest Department, Bharatpur- 321 001 Rajasthan

## State government special committee seeks emergency status for Ranthambhore

A Special Committee, set up by the Rajasthan Government, which visited the Ranthambhore National Park from March 12 for assessing the status of wild tigers there, sounded a red alert for the park and sought to declare an "emergency" situation. A brief note by the committee said that there was a definite decline in tiger sightings in the park between October 2004 and March 2005 and this was reported by both the Forest Department as well as tourists.

The recommendations of the committee include sealing of the park against intruders and deployment of 100 extra home guards. It has also sought intensified patrolling, particularly on foot as well as night patrols, raids on suspected camps of poachers and allocation of funds for intelligence gathering and cancellation of leave of the park staff. The committee has decided to supervise a detailed tiger census in Ranthambhore and Sariska TRs in May 2005.

Members of the committee included wildlife experts, Valmik Thapar and Belinda Wright, Chief Wildlife Warden of Rajasthan, Arun Sen, who was member secretary, and Rajpal Singh, author and honorary Wildlife Warden of Jaipur.

Source: Sunny Sebastian. 'Tigers vanish from Ranthambhore too', *The Hindu*, 15/03/05.

Contact: **Director**, Ranthambore TR, Sawai Madhopur - 322 001.  
**CWLW** - Rajasthan, Van Bhavan, Vaniki Path, Jaipur - 302 005. Rajasthan.  
Tel: 0141-2380832 / 2540531. Fax: 2380496/ 2380832

## TAMIL NADU

### Call to declare Tamil Nadu wetlands as bird sanctuaries

Dr. Robert Grubh, Director, Institute for Restoration of Natural Environment has

suggested that the many excellent wetlands in the Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and Tuticorin districts of Tamil Nadu must be preserved and declared as sanctuaries as thousands of resident and migratory birds flock here annually. He was speaking at a workshop for foresters and rangers of the Forest Department held on February 18 in Tirunelveli in connection with the 'World Wetland Day.'

The fresh water wetland that he specifically mentioned included those at Suchindram, Thearoor, Puththaeri, Chunkaankadai, Vembanur, Irachchakulam, Kothandaramankulam, Sengulam and Veeraani — in Kanyakumari district, Karungulam, Ariyakulam, Velloor, Kadamba — in Tuticorin district and all the wetlands close to the course of the perennial Tamirabarani River.

Source: Declare wetlands as sanctuaries', *The Hindu*, 19/02/05.

Contact: **CWLW**, Tamil Nadu, 6D, Panagal Building, No.1, Jeenis Road, Saidapet, Chennai - 600015. Tel: 044-24321738 / 22353589. Fax: 2433707/24321738

## UTTARANCHAL

### Elephant rampage in Rajaji continues

Wildlife elephants continued to destroy property and kill people in and around the Rajaji National Park (RNP). In addition to deaths in December (See *PA Update* 53), a fifty year old woman and a youth who were collecting firewood were trampled to death by tuskers near the Chila and Laldangh ranges of park, in the middle of January.

A few days earlier a tusker in 'musth' had attacked a school bus from Haryana and broken its windowpanes. Similar other incidents have been reported from several areas in the periphery of Rajaji Park, situated on the eastern edge of the Doon Valley.

Wildlife experts have suggested that this is the time of the year when elephants become sexually active and reckless and aggressive too. They have suggested that people should not venture into the park and

should remain extremely alert to the presence of any tusker.

Source: 'Tuskers on rampage; two killed',  
*Deccan Herald*, 19/01/05.

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, Shivalik House,  
Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal.  
**CWLW**, Uttaranchal, 85, Rajpur Road,  
Dehradun, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-  
744225 / 679817. Fax: 675138/747669

## WEST BENGAL

### Demand for elephant squad adjoining Jaldapara WLS

Residents living in the vicinity of the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary have renewed their demand for the formation of elephant squads to deal with the problem of destruction to property and human life due to the wild elephants in the region.

Some of the worst suffering areas in Salkumar-I and Salkumar-II gram panchayats are Shishubari, Mandalpara, Jaldapara, Suripara, Pradhanpara, Natunpara and Sidhabari, where villagers are forced to spend sleepless nights fearing attacks by wild elephants. The villagers here are also reported to have been aggrieved at the alleged inaction of the forest officials'

A senior forest official however has said that three elephant squads had been formed at Jaldapara sometime ago. Among those, two were formed to save the villagers of Sibnathpur, Kunjanagar, Bhairaber-hat, Salkumar-I and Salkumar-II and Purba Kathalguri gram panchayat areas. Another squad was formed for the residents of the villages adjacent to the Chilapata forests. He also admitted, however, that the squads had gone defunct due to various reasons.

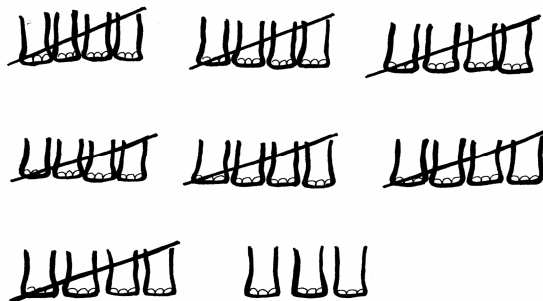
Source: 'Elephant squad eludes Dooars', *The Statesman*, 11/01/05.

## North Bengal wild elephant census in April

A census of wild elephants in the forests of North Bengal is to be conducted between April 21 and 28. The Eastern Dooars Elephant Reserve would be divided into two sectors for conducting the census and each sector would be coordinated by a sector coordinator.

The first sector of the Eastern Dooars Elephant Reserve will be between the Torsa River and the Sankosh River, comprising forests of Buxa Tiger Reserve and Cooch Behar Forest Division. The elephant range from Torsa River to Mechi River will be considered as the second sector for the census. The entire Wildlife-I, Wildlife-II, Jalpaiguri, Kalimpong, Baikanthapur, Kurseong and Cooch Behar Divisions will be covered under the elephant census.

306 census teams, consisting of about 1,200 forest personnel including representatives from 11 non-government organisations, will conduct the census with the help of 50 captive elephants. A total of 292 wild elephants had been counted in this region during the last census that was conducted in 2000. FD officials are of the opinion that the number of animals has now increased period.



It was also announced that during the census no visitors will be allowed in the forests and so the bungalows in the forests will be kept closed for tourists from 16 April to 29 April

Source: 'North Bengal wild elephant census in April', *The Statesman*, 10/02/05.

Contact: **Field Director**, Buxa Tiger Reserve, P.O.  
Alipurduar, Dist. Jalpaiguri - 736 122.  
West Bengal. Tel: 03564-256333 /255979.  
Fax: 03564-255577

**DFO, Wildlife (II),** Aranya Bhawan  
(Near Court), Jalpaiguri, West Bengal.  
Tel: 03561-24907(O) / 30383 (R).  
E-mail: wild2@dte.vsnl.net.in

### **Lights to scare elephants**

Wildlife authorities in West Bengal have proposed to light up paths along the forests in an attempt to keep elephants away from human settlements. The initiative is to be attempted in the worst affected districts of Purulia, Bankura, West Midnapore, where elephants migrate in from the neighbouring forests in Jharkhand including the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary (see *PA Updates* 50, 47 & 38). The other district where this will be tried is Jalpaiguri in North Bengal

This unconventional method of using lights is to scare elephants by blinding them and will come into operation from the middle of April.

Source: 'Lights to scare elephants',  
[www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), 16/02/05.

**CWLW**, West Bengal, Vikas Bhawan,  
North Block, Salt Lake, Calcutta 700  
091. Tel: 033-23346900/23583208.  
Fax: 23345946. Email:  
wildlife@cal.vsnl.net.in

## **NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA**

### **Meeting of the National Board for Wildlife**

The National Board for Wildlife, chaired by the Prime Minister met in New Delhi in March, 17 months after its last meeting.

Some of the important decisions that were taken at the meeting include:

- Consideration of the proposal for constituting two separate secretariats – one for wildlife and forests and the other for the environment
- The constitution of a Task Force on the status of tigers in the country. The

proposed task force will include forest officials, representatives of civil society and wildlife experts.

- The acceptance of the proposal to establish a National Wildlife Crime Prevention and Control Bureau
- Agreement to allow access into protected forest areas for professional researchers and others for the purpose of scientific research
- Commissioning of a special study on the status of vultures in the country

Source: 'PM orders task force on tigers', *Indian Express*, 18/03/05.

### **Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize for Arjan Singh**

Well known tiger conservationist, 'Billy Arjan Singh was conferred the J Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize in February 2005 in 'recognition of his outstanding contributions to the protection of tigers and the Dudhwa Reserve'.

The Getty Prize, which recognises pioneers in the field of conservation, is administered by World Wildlife Fund- United States and carries with it prize money of \$100,000, which Mr. Arjan Singh shares with Florida's Tony Iarocchi, a commercial fisherman believed to have pioneered marine conservation in the region.

Earlier recipients of the prize from India include after Dr Salim Ali (1975) and the West Bengal Forest Protection Committees (1992/93).

Source: 'Billy' Arjan Singh receives coveted Getty Award', [www.sanctuaryasia.com](http://www.sanctuaryasia.com), - 04/02/05.

### **Project Tiger annual meeting at Bandipur**

A two day annual review of Project Tiger Authorities to discuss issues of wildlife conservation in general and of the tiger in particular was held in Bandipur Tiger Reserve in the first week of February.



Those who attended the meeting included Mr. Rajesh Gopal, Director, Project Tiger; Mr Katwal, Additional Director General of Forests, Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi; Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Mr Ray; Tiger Reserve Field Directors and wildlife officials from the states of Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal



Source: 'Experts camp at Bandipur to discuss wildlife conservation', *Deccan Herald*, 03/02/05.

## SOUTH ASIA

### **Bhutan**

#### **Bhutan to establish forestry studies institute**

The Bhutanese Government will be setting up the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute of Forestry and Environmental Studies in Bumthang for the purpose of training forest guards, technicians and professionals. The institute is being set up with a US \$1.5 million grant from the MacArthur Foundation.

This new institute will absorb and expand the training functions currently provided by the Bhutan Forestry Institute in Taba, which will be closed over a two year transition period.

Source: 'Bhutan to establish forestry studies institute', *TigerPaper*, Oct-Dec. 2004

### **SRI LANKA**

#### **Lunugamvehera National Park opened to public**

The Lunugamvehera National Park, located in the Moneragala District of the Uva Province was recently opened to the public by Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse. The park covering an area of nearly 240 sq. kms was created in December 1995, but had not been open for the general public to visit.

The Lunugamvehera National Park was established for protection as a corridor for elephant migration from the Yala National Park to the Uda Walawe National Park's Western region and for the protection of the catchment areas of the Lunugamvehera Reservoir, spread over 32.83 sq. kms inside the park.

The park extends to areas of Thanamalwila, Wellawaya, Kataragama, Buttala and to the Hambantota District in the south and is home to a wide range of plants and animals including elephants wild buffaloes, fishing cat, grey mongoose, bear, wild boar, spotted deer and mouse deer.

Source: 'Lunugamvehera National Park opened to public', *Daily News*, 09/02/05.

#### **Wildlife Rangers to be on par with Armed Forces, Police**

The Sri Lankan Environment and Natural Resources Minister, AHM Fowzie has recently submitted a proposal to the Cabinet for Wildlife Range Officers to be given the same recognition as that of Officers in the Armed Forces and the Police. The proposal also recommends that Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC) field officers be placed on the same salary scale and be granted all privileges enjoyed by officers of the armed forces and the police.

The Minister also said that a decision had been taken to increase the payment of compensation to Rs. 100,000 to the DWLC officers killed while on duty.

Source: Wildlife rangers to be on par with armed forces, police, <http://www.dailynews.lk/>

## UPCOMING

### 9<sup>th</sup> International Wildlife Law Conference

The 9<sup>th</sup> International Wildlife Law Conference (IWLC) will take place on November 4-5, 2005 at the Tulane University Law School in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA.

Participants will be invited to develop articles for a special symposium issue of the Journal of International Wildlife Law & Policy.

Contact: **William Burns**. American Society of International Law – International Environmental Law Group, 1702 Arlington Blvd., El Cerrito, CA 94530, USA. Email: [jiwlp@pacbell.net](mailto:jiwlp@pacbell.net). Website: [www.jiwlp.com](http://www.jiwlp.com)

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Opportunities with ATREE

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has advertised the following positions for its team in Bangalore:

#### 1. Fellow in Environmental Governance

S/he must be willing to build a program of research, policy and advocacy in the field of Environmental Governance. S/he must be familiar with relevant policies and institutions. S/he must be interested in catalyzing meaningful exchange and action among government, non-government, and corporate sector institutions involved in environmental governance. The applicant would be expected to lead a program in environmental governance, and contribute to *Protected Area Update* 54

the development of ATREE's planned Center for Conservation, Governance and Policy. This position is supported by an endowment from the Arghyam Foundation.

#### 2. Fellow in Conservation, Livelihoods and Policy

S/he must develop a research-based policy oriented program in Conservation and Livelihoods at ATREE. S/he should be familiar with current theories and approaches in biodiversity conservation. The person would be expected to strengthen ATREE's program in Conservation and Livelihoods, and contribute to the development of ATREE's planned Center for Conservation, Governance and Policy. This position is supported by an endowment from the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust.

*Qualifications needed:* A Ph.D or Masters degree with demonstrated record in any field. Must be open to work as part of a multidisciplinary team of natural and social scientists committed to balancing the demands of conservation and development.

Contact: **The Director**, ATREE, #659, 5<sup>th</sup> A Main Road, Hebbal, Bangalore - 560024, Karnataka. Tel: 080-23533942 / 23530069 Fax: 080-23530070, Email: [director@atree.org](mailto:director@atree.org); [info@atree.org](mailto:info@atree.org) Website: [www.atree.org](http://www.atree.org)

#### **Managing Editor for *Conservation and Society***

*Conservation and Society*, an interdisciplinary journal exploring linkages between society, environment and development has invited applications for the position of Managing Editor.

The candidate should have a Masters degree in a discipline relevant to conservation science, and excellent writing skills. Candidates with a thorough working and experiential knowledge in the journal's broad areas of interest (conservation science) and a strong interest in communication of scientific ideas are particularly encouraged to apply.

Responsibilities include working with the editors on all aspects of the editorial process, including commissioning and editing contributions, organising peer-review, developing the editorial content for print and online editions and developing grant proposals. The managing editor will be in charge of the production, promotion, marketing and distribution of the journal.

This is a full time position based in Bangalore with competitive salary and benefits and will commence from April 2005.

Contact: **The Executive Editor**, Conservation and Society, c/o ATREE, 659, 5<sup>th</sup> A Main Rd, Hebbal, Bangalore 560024. Tel: 080-23533942, 23530069 Fax: 23530070. Email: [editor@conservationandsociety.org](mailto:editor@conservationandsociety.org)

### **Samrakshan seeks people in Meghalaya and Madhya Pradesh**

Samrakshan Trust is an organization working with people around protected areas in an effort to harmonise livelihood needs of local communities with conservation imperatives.

The Trust has advertised the following openings:

A) Ecologist/Wildlife Biologist to join its team based in the Garo Hills, Meghalaya  
Qualifications required: Master's degree in Wildlife Biology/ Ecology. A Ph.D. desirable.

Responsibilities include: identifying habitat use by elephants in community lands in the South Garo Hills and determining the elephant presence/absence using feeding signs & dung encounters; delineation of the areas within the landscape being used by the elephants and determining the seasonal movement patterns and use of different habitat types within the landscape; GIS applications; handling of documentation, monitoring and planning of the ecological aspects of the organization's intervention and designing future ecological studies within the landscape.

B) Social Development Professional to join the team in the South Garo Hills Meghalaya.

The specific initiative is aimed at working with farmers in the South Garo Hills in order to raise productivity of their land. The initiative involves fostering people's institutions that will undertake activities to improve livelihood security of local communities living in the Rongara and Baghmara areas of the South Garo Hills district.

Qualifications required: Masters degree (preferably in Social Work), and good English writing skills. Familiarity with the Garo language will be a must.

Contact: **Nimesh Ved**, Samrakshan trust Meghalaya Field Office, c/o. Dorikson G. Momin, Rangdokram, P.O. Baghmara, Dist. South Garo Hills – 794102, Meghalaya. Tel: 03639- 222187. Email: [nimesh@samrakshan.org](mailto:nimesh@samrakshan.org)

### **THE CHILIKA STATEMENT** **Bhubaneswar, February 9, 2005**

*We, the 400 participants from 32 countries, at the Asian Wetlands Symposium 2005, having met at Bhubaneswar and Chilika, Orissa, India, from 6-9 February 2005, hereby RECOGNISE:*

Wetlands in Asia have traditionally provided people with ecological security & livelihood support through their natural processes & functions. Increasing population pressures and lack of awareness about the role of wetlands have led to degradation of wetlands & increased

vulnerability for local users. There is an urgent need to address the challenges posed by unbalanced sectoral development, poverty, and inadequate capacity for effective restoration and management of wetlands.

That building upon the Asian Wetland Symposia of 1992 & 2001 and their recommendations that provided an effective mechanism for promoting conservation and wise use of wetlands in Asia through networking of international and national organizations and individuals. New strategic directions, partnerships and pioneering examples of community-based management are emerging through sharing of experiences and knowledge within the region.

That Chilika Lagoon in India is an outstanding example of wetland conservation & wise use following the principles of integrated management with strong emphasis on local peoples' participation & shared decision-making through networking of local, national & international experiences. Restoration measures adopted have led to significant improvement in socio-economic conditions of communities' dependant on Chilika Lagoon for livelihoods while maintaining ecological integrity.

That the recent *tsunami* in the Indian Ocean severely affected the coastal resource base & livelihoods of many people, and has posed new challenges for restoration of coastal wetlands, including mangroves, sea grasses, coral reefs & other related ecosystems.

**Thus, we URGE:**

That degradation of wetlands caused by unsustainable development be urgently halted & reversed, and knowledge based strategies and techniques adopted for conservation & restoration of wetland ecosystems and livelihood improvement of communities. The cultural values of wetlands having great relevance to wetland communities be recognized & integrated into wetland management practices. Mainstreaming of their ecological & socio economic values into developmental planning be promoted to achieve poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods.

**Therefore, we CALL FOR ACTION:**

That innovative ecosystem based approaches be adopted to promote wetland conservation & management to support sustainable livelihoods with emphasis on:

- maintenance of optimal environmental flows to ensure functional integrity of wetland ecosystems;

- Promotion of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of wetland resources incorporating traditional knowledge and wisdom of local people;

- Documentation and sharing of cultural heritage and values to provide a platform for conservation and management;

- Urgently support local livelihoods through traditional knowledge base and eco-enterprises, including eco-tourism, and promote public-private partnerships for adding value to wetland products to generate additional income and thereby reduce pressures on wetland resources;

- Strengthening of community based institutions and traditional resource user groups to ensure their rights and interests are recognised in the process of planning, development and implementation of wetland management plans;

- Mainstreaming wetlands into sectoral development planning at all levels to ensure sustainable development;

- Adoption of wetland conservation & management policies, plans & strategies for the wise use of wetlands;

- Identification, promotion, and replication of successful cases of partnerships for wetland management & conservation, and disseminate these examples at the local, national & regional levels;

- Assignment of the highest priority to education and awareness activities as the foundation towards changing attitudes and perceptions towards sustainable wetland management;

- Strengthening and development of capacity building programs for wetland managers, policy makers, planners, practitioners, media, decision makers and local communities;

- Restoration of wetlands to maintain ecological integrity & productivity to sustain local livelihoods

- Urgent actions for rehabilitation of coastal wetlands affected by the *tsunami* to restore sustainable livelihoods of the affected communities and conservation of biodiversity.

## IN THE SUPREME COURT

- 1) **Hearings before the CEC on 18/01/05**
- 2) **Godavarman Case: Update on hearings held on January 28, 2005**
- 3) **Forest Cases in February 2005: An Overview**

### 1) Hearings before the CEC on 18/01/05

- *Application No.46 by Alok Krishna Agarwal Regarding Protection of Endangered Olive Ridley Sea Turtle in Orissa*

The CEC highlighted that a number of hearings had taken place in this case and the CEC has also conducted a site visit. It was also pointed out that there were detailed directions given by the Orissa High Court, in this matter. The representative of the state government highlighted a number of steps that have been taken towards conservation and protection of the sea turtles, including restrictions on fishing (including no fishing in Gahirmatha Sanctuary), licensing of fishing boats, patrolling, seizures and so on. It was highlighted that the state government is aware of the sensitivity of the area. The applicant highlighted that very few or none of these measures were being implemented on the ground; for eg., no seizures had taken place and neither had the boats been registered. There was also no deployment of the coast guard. The applicant highlighted that there is 90% non-compliance in this case. The CEC directed the state government to file an affidavit with full details of the all the action taken up by the state government, in two weeks time. They also highlighted that in this case the applicant and the respondent need to work together.

See: Forest Case Update, Issue 2, July 2004

- *Application No. 337 by Ashok Kumar Senior Advisor and Trustee, Wildlife Trust of India, Regarding Village Lal Dhang in Corbett Tiger Reserve*

It was highlighted that in the last hearing in this case, the CEC had asked the state administration to take up the matter. It deals with the setting up of a Hot Mix plant up in Aampokhra Reserved Forest and also the illegal widening of a road into the Corbett Tiger Reserve. The CEC stated that this is a case with a problem of enforcement and it should have been pursued by the state forest department. In this light the CEC will take up the matter separately with the state administration, including a meeting with the Chief Secretary of Uttaranchal, along with the concerned revenue officials.

See: Forest Case Update, Issue 6, November 2004

- *Application No. 418 by World Wide Fund for Nature- India Regarding assault to Front Line Field Staff of Forest Department of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and forced grazing inside the park*

It was highlighted by the applicant that there needs to be some permanent solution that needs to be sought for this problem, as it recurs every year and that short term measures would not be adequate. The state government was also given directions in this matter. Related problems of the forest department being short staffed, and the problem of wood cutting in the area were also highlighted. Irrigation projects also needed to be reviewed. The CEC has asked MoEF to respond in the case. It was pointed out that on behalf of the CEC, Valmik Thapar, member would be in the area from 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> January 2005. A plan will have to be worked out for the occurrence of prosopis in

the area, as well as other issues. The CEC highlighted to the state government, that if any modifications were sought to be made to the 14.2.2000 order of the Supreme Court, then the submissions could be made to Mr. Valmik Thapar.

- *Application No. 543 by Manjit Ahaluwalia Regarding Direction to the Respondents regarding the construction of the Pucca Road in the Bandavgarh National Park and to stop further construction (Khatauli Dhamodar Range),*

This matter dealt with the construction of a road in Bandavgarh National Park. There were detailed arguments in this case. The Director of the National Park stated that the road was 3m wide and tarred/*pucca* road, and only repair work has been carried out. The applicants pointed out that it was false and that the road was not tarred or *pucca*, and it is part of the contract for road construction given to a Malaysian company, 5.8 kms of the road is within the national park. The CEC directed the State Government to submit details of PWD records, the tender notice and other related documents to prove that the road was a tarred road within two weeks.

- *Application No. 569 Reserve by M. Sunil For Direction in the matter of Development of Sabrimalam inside the Periyar Tiger*

In this case the CEC highlighted that the CEC is not a forum to challenge High Court orders, as had been done. Both the respondents and CEC advised the applicants to withdraw the case and file it in an appropriate forum, as the series of issues raised in the application are important. The application was withdrawn with liberty to file a fresh application.

### **1) Godavarman Case: Update on hearings held on January 28, 2005**

The Godavarman Case was heard in Supreme Court on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2005. Several matters were heard in detail, and presented below are a few highlights.

One of the IAs listed was **IA 826 In IA 566** for recommendations of the CEC in IA 566 and modification of the court's order dated 30.10.2002. IA 566 is regarding creation of compensatory afforestation fund (see *PA Update 50*) and charging net present value (NPV) of forestland diverted for non-forest purpose. The Amicus pointed out that the affidavit of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) stating that certain projects be kept out of NPV was objectionable; for example mining is proposed to be kept out of the purview and also hydel power projects in view of their non polluting nature. However, the Amicus raised the issue of the ecological and other impact of hydel projects. The Amicus suggested that it is important that the court keeps aside one clear day to discuss this and related IAs. It was agreed that the Amicus will give suggestions on this issue within three weeks time based on aspects should be left out from NPV (for instance small schools) and a classification of industries (infrastructure, hydro power etc). After this areas of difference can be crystallized and one clear Friday afternoon after about eight weeks can be kept aside only to discuss this matter. The court agreed to this suggestion.

In **IA 930** with reference to demarcation of the boundaries of the Matheran Ecologically Sensitive Area, it was highlighted that the government has delayed the process for a year and there are encroachments in the forest area. In the 15.10.2004 hearing of the Godavarman case the Supreme Court had granted time till December 2004. The court here ordered the state government to file a response within one week's time.

Another important case that was heard was with reference to the CEC orders on the closure of saw mills near Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary in Maharashtra in response to Application 406 filed by Bombay Environmental Action Group (see *PA Update 50*). Earlier, a site inspection was carried out by the Regional office of the MoEF and it



was revealed that certain number of saw mills had been allowed to function in violation of the order of the Supreme Court dated 14-7-2003. The counsel representing two of these units (Oriental and Pagoda) raised several objections to the orders of the CEC directing the closure of the units. According to the counsel, the units are using only imported timber and make plywood by peeling machines. There was therefore, no impact on the wildlife sanctuary. The state government had granted them a No Objection Certificate (NOC) based on which they were operating and also that the closure was ordered without giving an opportunity to the units to be heard. Interestingly according to the state government records the unit had been closed in 1999. The court point out that the operation of the units is in violation of the Supreme Court's orders and also questioned if the unit was, indeed, using only imported plywood, then what was the need for it to be situated only one kilometer from the boundary of the Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary. It was finally ordered that the CEC would hear both parties (the Applicant and the State Government) and the concerned units) and submit a report before 4<sup>th</sup> February 2005. The hearing would take place on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2005. It was ordered that a responsible officer from the state government be present with the relevant records.

**IA 1843** was with reference to the collection of Tendu Leaves in sanctuaries and national parks in Madhya Pradesh. The court took the view that since the application does not state what has been the difficulty in the four year old order, the case would need to be dismissed.

**IA 1169** was in reference to the allotment of forestland in the Gir National Park in Gujarat for a pasture land. The CEC has held an opinion that this is in violation of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. The Amicus suggested that the court direct MoEF to file a reply on whether any such permission have been granted in any of the national parks and sanctuaries as no pasturelands in these protected areas is allowed to be used. The counsel for the MoEF pointed out that no new permissions had

been granted after the 14.2.2000 order of the Supreme Court.

### **3) Forest Cases in February 2005: An Overview**

Four hearings were held in the Godavarman case in the month of February. A range of issues were covered ranging from NPV to encroachments and illegal mining. It was revealed that despite the regular monitoring of the Court, violations as well as tendency to allow prohibited activities inside national parks, sanctuaries and forests was rampant. The Supreme Court, while setting aside the order allowing for mining in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar, once again reminded all states of the fact that mining in any protected area is not permissible without its specific approval.

The non release of water and the resultant damage to the Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur, Rajasthan was the focus of attention of the CEC. The matter was heard at length with detailed presentation by the Government of Rajasthan. The CEC is now in the process of sending its recommendation based on the letter petition by the Tourism and Wildlife Society of Rajasthan as well as the Writ Petition filed by the Wildlife Trust of India before the Rajasthan High Court which has been referred to the CEC.

The Centre for Environmental Law case (337 of 1995) (see *PA Update* 52) though listed for hearing was adjourned for four weeks.

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

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