

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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LIST OF CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Will wildlife matter? 3

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

Andhra Pradesh

Land sought to be diverted from Krishna WLS for DRDO project 3

Arunachal Pradesh

India, China and Myanmar to co-operate for management of Brahmaputra-Salween landscape; Namdapha TR to benefit 4

Assam

Four trampled to death by wild elephant in Udalgiri, Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve
Additional force for Kaziranga NP in the monsoons
Plea to extend counter-insurgency operations to Kaziranga NP to deal with poaching
Forest guards foil rhino poaching attempt at Orang National Park 4

Goa

Goa urges centre to reduce PA buffer zones; to review ban on mining in buffer zones 6

Gujarat

WII to study lions living outside Gir
Gir NP closed for tourists till October 15
FD recommends alternative route for Pipavav railway line to prevent lion deaths 7

Jharkhand

Jharkhand prepares to follow online forest clearance system 7

Karnataka

FD instructed to speed up rehabilitation of residents from Kudremukh NP
Forest watcher shoots tusker in Nagarahole National Park 8

Kerala

Road project for Parambikulam TR suspended
75 families from Kurichyat to be relocated from the Wayanad WLS 9

Madhya Pradesh

Forest ranger, guard found in Panna TR with throats slit
Drones to watch over Panna Tiger Reserve
MP forwards Rs. 80 crore lion conservation proposal to MoEF 10

Maharashtra

Sanjay Gandhi NP gets Rs 15 crore compensation for proposed freight corridor
125 sq. km FDCM area brought under the control of the Tadoba Andhari TR 11

Odisha

Decline in elephant casualties in Odisha
Elephants continue to be in danger of electrocution in Sajnararh area
Staff crunch for STPF at Similipal TR
Elephants for protection of Similipal NP
FD initiates the process of shifting 'strayed' tiger to Similipal TR
Prawn hatchery poses threat to turtle nestings at Rushikulya rookery 11

Punjab

Punjab proposes to restrict eco-sensitive zones to a 100 m radius around PAs 13

Tamil Nadu

Panel constituted for preservation of eco-sensitive areas 14

Uttarakhand

Camera traps at Rajaji NP for rainy season
Valley of Flowers to remain inaccessible for another year 14

Uttar Pradesh

Pilibhit WLS gets tiger reserve status 15

West Bengal

West Bengal failed to follow guidelines, utilise Project Tiger funds: CAG
Fisherman killed by a tiger in Sundarbans
Two elephants mowed down by a train in Buxa TR
State tourism project to come up in elephant corridor connecting Mahananda WLS 15

NATIONAL NEWS	16	Assam	
Railways push for green clearance to 40 key projects		Traditional ‘gamosas’ to take vulture conservation message to people	
SOUTH ASIA	17	Rehabilitation package for Deepor Beel WLS fisherfolk	
Bangladesh		Delhi/Uttar Pradesh	
Entry to the Sunderbans to be restricted		Delhi to propose 100 m eco-sensitive zone around Okhla Bird Sanctuary	
Bangladesh preparing Elephant Action Plan		Madhya Pradesh	
Nepal		NGT asks for closure of mine, hotmix plant near Sailana Sanctuary	
Pied cuckoo and Common Emerald dove sighted for the 1 st time in the Annapurna Conservation Area		Rajasthan	
IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS UPDATE	18	Solar power project threat to Sambhar lake	
National News		Dam projects considered in the past 4	
Hornbill Watch: Website Launched		Maharashtra SBWL Meetings	22
Andaman & Nicobar Islands		A DECADE AGO	23
Approval for radar station at Narcondam Island Wildlife Sanctuary		PERSPECTIVE	24
		The CEPF Western Ghats – Challenges faced and lessons learnt	

Protected Area Update

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EDITORIAL

Will wildlife matter?

It's only two months since the new government came to power at the Centre and the answer to the title question already seems evident. The editorial in the last issue of the *PA Update* had asked the question Does Wildlife matter? and had expressed concerns over the broad economic and developmental thrusts of the government, particularly for the impact this would have on wildlife and wildlife habitats. If the policy announcements and actual decisions on the ground are anything to go by, there is clearly a lot to worry about.

The Coast Guard radar project on Narcondam Island, the home of the unique and endemic Narcondam Hornbill, has been revived, the Naval base at Karwar in Karnataka has been granted environmental clearance, projects in border areas will now have to worry much less about the environment, the Railways have sought speedy clearance for nearly 40 projects that are awaiting environmental clearance, the project to link rivers across the country is being pushed again and as we can see in this very issue of the *PA Update*, states like Punjab and Goa have made a strong pitch for a drastically reduced eco-sensitive zone around protected areas. The ministry has also decided to streamline the overall process of environmental and forest clearance, a move many allege is directed towards making forest land diversion for projects easier and faster. And all of these are only in addition to a number of other projects and proposals that are at different stages of seeking or getting clearances including those within PAs in any case (this issue of the *PA Update* has many such examples).

Not only are environmental clearances being granted with alacrity, the rhetoric has also been ramped up that the environment is coming in the way of the progress of the country. The controversial Intelligence Bureau report targeting NGOs for their oppositional role is based on the same premise and though a legacy of the earlier government, is very much in line

with and even bolsters the position of the current powers that be. Add to this the fact that the allocation for the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) was slashed drastically in the latest budget, that land acquisition for industrial and other such projects is sought to be made easier and a move is on towards only 'limited' consent by local people sufficing for approval for projects - and the picture that emerges is a clear one.

It is a point that commentators, as also the editorial in the *PA Update* has made repeatedly over the years and might well be repeating again. Development and economic growth that compromises the livelihood base of a majority of the people and the environmental and ecological security of the country cannot be sustainable. The price we have to pay for this is already huge and will only escalate if the course we are taking is not corrected at the earliest.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

Land sought to be diverted from Krishna WLS for DRDO project

The Andhra Pradesh State Wildlife Board is seeking the Centre's nod for the use of 383 acres of forest land for the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) proposed Missile Test Launch Facility in Nagayalanka mandal of Krishna district. The Rs. 1,000 crore project will need 60 acres of land from the Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary (KWLS), while the remaining portion comprises reserved forest and mangroves.

In February 2013, the then Defence Minister, A.K. Antony, had informed the Rajya Sabha that the Andhra Pradesh government had been requested to "spare unassigned revenue and reserve forest land at Nagayalanka" for setting up the project. Based on the DRDO's land suitability report in and around Sorlagondi Reserve Forest and surrounding areas in Nagayalanka, a team led by Chief Wildlife Warden and Principal Chief Conservator of

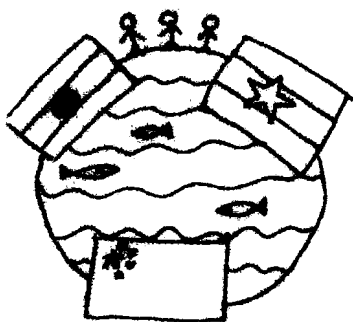
Forests (Wildlife) A.V. Joseph inspected the proposed site and found that a part of the land comprised forest area and the KWLS. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 1)

Source: '383 acres of forest land sought for missile test launch site', *The Hindu*, 26/06/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Krishna WLS, Dist. Krishna, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

India, China and Myanmar to co-operate for management of Brahmaputra-Salween landscape; Namdapha TR to benefit



The regional cooperation framework for the Brahmaputra-Salween trans-boundary landscape between China, India and Myanmar was finalised at a meeting at Nay Pyi Taw in Myanmar on June 26 and 27. The Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has taken up the trans-boundary project. The Namdapha Tiger Reserve (NTR) in Arunachal Pradesh will benefit from an agreement between the three countries.

The agreement will initiate scientific cooperation, knowledge-sharing and inter-country aid in formulating long-term conservation and development plans. ICIMOD would get partner institutions in each country together to have national consultations and prepare strategic documents. The G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, the partner institution from India, will soon start the process in India.

The NTR is surrounded by Myanmar on three sides and several endangered and rare species of fauna move between Namdapha and the adjacent areas in Myanmar. Experts at ICIMOD believe that managing the entire landscape will be beneficial for Namdapha and adjacent protected areas across the border. These protected areas run the risk, otherwise, of isolation and fragmentation.

The Brahmaputra-Salween landscape lies at the junction of three global biodiversity hotspots — the Himalayas, Indo-Burma and Mountains of Southwest China and between two important river systems — the Brahmaputra and the Salween. The 71,000 sq km landscape has seven important protected areas, including the NTR.



Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Tri-nation pact boost for Namdapha - India, China, Myanmar to cooperate on conservation of transboundary landscape', *The Telegraph*, 02/07/14.

ASSAM

Four trampled to death by wild elephant at Udalguri in Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve

Four persons were recently trampled to death by a wild elephant at Coramore under Paneri police station in Udalguri district near the Indo-Bhutan border. The event occurred in the early part of July in the area that is part of the Chirang-Ripu Elephant Reserve. Three of the four persons were killed when they were trying to drive the elephant back into the forest at the Coramore Tea Garden. The fourth person was killed by the same animal at Bormukuli, about one km from the site of the earlier incident.

Elephant-human conflict has assumed serious proportions in this area with 10 persons being killed by wild elephants this year alone in Udalguri district. 19 people were killed and 10

elephants died in the conflict here in the year 2013.

Officials and conservationists say that rapid encroachment in, and destruction of, forests in the region is the main cause of the escalating conflict. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, No. 4 and Vol. XVII, No. 6)

Source: 'Jumbo tramples four in Udalgiri', *The Telegraph*, 16/07/14.

Additional force for Kaziranga NP in the monsoons

The Kaziranga National Park will have about 150 additional men of the Assam Forest Protection Force (AFPF) for the monsoons. This is mainly to protect rhinos and other wildlife that move to the highlands of the Karbi Anglong to escape the floods of the Barhmaputra and where they are vulnerable to poaching attempts.

Source: Anup Sharma, 'More forces to protect wildlife from poachers in Kaziranga', *The Pioneer*, 23/06/14.

Plea to extend counter-insurgency operations to Kaziranga NP to deal with poaching

The Bokakhat sub-divisional administration of Golaghat district has asked for the extension of counter-insurgency operations to areas on the periphery of Kaziranga National Park (KNP) to curb rhino poaching. The proposal also calls for deployment of a force with amphibious capabilities to operate on both the banks of the Brahmaputra.

The proposal is part of a comprehensive report prepared by the administration on measures to be adopted to check rhino poaching. The report was submitted recently to the Chief Secretary. It has quoted and annexed recent intelligence reports from the Special Branch of Assam Police and the Union Home Ministry, which mentioned the involvement of cadres of the Karbi People's Liberation Tigers in rhino poaching in Kaziranga.

Of the 42 rhinos killed in the state by poachers last year, 27 were killed in Kaziranga, while this year, of the 19 rhinos killed till date, 15 have been killed in here.

The park has about 160 anti-poaching camps with about 1,200 employees belonging to different categories of organisations guarding the park. Forest guards, boatmen, home-guards and Assam Forest Protection Force staff are engaged in protecting the KNP.

The suggestions given in the report include;

- One company of the army currently stationed at Bagori should be "mandated" to monitor National Highway (NH) 37 from the Haldhibari corridor to Kuthori and the area extending to the adjoining hills.
- One additional company to be deployed at Burapahar for the Kanchanjuri-Burapahar-Ghorakati stretch of NH 37.
- The Mizo police battalion, currently stationed at Panbari and Hathikhuli, should be directed to monitor about 3 km of NH 37 in the adjoining areas to protect the animal corridors.
- Another company with amphibious capabilities should be stationed at Biswanath Chariali or Gohpur to operate on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. The force should be equipped with speedboats, inflatable rubber boats, night vision glasses and vehicles to carry out its operations on both land and water.
- Recruitment of 300 eligible youths from the fringe areas of Kaziranga as guards with 50 each from the five ranges of the park and another 50 from the adjoining Karbi Anglong district.

And,

- Formation of village defence parties (VDPs) under the name of Green Warriors or Green Guards in the villages surrounding KNP with stipends to be given by the corporate sector like in the case of oil companies providing VDPs engaged in guarding pipelines.

Source: Wasim Rahman, 'Push for forces in park - Plea to extend anti-militancy operations in Kaziranga', *The Telegraph*, 01/07/14.

Contact: **Director**, Kaziranga NP, PO Bokakhat, Dist. Golaghat – 785612, Assam. Tel: 03776-268095(O), 268086(R)

Forest guards foil rhino poaching attempt at Orang National Park

Forest guards at the Rajiv Gandhi (Orang) National Park (ONP) engaged in a gun battle with poachers and foiled an attempt to kill rhinos in early June. It was the fourth such poaching attempt in the park this year, all of which have been foiled by forest staff.

According to the Divisional Forest Officer, the gang of four poachers entered the park through the Kacharibheti area. They were accosted by forest guards as the forest department already had some intelligence about the possible attempt. The poachers fled following a gun battle that lasted about half an hour. A .303 rifle and four rounds of live cartridges were recovered from the encounter site. The forest staff were able to identify one of the poachers and raided his residence on the periphery of the park in the Kacharibheti area.

The park authorities have set up another anti-poaching camp at Kacharibheti this year, taking the number of such camps here to 40.

In another development, CPI (ML) activists are reported to have held a rally at Behali under Biswanath sub-division in Sonitpur district to protest against the state FD's failure to check rampant poaching of rhinos at Kaziranga National Park.

Source: 'Guards foil poaching bid - One Orang poacher identified but on the run', *The Telegraph*, 11/06/14.

Contact: **DFO**, Orang NP, Mangaldoi Wildlife Division, P.O. Mangaldoi, Darrang - 784 125, Tel: 0914-22065(O), 22349(R)

GOA

Goa urges centre to reduce PA buffer zones; to review ban on mining in buffer zones

The Goa government has urged the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to reduce the buffer zone around each of the six protected areas in the state. A zero buffer zone has been proposed around the Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary, while it is sought to be reduced to less than a kilometer in the case of the Cotigao WLS. For the rest, a one kilometer buffer has

been proposed with an option to phase out existing mining activity in these areas over the next ten years.

The Goa Chief Minister, Manohar Parrikar, has pointed out while making a case for these reduced buffer zones that Goa figured second after Sikkim in terms of forest cover and that the buffer zones in Sikkim were between 25-200 metres despite the fact that the state was located in the fragile Himalayan region.

The Union Minister Environment and Forests, Mr. Prakash Javadekar, has asked the state government to submit a 'case to case' proposal in this regard. He also indicated that the MoEF will review its earlier notification banning mining activity within a one kilometer radius of protected areas in Goa. The state may now be allowed to phase out mining in the buffer zones of protected areas in next 5-10 years instead of going ahead with the immediate outright ban. In April, earlier this year, the Supreme Court had partially lifted the 18-month-old mining ban in the state and allowed 20 million tonnes of iron ore to be extracted annually. The ban had been in force since 2012 in the wake of the recommendations of the Justice Shah Commission. (*PA Updates* Vol. XX, No. 3, Vol. XIX, Nos. 6 & 5)

Mr. Parrikar also expressed reservations over the Kasturirangan report on the Western Ghats amidst fears that the report might result in the conversion of 40% of Goa into an eco-sensitive zone making it a 'no-go' area for many activities. The MoEF has agreed to review the report after discussing the issue with other stakeholders including the five other states that have a section of the ghats- Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

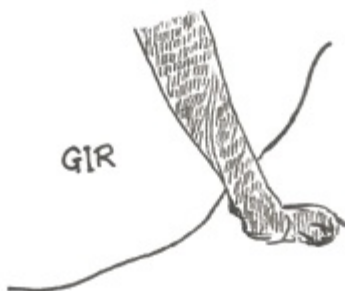
Source: 'Goa government for zero buffer zone around Salim Ali bird sanctuary', *DNA*, 11/06/14.

Vishwa Mohan. 'Government to review ban on mining in buffer zone in Goa', *The Times of India*, 11/06/14.

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

GUJARAT

WII to study lions living outside Gir



The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Gujarat Forest Department has initiated a project to track and study lions living outside the protected forests of Gir. Four lionesses from different prides have been radio-collared and another six are to be similarly collared soon for the purpose of the project. The study aims to reveal the movement patterns of the lions and to ascertain whether they return to the sanctuary frequently. It is expected to help researchers understand how much area a breeding female requires for hunting and for rearing her cubs.

As per the May 2010 census, there are 130 lions outside the sanctuary. But the numbers are expected to have increased since then.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Lions outside Gir get radio collar', *The Times of India*, 17/06/14.

Contact: **CF (Wildlife)** Junagadh, Sardar Bag, Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/630051. Fax: 631211. Email: cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in

Gir NP closed for tourists till October 15

The Gir National Park (NP) has been closed for the monsoons and will open for tourists only after October 15. The monsoon closure is a part of the park's management plan – on account of this being the breeding season for the lions and other species of wildlife and also because roads and paths in the forests are broken and washed away in the rains.

The forest staff also makes a special effort for the rescue and protection of animals that might be affected by the rains.

Source: 'Gir forest to be shut down till October 15', *The Hindu*, 16/06/14.

FD recommends alternative route for Pipavav railway line to prevent lion deaths

The Forest Department (FD) has asked for an alternative alignment for the railway line to the Pipavav port even if it requires a diversion of several kilometers. The recommendation comes after the death of six lions in two months in the Rajula region. All six lions died after being hit by goods trains travelling to or from the port.

The FD is open to fencing the route provided the railways permit underpasses at regular intervals. It has surveyed the area and decided that there should be around 27 underpasses on the 3 km stretch where lion prides are found. The fencing and underpass proposal would cost the railways about Rs. 20 crore.

As a short-term measure the FD plans to ask for a reduction in the speed of the trains to 25 km per hour. Till a permanent solution is worked out, they also want to stop movement of the trains at night as the lions are believed to be most active after sunset and the accidents have all occurred in the early hours of the morning.

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Forest department to propose shifting of railway track from lion habitat', *The Times of India*, 02/06/14.

JHARKHAND

Jharkhand prepares to follow online forest clearance system



Jharkhand is getting ready to follow the online system of time-bound forest clearance launched by the Centre. According to the state Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), who attended a Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) training session in New Delhi recently, the actual date of operations will be communicated to the states formally by the MoEF.

Currently, when a user agency or investor submits an application for forest clearance and land diversion, the file moves to roughly around 70-75 tables of the State and Centre. In the new system, investor applications must be submitted online on 'forestelearances.nic.in'. This central website is connected to all State Forest Departments. The nodal officer concerned has to scrutinise the file within 10 days and state whether it is accepted or rejected at his or her level and state the reasons behind the decision. If accepted, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) concerned will get a text message from the system about the application. The DFO then needs to make a physical survey of the forestland and submit an online feasibility report in 25-30 days. Once done, the Conservator of Forests will get a text message prompter for his recommendation, who will then forward it to the state government via the PCCF. The state will then send it to the Centre.

A senior forester is reported to have termed the initiative as a win-win situation for all as the investor and government officials can track the online application status at any given moment. Concern has been expressed by environmentalists, however, that such a system will be skewed towards investors rather than ecological needs and considerations.

Source: A.S.R.P. Mukesh, 'State gears up for forest e-clearance', *The Telegraph*, 01/07/14.

Contact: PCCF, Jharkhand, At- Doranda, P.O. Doranda, Ranchi. Tel: 0651-2500455(O), 2500413(R) Fax: 0651-500413

KARNATAKA

FD instructed to speed up rehabilitation of residents from Kudremukh NP

The Forest Department (FD) has been instructed by the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the region to expedite the rehabilitation process for 97 families who have sought rehabilitation out of the Kudremukh National Park. So far only 20 properties have been surveyed for compensation.

At the review meet of works held at Belthangady recently, the DC, Mr. Ibrahim, said a total of Rs. 17 crore had been released for rehabilitation of those living within the KNP in Belthangady taluk. He noted that though a Rs. 5 crore package had been given for the Maoist-affected Gram Panchayats here, not much progress had been made in the implementation of the various projects. He also noted that a request for the construction of a road from Yelnir to Melavantige via Bidupe had to be turned down as the law does not allow for its construction.



Source: 'Quicken rehabilitation process, says Ibrahim', *The Hindu*, 26/06/14.

Contact: DCF, Kudremukh Wildlife Division, Karkala, Dakshina Kannada, Karnataka. Tel: 08258-221183(O), 221004(R). Fax: 08258-221183

Forest watcher shoots tusker in Nagarahole National Park



An elephant was shot dead by a forest watcher in the Nagarahole National Park in early July in what has been justified as an "act of self-defence" by the

Forest Department (FD). The 12-year-old male elephant was shot dead at point-blank range by the FD's anti-depredation squad that was trying to chase away elephants raiding agricultural fields on the fringes of the forest.

The incident took place between Taraka and Damanakatte Gate in the Antharsanthe

range of the park as a guard holding a torch fell down when he was charged by the animal. Other guards in the vehicle had no option but to open fire to save their colleague. The elephant was shot in the forehead and it collapsed and died on the spot.

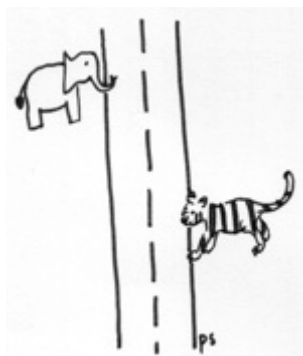
A first information report (FIR) has been filed and an investigation into the incident has been launched. Wildlife activists said, while expressing concern over the incident, that never in the history of the FD had a watcher shot dead an elephant in an act of self-defence. Usual practice is to fire in the air to scare away the animal and not aim at it. They have said this killing of an elephant by the authorities was a very serious issue and hence should not be treated as an open and shut case of shooting in self-defence.

Source: R. Krishna Kumar. 'Forest watcher shoots tusker in Nagarhole National Park', *The Hindu*, 05/07/14.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, Nagarhole NP, Wildlife Division, Hunsur, Dist. Mysore, Karnataka. Tel: 08222-252041(O), 252070(R)
Chief Wildlife Warden - Karnataka, 2nd Floor, 18th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bengaluru – 560003, Karnataka. Tel: 080-3341993 Email: pccfwl@vsnl.com

KERALA

Road project for Parambikulam TR suspended



The Kerala government has suspended its plan to lay a 40-km road through forests to reach the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve without entering Tamil Nadu. The proposal made by

Chief Minister Mr. Oommen Chandy three years ago was shelved following opposition from the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests on the grounds that the road would

affect several forest corridors used by elephants and tigers.

Source: K. A. Shaji, 'Parambikulam road plan shelved', *The Hindu*, 24/06/14.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Parambikulam Division, P.O. Thunacadavu (Via) Pollachi Dist. Palakkad-678661. Tel: 04253-267233

75 families from Kurichyat to be relocated from the Wayanad WLS

75 families from 57 households, including 40 which are tribal, living in the Kurichyat settlement, are preparing to relocate from the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWLS) under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat Scheme of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).

The MoEF has handed over Rs. 4.46 crore to the State Forest Department (FD) for the implementation of the package. Earlier, the MoEF had allotted Rs.7.8 crore for relocation of the Kottamkara settlement and the FD had spent Rs.6.2 crore for the purpose. The remaining amount would be utilised in Kurichyat.

As per a study conducted by the Kerala Forest Research Institute in 2010, there were 94 families eligible to be relocated from the settlement. 19 of these had, however, declined to cooperate with the project. A total of 1,388 people from 880 families in 14 settlements need to be relocated from the sanctuary. Though the FD had submitted a proposal for Rs. 80 crore for this resettlement four years ago, the MoEF has allotted only Rs. 13.34 crore for the purpose so far.

Source: E.M. Manoj, '75 families to leave settlements inside WWS', *The Hindu*, 25/06/14.

Contact: **Wildlife Warden**, Wayanad Wildlife Division, P.O. Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad-673 592, Kerala. Tel: 0493-2620454

Chief Wildlife Warden – Kerala, Vazhudacaud, Trivandrum – 695014, Kerala. Tel: 0471-2322217 / 2360452 / 2204896. Fax: 2360452 / 2322217

MADHYA PRADESH

Forest ranger, guard found in Panna TR with throats slit

A forest ranger, with the anti-poaching squad of the Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR), and a forest guard were murdered at a government accommodation in July. Ranger Jawan Singh Rathore, 52, and guard Pattu, 40, were found sprawled on the floor with their throats slit. Police have not ruled out the role of poachers in the twin murders.

While the body of Rathore was found in the washroom of his official quarter at Hinauta village, the guard's body was found on the terrace of the same house in the tiger reserve. A clerk with the forest department alerted the police after he came to meet the ranger for official work and found him dead.

The front doors of the house were open and all his belongings, including Rs. 70,000 in cash kept in a bag, were found intact. There were no signs of rummaging at the crime site either. Forensic officials, who inspected the crime spot said the guard was murdered in his sleep while the ranger was chased and killed.

Source: 'Panna forest ranger, guard found dead with throat slit', *The Times of India*, 12/07/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Panna National Park, Panna – 488001, Madhya Pradesh. Tel: 07732-252135. Fax: 07732-252120

Drones to watch over Panna Tiger Reserve



After six months of successful trials, drones will soon be deployed in the Panna Tiger Reserve to keep an eye on wildlife here. It will be the first instance in the country of the deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for wildlife research and management.

The Wildlife Institute of India, (WII), Dehradun, and a US-based company Conservation Drones, had been holding these trials in Panna since January and results were found to be satisfactory. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has said they might use drones in other reserves as well depending on the final results from Panna.

The WII scientists too were reported to be happy with the results from the initiative and have said work will continue for the improvisation of the technology and also to indigenize it.

Source: Richa Sharma. 'Drones to watch over big cats at Panna', *The New Indian Express*, 03/07/14.

MP forwards Rs. 80 crore lion conservation proposal to MoEF

The Madhya Pradesh (MP) government has forwarded a Rs. 80 crore proposal to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), for the lion conservation project to be taken up at Kuno-Palpur. The budget includes Rs. 20 crore for infrastructure development and Rs. 59 crore for relocation and rehabilitation of two more villages from within the Kuno sanctuary.

The MP government has already spent Rs. 15 crore for relocation of 1,543 families from 24 revenue villages inside the sanctuary. This money had been released by the Central Government in 2007-08 under a centrally-sponsored scheme — Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries. The MP government, had in the past, approached the 12-member Supreme Court appointed lion expert committee for the funds. This proposal, however, has been sent to the MoEF itself.

The Gujarat government, meanwhile, has filed a petition in the Supreme Court in order to retain all its Asiatic lions. Two Gujarat-based NGOs have also filed separate petitions challenging the translocation of lions to Kuno. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, Nos. 5, 4 & 3)

Source: Himanshu Kaushik. 'Madhya Pradesh tests Modi's lion-transfer mood', *The Times of India*, 16/06/14.

Contact: CF (Wildlife) Junagadh, Sardar Bag,
Junagadh, Gujarat. Tel: 0285 - 631678/
630051. Fax: 631211. Email:
cfwildlife_ad1@sancharnet.in

MAHARASHTRA

Sanjay Gandhi NP gets Rs. 15 crore compensation for proposed freight corridor

The Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) has been given Rs. 15 crore as compensation for the proposed Delhi-Mumbai Freight Corridor (DMFC) that will pass through the park. The kilometre-long section of the Diva-Vasai railway line that passes through the SGNP will be upgraded and expanded as part of the DMFC project. At present, there is only one line. The goods trains that will use the corridor will be run at greater frequency and hence, an additional line is to be added.

Praveen Pardeshi, Principal Secretary, Revenue and Forests, Maharashtra, has said that no additional forest land is being made available for the freight corridor, work for which will start in a year.

Source: Clara Lewis. 'Sanjay Gandhi National Park gets Rs 15 crore for freight belt', *The Times of India*, 25/06/14.

Contact: **Dy. Conservator of Forests**, SGNP, Borivili (East), Mumbai – 400066, Maharashtra. Tel: 022-28860362, 28860389(O), 8862780(R) Email: sgnpmumbai@gmail.com

125 sq km FDCM area brought under the control of the Tadoba Andhari TR



125.51 sq km dense forests in the West Chanda division that had been leased out to Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) have finally been

brought under the control of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). A government resolution handing over control of the area to the TATR was issued on June 13.

The state government had notified the 1,103.34 sq km Tadoba buffer zone on May 5, 2010. Barring the 125 sq km under the FDCM, 901.66 sq km with the Chandrapur division and 76.17 sq km with the Brahmapuri division had been brought under the administrative control of the tiger reserve for better wildlife management. The State Forest minister Mr Patangrao Kadam had given an assurance in April last year that this 125 sq km would be given over to the TR authorities. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) too had written to the Maharashtra Forest Secretary in the matter.

Now, the area will be under the Deputy Director (Buffer) who would implement projects related to forestry, joint forest management (JFM) and eco-development while ensuring coordination with other sectors.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. 'Finally, 125 sq km FDCM area comes under Tadoba control', *The Times of India*, 30/06/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Project, Mul Road, In front of Sanchiti Chamber, Chandrapur – 442401, Maharashtra. Tel: 07172-51414(O), 56382(R)

ODISHA

Decline in elephant casualties in Odisha

Wildlife officials in Odisha have claimed a significant decline in elephant casualties in the state. The number of elephant deaths is reported to have come down from 82 in 2012-13 to 70 in 2013-14. The number of elephant deaths in train accidents in the state was 11 in 2012-13, but in 2013 it was just one. No casualties have also been reported so far this year.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) has attributed the scaled down casualties to closer coordination between State forest officials and the railway staff. Forest officials use VHF sets to inform train drivers and guards about the movement of elephants in areas where railway lines pass through forests. This has proved effective in reducing casualties. Earlier, they used to go through stationmasters and this used to delay the flow of information.

A decline in elephant deaths caused by electrocution is also reported. The number of such accidents came down from six in 2012-13 to just one in 2013-14 (Also see following story).

Source: Subrat Das, 'Jumbo casualty drops in state - Coordination between govt agencies yield results', *The Telegraph*, 27/06/14.

Elephants continue to be in danger of electrocution in Sajnarh area

A plan to modify the high voltage supply lines in the Sajnarh area covering parts of Tinikosia, Ayodhya, Gopalpur and Tenda has still not been implemented, leaving wild elephants under continued threat of electrocution. An estimated Rs. 4.72 crore was to be spent for the improvements which include increasing the height of the electric poles to 9 metres, insulating the wires and incorporating circuit breakers in the transformers. There are estimated to be about 100 elephants resident in the area and many others also move in here in the months of November and December during the Kharif paddy harvesting season.

The Forest Department (FD) says an amount of Rs. 21 lakh has already been made available for the implementation of the project, but nothing has been done so far. An official from Nesco SE that is implementing the project has, however, said that tenders have already been invited for electrical installation works in the elephant areas in Baleswar, Jajpur, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts.

(Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, No. 1; Vol. XVIII, Nos. 4, 2 & 1; Vol. XVI, Nos. 5 & 3; Vol. XIV, No. 3; and Vol. XII, Nos. 6 & 1.)

Source: Bachak Mohanty, '4 yrs on, Nilgiri elephant safety project yet to start', *The Pioneer*, 27/06/14.

Staff crunch for STPF at Similipal TR

The Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) formed in August 2013 in the Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) is facing a staff shortage. While the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had sanctioned 112 dedicated posts for

the special force, the STPF had temporarily engaged forest guards from four other divisions - Baripada, Rairangpur, Karanjia and the STR core division. They have, however, been recalled to their parent divisions because there is a staff shortage there as well.

According to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), 63 forest guards were recruited in February exclusively for the STPF but they are yet to undergo the mandatory training. The Forest Department has requested the government to exempt them from training and induct them directly in the STPF with the reasoning that they can be imparted training after joining the force. A final decision in the matter has, however, still not been taken. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XIX, No. 5)

Source: Riyan Ramanath V. 'Staff crunch hits tiger protection in Similipal Tiger Reserve', *The Times of India*, 25/06/14.

Elephants for protection of Similipal NP

Five trained elephants will be employed for protection and patrolling activities at the Na'ana range of the Similipal National Park. Three of these had been brought to Similipal from Karnataka in 2001 for the promotion of eco-tourism and protection of wildlife and forests. The elephants are expected to be particularly useful in the monsoon months when roads and other infrastructure is damaged and access to many parts of the park is either restricted or impossible.

Source: 'Trained Jumbos to Thwart Poaching, Smuggling in Similipal Reserve', *The New Indian Express*, 26/05/14.

Contact: **Director**, Similipal Tiger Reserve, P.O. Baripada, Dist. Mayurbhanj - 757002, Orissa. Tel: 06792-252593(O), 252773(R) Fax: 256705

FD initiates the process of shifting 'strayed' tiger to Similipal TR

The Odisha Forest Department (FD) has initiated the process of shifting to Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) the tiger which had 'strayed' into Nandankanan Zoo. The STR

authorities have selected two sites for releasing the tiger - Nawana (north) range and Chahala range - considering the nature of the forest and the density of prey population here. These two sites are also free from human habitations and there are many water bodies here as well. Once the exact site is chosen, three forest staffers will be trained for tiger post-release monitoring of the tiger. A team of scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) will also fit the big cat with a radio collar to tiger to monitor its movement after release.

The tiger had moved into the zoo on April 30, 2013 and was captured and put into an enclosure. It had fled the zoo by scaling the enclosure fence after 10 days only to come back three weeks later.



Source: Riyan Ramanath V. 'Wildlife Institute of India scientists to get radio collar for strayed tiger', *The Times of India*, 06/06/14.

Riyan Ramanath V. 'Similipal Tiger Reserve zeroes in on sites for strayed tiger', *The Times of India*, 09/06/14.

Prawn hatchery poses threat to turtle nestings at Rushikulya rookery

Wildlife campaigners are opposing a prawn hatchery that is allegedly coming up near the mouth of the Rushikulya river in Ganjam district. Olive ridley turtles lay eggs on the Purunabandh-to-Kantiagada stretch near the river mouth in February-March every year and any construction here could have a bearing on the arrival of turtles at the rookery.

A private agency has started construction work at Kantiagada, and the Rushikulya Sea Turtle Protection Committee has pointed out that this is also in violation of the Coastal Regulation Zone rules. The District

Collector was reportedly not aware of any construction activity near the river mouth while the Chief Wildlife Warden, when approached, said he would look into the matter and take necessary steps to ensure safety of the turtles. The Divisional Forest Officer, Berhampur, has asked the concerned forest range officer to probe the allegation and the impact of any such construction on mass nesting of turtles.

Rushikulya is the second biggest rookery in the country after Gahirmatha in Kendrapara district. A few thousand turtles laid eggs at Rushikulya earlier this year, while they skipped Gahirmatha (*PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 3). Nearly three lakh eggs were laid here in 2013.

Source: 'Prawn hatchery threat for turtles', *The Times of India*, 10/06/14.

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

CWLW– Odisha, Plot No. 8, Shahid Nagar, Bhubaneswar – 751007, Odisha. Tel: 0674- 2512502 / 2513134 / 2515840. Fax: 512502

PUNJAB

Punjab proposes to restrict eco-sensitive zones to a 100 m radius around PAs

Punjab has proposed to restrict the eco-sensitive zones to a radius of 100 meters from protected area boundaries. The proposal for the same has already been sent to the centre for approval.

The state government has made the claim that the 10 km eco-sensitive zone as per the original directions of the Supreme Court would not be possible in the state on account of its large population and the bottleneck it would create for developmental activities.

Source: Vibhor Mohan. 'Punjab proposes to drastically cut eco-sensitive zones', *The Times of India*, 01/07/14.

Contact: **Chief Wildlife Warden**, Punjab, SC No. 2463-64, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh - 160022. Tel: 0172-2705828(O), 2675661(R). Fax: 2705828

TAMIL NADU

Panel constituted for preservation of eco-sensitive areas

The Tamil Nadu government has decided to set up the Tamil Nadu Authority for Preservation of Eco-sensitive and Heritage Areas. It will be headed by Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa and will have the final say on issues related to the hill areas like Ooty and Kodaikanal.

The decision comes close on the heels of the Madras High Court issuing directives to the Tirunelveli district administration and the Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation to make Courtallam Falls a clean tourist spot.

Environmental activists have pointed out that the State Wildlife and Biodiversity Boards were not functioning effectively and that the Hill Area Conservation Authority set up in 1990 had also proved ineffective.

Source: 'Jayalalithaa to head panel to preserve eco-sensitive areas', *The Times of India*, 28/06/14.

UTTARAKHAND

Camera traps at Rajaji NP for rainy season



The Rajaji National Park (RNP) authorities have started installing camera traps as part of an annual exercise undertaken for keeping an eye on wildlife and wildlife criminals in the rainy season. So far, about 60 camera traps have been installed in different ranges of the park. The exercise is being carried out with the assistance of the Wildlife Institute of India.

The RNP is closed to visitors during the rainy season and patrolling also becomes difficult with roads either getting damaged or submerged during the rainy season. Poachers and wildlife criminals often try to capitalise on this factor and step up their activities. The RNP undertakes an annual exercise of installing camera traps in its ranges-especially the ones with tiger presence.

Source: 'Rajaji National Park gets camera traps to keep eye on poachers', *The Pioneer*, 27/06/14.

Contact: **Director**, Rajaji NP, 5/1 Ansari Marg, Dehradun – 248001, Uttaranchal. Tel: 0135-2621669 Fax: 2621669

Valley of Flowers to remain inaccessible for another year

The Valley of Flowers will remain inaccessible for tourists for another year. The lone bridge to the Valley over the Pushpavati River near Ghangaria village has not been repaired since the floods of June 2013 washed it away. Even the approach roads to the valley lie in a state of disrepair.

The Forest Department (FD) has not yet made an assessment of the damage here as the whole area has remained inaccessible; and with all rebuilding efforts being focused on the Char Dham and Hemkund Sahib. A team of forest officials is expected to visit the Valley of Flowers soon from the Kedarnath side for a survey. A state government official said that the specifications of the bridge and other technicalities have been worked out, and the FD and the Public Works Department will soon start work on the bridge.

Every year, over 7,000 tourists, mostly trekkers visit the Valley of Flowers, earning the FD about Rs. 7 lakh in tourist fees each year.

Source: Yogesh Kumar. 'No bridge to Valley of Flowers', *The Times of India*, 30/05/14.

Contact: **DFO**, Valley of Flowers NP, Joshimath, Dist. Chamoli, Uttaranchal, Tel: 01389-222179

UTTAR PRADESH

Pilibhit WLS gets tiger reserve status



TOTAL 73,025 ha
CORE 6,280 ha
▲
3 T.R.s
in U.P.
9 JUN
30

The Uttar Pradesh government has notified the Pilibhit Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) as a tiger reserve (TR) with effect from June 9, 2014. It will be constituted of the forest ranges of Mala, Mahof, Barahi, Deoria and Haripur. The core area will comprise 6,279.8 ha, while the buffer zone — the Khutar range in Shahjahanpur — will span 12,745.2 ha. There are estimated to be 30 tigers in the forests here.

Pilibhit will be the third TR in the state after Dudhwa, which was notified in 1987, and the Amangarh TR in Bijnor, notified in 2012
(PA Update Vol. XX, No. 1).

Source: 'Pilibhit Wildlife Sanctuary gets tiger reserve forest status', *The Times of India*, 14/06/14.

WEST BENGAL

West Bengal failed to follow guidelines and to utilise Project Tiger funds: CAG

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has criticised the functioning of the West Bengal Forest Department (FD) in matters related to tiger conservation in the state. It has noted in a recent report that the state failed to conduct the annual tiger census and could not even utilise the Centre's funds under Project Tiger. The Centre therefore did not release Rs. 6.21 crore under the centrally sponsored scheme against the sanctioned central share due to the FD's inability to spend the amount released as well as non-submission of utilisation certificates.

The CAG also noted that the state had failed to follow the 2001 guidelines of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) for the estimation of the tiger populations in the tiger reserves in the state. It specifically noted that the Buxa Tiger Reserve (TR) did not even attempt to conduct a camera-trap study as was done in the Sunderbans TR. It pointed out another violation by the state of the guidelines of the MoEF and the National Tiger Conservation Authority when the Sajnekhali Wildlife Sanctuary was included, not in the core but in the buffer zone of Sunderbans TR.

Source: 'West Bengal failed to utilise Project Tiger funds from Centre: CAG', *DNA*, 15/07/14.

Contact: **Field Director**, Sunderbans Tiger Reserve, PO Canning, Dist. South 24 Parganas 743329, West Bengal

Fisherman killed by a tiger in Sunderbans

A fisherman who had entered the Sunderbans creeks in his boat was killed in a tiger attack. The tiger reportedly jumped into the fishing boat from the banks of the creek and leapt back with the fisherman in its clutches and disappeared into the forests. This is the fourth incident of a human being killed by a tiger in the Sunderbans this year.

The victim in this, the latest case, was 62-year-old Sushil Majhi who lived in Lahiripur

near Datta river. He had rowed into the creek to catch crabs along with his son and daughter on June 26 when the attack happened at around 7'o clock in the morning.

Source: Monotosh Chakraborty. 'Tiger snatches man off boat, leaps back into Sunderbans jungle', *The Times of India*, 27/06/14.

Two elephants mowed down by a train in Buxa TR

Two elephants, an adult female and a sub-adult male, were mowed down in the Buxa Tiger Reserve in the first week of July by a military train that was headed for Guwahati. The accident took place at about 3 am in the morning between Hasimara and Hamiltongunj near Madhu Tea Estate on the railway track between New Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar.

Both the animals died on the spot and the train was also derailed leading to the suspension of train services on the route for a while. A herd of some 20 elephants was crossing the railway tracks and the train was going so fast that the driver could not avoid hitting the elephants although he had applied the brakes on seeing the herd. According to the forest officials, the train was going faster than the stipulated speed limit of 50 kmph, and an FIR has, therefore, been filed against the driver.

The state forest department (FD) has urged the Railways to reduce the existing speed of trains to 25 kmph along this 168-km track and also demanded that an alternative route be put into operation to avoid these accidents.

An estimated 50 elephants have died in train accidents in this section in the last decade and the toll in the last one year alone is said to be 20 (see *PA Updates* Vol. XIX, Nos. 6 & 2 and Vol. XVII, No. 6)

Source: Shiv Sahay Singh. 'Two elephants mowed down by train in Buxa Tiger Reserve', *The Hindu*, 02/07/14.

Pinak Priya Bhattacharya. 'Train mows down 2 jumbos in Alipurduar', *The Times of India*, 02/07/14.

State tourism project to come up in elephant corridor connecting Mahananda WLS

A tourism project by the state government is threatening a key elephant corridor in North Bengal. The project is coming up on a 90-acre plot near the Sylee Tea Estate (TE), which is a part of a corridor used by the elephants for movement between the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and Kalimpong forest division. Though the project components are yet to be finalized, the land has already been identified in compartment number 8 of the tea estate, also known as Nayabasti.

To the north-east of the project site lies the forest of Bhuttabari that is used by the elephants to cross over from the Sakma forest of Kalimpong division. From Bhuttabari, some elephants enter the forest of Apalchand in Baikunthapur division via Sylee TE while another group is known to cross the Teesta river to enter Mahananda WLS.

The tourism department of North Bengal is reported to have engaged a consultant, IL&FS, for doing a feasibility study. While the tourism minister has given assurances that we will look into the matter, the forest minister is reported to have said that he is unaware of the project. A member of the state wildlife advisory board has also expressed concerns over the fact that the place is dotted with tea gardens and hence elephant depredation in the gardens is bound to rise once the project comes up.

Source: 'State tourism project to straddle jumbo corridor', *The Times of India*, 10/06/14.

Source: **DFO, Wildlife Division - I**- Mahananda WLS, Old Secretariat Campus, P.O. & Dist. Darjeeling - 734101, West Bengal. Tel: 0354-254308(O) / 256524(R).

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

Railways pushes for green clearance to 40 key projects

In a move towards expediting green clearance, the Railway Ministry is reported to have prepared a list of 40 key projects which have

faced a clearance bottleneck from the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). The projects are spread across 71 divisions in 16 zones of the railways and include eight projects in the northeast region of the country. According to the Railway Ministry, the projects have been held up in the MoEF for over eight to 10 years. About 11 national projects and 14 strategic projects in the states of Jammu and Kashmir, the northeast, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Punjab have been stuck for want of forest and wildlife clearance from the MoEF and some are stuck due to a monetary crunch.

Some of the specific projects include the 51.83-km-long Bhairabi-Sairang rail project in Mizoram, which was sanctioned in 2008-09 at a cost of Rs. 2,393.48 crore, the Sivok-Rangpo rail line in Sikkim, which was also sanctioned in 2008-09 at a cost of Rs. 3375.42 crore and the Tori-Shivpur -Kathautia (53 km) railway line in North Karanpura in Jharkhand.

The collated list of these projects will be sent to the cabinet secretariat's project monitoring group (PMG) to expedite the clearances. The Ministry of Railways is also preparing a policy note seeking relaxation of green norms to expedite construction of national and strategic rail projects. This too will be sent to the cabinet secretariat for a discussion.

Source: Richa Sharma. Railways Pushes for Green Clearance to 40 Key Projects', *The New Indian Express*, 02/07/14.

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

Entry to the Sunderbans to be restricted

The Bangladesh government is in the final stages of preparing a policy that will restrict visitor entry into the mangrove forests in the Sunderbans. Hundreds of visitors enter these forests and cause disturbance by using loud speakers and leaving behind waste that includes polythene papers, bottles and juice packs.

Restrictions will also be put on visitor vessels that can ply in the water channels here. The length of the boat cannot cross 50 meters, would have to be certified by government agencies and would not be allowed to carry more than 150 people in the day and 75 people at night.

Restrictions will also be imposed on local people who are dependant on forests for their livelihood. Authorities say the move has been prompted by the growing number of visitors and the business activities by the locals here. Data suggests that 3.5 million people are dependent on these forests for wood, fishes and honey. Alternate employment for the local folk will be suggested in the new policy.

Source: Shakhawat Hossain. 'Govt. to restrict Sunderbans entry', www.newagebd.net, 01/07/14.

Bangladesh preparing Elephant Action Plan

Bangladesh is formulating an elephant action plan, one aim of which is to curb the elephant-human conflict in the country. According to forest department (FD) at least 93 people have been killed in elephant attacks in Bangladesh in the last 13 years. 50 were killed in Chittagong's southern part – in Patiya, Khurushia and Banskhali. 823 homes in the Rangtia range and 19 in the Balijuri range in Sherpur respectively were also destroyed in the last decade.

The plan is expected to be finalised by December 2014 and brought into force by January 2015. An elephant census is to be conducted, the results of which will be out in June 2015. It is estimated that there are about 200 wild elephants in Bangladesh at the present; this was around 500 in the mid-20th century.

Source: Abu Bakar Siddique. 'Elephant action plan on the cards', *Dhaka Tribune*, 04/06/14.

NEPAL

Pied cuckoo and Common Emerald dove sighted for the 1st time in the Annapurna Conservation Area

Two bird species - Pied cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*) and Common Emerald dove

(*Chalcophaps indica*) - have been sighted for the first time in the Annapurna Conservation Area. Paras Bikram Singh, conservation officer at the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), and Sijan Gyanwali, a researcher reported these two species recently from the Birethanti and Ghandruk areas of the ACAP that covers five districts—Manang, Mustang, Lamjung, Kaski and Myagdi.

This is the first time that these species, believed to be found at an altitude of 400 meters above sea level, have been reported at an elevation range above 790 meters. The Pied cuckoo, locally known as Jure Koili, is a summer migrant travelling from Africa and some parts of Asia including Sri Lanka and India to Nepal while the Common Emerald dove, locally called Haril Dhukur, is a

commonly found resident bird in the lowlands of Nepal. In the last 15 years, nine new species of animals have been reported in the ACAP region. This includes the the rare Pallas' cat (*Otocolobus manul*) in Upper Manang early this year, the Musk deer from Mustang two years ago, the Eurasian eagle and some butterfly species.



Source: Shiva Sharma. 'Two new bird species sighted in ACAP', www.ekantipur.com, 24/06/14

Important Bird Areas Update

NATIONAL NEWS

Hornbill Watch: Website Launched



Hornbill Watch - a citizen-science initiative to better understand Indian hornbills was launched recently by the Nature Conservation Foundation in

collaboration with Conservation India. The site seeks inputs by citizens on hornbill sightings and images. It is hoped that the data will help in identifying and prioritizing sites for hornbill conservation. The site can be accessed at <http://hornbills.in>

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Approval of radar station at Narcondam Island WLS

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) is reported to have approved the Coast

Guard proposal for the creation of a radar station at the Narcondam Island Wildlife Sanctuary. The Environment minister, Mr Prakash Javadekar has argued that the radar project was of strategic importance to India and that it will not affect the environment here because only 8-10 people will be employed at the station.

The proposal had been rejected by the earlier government (*PA Update* Vol. XVIII, No. 5) following concerns expressed by conservationists of the impact it would have on the forests and particularly on the small population of the endemic Narcondam Hornbill here. The Andaman and Nicobar Command has welcomed the move of the MoEF saying that Narcondam was an ideal location for the radar as there was no other land around the island. It was also pointed out that a total of 18 radar stations are to be set up in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands of which four are to be set up in the first phase. One such station at East Island in the north of the Andamans is reported to be almost ready for operation.

The clearance for the radar project by the MoEF is one of many defence related

projects that the new government has cleared or declared an intention to clear immediately after coming into power. These include, among others, projects along the border with China and the expansion of the Karwar naval base in Karnataka.



Source: 'Government clears counter-china move in Andamans', 11/06/14, www.rediff.com/news
 'Radar at Narcondum will be good for National Security: ANC', www.andamansheekha.com
 Vishwa Mohan. 'Green nod for radar station at Narcondam in Andamans', *The Times of India*, 12/06/14.

Contact: **CWLW**, A&N Islands, Haddo, Port Blair - 744102

ASSAM

Traditional 'gamosas' to take vulture conservation message to people

White cotton gamosas with traditional red embroidery will now sport vulture motifs to spread awareness about vulture conservation in Assam. The initiative is being taken jointly by the Bombay Natural History Society and the Assam State government.

An estimated 300 vultures of three species — slender-billed vulture, White-backed vulture and the Himalayan griffon — have died in Assam since 2007 because of poisoning, train hits and electrocution. A number of birds have died after feeding on carcasses of animals that have been administered diclofenac, an anti-inflammatory drug used as a painkiller. The non-steroidal drug, introduced in India in 1993, was banned for veterinary use in 2006. However,

diclofenac for patients, available in pharmacies, is used by farmers for treating cattle.

A 19-year-old weaver, Pallabi Das of Birkampur in South Kamrup, has already woven a number of *gamosas* with the vulture motifs as the first step in the initiative.

Source: 'Gamosas to take vulture message to people', *The Telegraph*, 17/06/14.

Contact:

Rehabilitation package for Deepor Beel WLS fisherfolk

The Assam government is planning to formulate a rehabilitation package for 815 fisherfolk families dependent on Deepor Beel WLS for their livelihood. The information was provided by the State Chief Minister Mr Tarun Gogoi recently while interacting with a delegation of the Asom Anusuchit Jati Yuba Chatra Sanstha. He also assured the delegation that the government would take all possible steps to stop the flow of contaminated water into the water body from nearby factories and prevent fresh encroachment.

Source: 'Assam plans rehabilitation package for Deepor Beel fishermen', *Business Standard*, 13/06/14.

Contact: **Divisional Forest Officer**, Assam State Zoo Division, I/c Deepor Beel WLS R.G. Baruah Road, Guwahati - 781 024, Assam0361-261363(O), 263331(R)

DELHI/UTTAR PRADESH

Delhi to propose 100 m eco-sensitive zone around Okhla Bird Sanctuary

The Delhi government has proposed a 100-metre eco-sensitive zone around the Okhla Bird Sanctuary that is located on the Delhi - Uttar Pradesh border. This follows a similar recent proposal by the Uttar Pradesh government, also to notify a 100 metre eco-sensitive zone around the sanctuary.

Officials have said that this 100 metre zone will be sufficient to protect the sanctuary as it is primarily comprised of a water body. Both the state governments' proposals will go to the

Ministry of Environment and Forest, which will invite suggestions at the time of the preliminary notification before taking a final decision.

The move to declare an eco-sensitive zone in a 10 km radius of PAs as per a Supreme Court (SC) order was opposed by a number of people on grounds that it will affect developmental projects including real estate development in the area.

(Also see *PA Update* Vol. XX, No. 1))

Source: Anumeha Yadav. 'Delhi to propose 100 m eco-sensitive zone around Okhla Bird Sanctuary', *The Hindu*, 01/07/14.

Contact: **DFO**, WL, National Chambal Wildlife Division (I/c Okhla WLS), Mau Van Block, Agra, Uttar Pradesh. Tel: 0562-2320091

MADHYA PRADESH

NGT asks for closure of mine, hotmix plant near Sailana Sanctuary

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) recently ordered the company Dilip Buildcon to stop mining operations in the vicinity of the Sailana WLS. It was also asked to shut its hotmix plant here immediately. The company has the contract to construct 87.77 km of road in Ratlam district awarded to it by the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation Limited (MPRDC), Bhopal. The mining activities and the hotmix unit were for the said road construction.

A local NGO had moved the NGT, claiming the company was using explosives for mining and operating the mixing plant, posing a threat to the endangered bird species in the Sailana-Kharmor Sanctuary. Company officials submitted an affidavit that no mining activity was being carried out in the region but this was challenged by the NGOs.

Source: 'Green tribunal orders builder to stop mining near wildlife sanctuary, shut hotmix plant', *The Times of India*, 06/06/14.

RAJASTHAN

Solar power project threat to Sambhar lake



A 4000 MW ultra mega solar power project (UMSPP), believed to be the world's largest such project, could pose a serious threat to the Sambhar lake. The project will involve the installation of PV solar panels across over 9,000 hectares (ha) of land which is nearly 40 per cent of the lake that is a Ramsar site. The project is expected to generate 6,000 million units of electricity annually for 25 years, and offset over four million tonnes of CO₂ a year. It also aims to reduce the cost of solar energy from Rs. 7-8 to Rs. 5 a unit.

The project had received in-principle approval of the state government last year by the then government led by Ashok Gehlot. In January 2014, however, the newly-elected Chief Minister Ms Vasundhara Raje wrote to the Union Minister of Heavy Industries expressing her reservations about the project on the largest inland saline wetland in Asia. She wants to develop the wetland as a tourism site. Three Union ministries and six public sector undertakings went ahead, however, and signed an MoU in January to develop and operate the project. The concerns of the state government have now alerted the World Bank, whom the centre had approached for a loan of US \$500 million for the first phase of the Rs. 30,000 crore project. The bank has said that they will commit the amount only after the issues raised are cleared.

Section 4 of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules 2010 prohibits setting up new industries and expansion of the existing ones on wetlands. Though a sub-rule under the section allows the Centre to permit any of the prohibited activities on the recommendation of

the Central Wetlands Conservation Authority (CWCA), the authority is yet to receive this project proposal. Sambhar Salts Limited (SSL), a PSU that has a 99 year lease on the lake and its catchment beginning 1961 has said that the land allotted for the power has been lying barren for several years and that salt extraction happens only on 2,400 ha of land.

It has been noted that the Sambhar lake faces serious threats on a number of fronts as well. This includes among others a reduced inflow of water, rampant illegal salt production and ground water extraction,

Source: Ankur Paliwal. 'Solar threat to Sambhar',
Down to Earth, 31/05/14.

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Annexures

Dam projects considered in the past 4 Maharashtra SBWL Meetings

No	Name	District	PA Affected	Decision & issues	Date
1.	Kukadi Left Bank Canal through GIB Sanctuary	Ahmednagar, Solapur	Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary	Recommended	4 th meeting 20.02.09
2.	Survey & Investigation for Savarde Irrigation Project	Kolhapur	Radhanagar WLS	Recommended. Minutes note no new projects of WRD to be considered	5 th meeting 28.06.11
3.	400 MW Humbarli Pumped Storage HEP	Satara	Koyna WLS	Recommended	5 th meeting 28.6.11
4.	Baglinga Irrigation Project		Melghat TR	Recommended	6 th meeting 7.6.12
5.	Survey and investigation Gargai Dam Project		750 hectares inside Tansa WLS	Recommended. No discussion of site visit, further studies, etc.	6 th meeting 7.6.12
6.	Dams at Chena and Yeoor for drinking water of Thane	Thane	80 hectares inside Sanjay Gandhi NP	Not recommended. Thane EE gave letter that after Shai, no new drinking water source will be required till 2031	6 th meeting 7.6.12
7.	Survey & Investigation for dams at Deokhinpada, Vasai. Water supply of Vasai Virar		Tungareshwar WLS	Recommended. CCF refused recommendation, but SBWL recommend clearance for Survey and investigation	6 th meeting 7.6.12
8.	Tambadi Irrigation Project	Roha, Raigad	Phansad WLS	Initially stated that no project to be considered, but later suggested mitigation measures for the project	7 th meeting 24.1.13
9.	Khindsi Feeder Canal Pench Irrigation Project	Nagpur	Pench Tiger Reserve	Recommended after site visit and mitigation measures	7 th meeting 24.1.13
10.	Raperi Irrigation Project	Washim		Recommended	7 th meeting 24.1.13
11.	Naradwe Irrigation Project	Sindhudurg	Radhanagar WLS	Recommended despite violation and ongoing work & Despite SBWLs decision of not considering projects in Radhanagari WLS	7 th meeting 24.1.13
12.	Kholsapada Irrigation tank	Vasai, Thane	Tungareshwar WLS	Recommended	8 th meeting 20.02.14
13.	Patiya Irrigation Project	Amravati	Melghat TR	Recommended	8 th meeting 20.02.14
14.	Shirapur LIS	Solapur	Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary	Recommended (Clear violation, nearly 75% scheme is complete)	8 th meeting 20.02.14
15.	Alewadi Irrigation Project	Buldana	Ambabarva WLS	Recommended (Violation: Work has started, MoEF has passed strictures)	8 th meeting 20.02.14
16.	Ar Kacheri Irrigation Project	Buldana	Ambabarva WLS	Recommended (Violation: Work has started, MoEF has passed strictures)	8 th meeting 20.02.14

Source: <http://sandrp.wordpress.com/2014/07/14/hugely-problematic-functioning-of-state-board-for-wildlife-in-maharashtra/> (based on RTI applications filed by SANDRP)

A Decade Ago Protected Area Update 50, August 2004

BIHAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: Abhay Mohan Jha. 'Rabri gets a suit for Lalu, but will he pay
Times News Network, 07/08/04.
'Laloo vs Rabri: Bihar files Rs 1,002 cr suit against Rly', *Deccan Herald*, 08/08/04

Water shortage affects Keoladeo NP

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

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

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

Mr. Francesco Bandarin, Director of UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, too wrote to Ms. Vasundhara Raje Scindia, CM of Rajasthan in the matter, requesting for action that will not compromise the integrity of this world heritage site.

(Also see *PA Updates* 43, 40 & 39).

Source: 'Migratory birds in troubled waters', *The Statesman*, 11/09/04.
'Birds deserting Bharatpur', *The Tribune*, 31/08/04.
'Keoladeo park gets no water; birds desert nests', *The Hindu*, 02/09/04.
Francesco Bandarin. Letter to Ms. Vasundhara Raje Scindia, dated 07/09/04.

PERSPECTIVE

The CEPF Western Ghats – Challenges faced and lessons learnt

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) awarded a US\$ 6.1 million fund in 1998 to engage civil society in biodiversity conservation in the Western Ghats. The seven year project that was co-ordinated by the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) sought to try out innovative approaches and partnerships involving NGOs, the corporate sector, academia and government.

The project involved the disbursement of the money over 101 grants involving 42 civil society organisations and 19 individual grantees, 1,394 species threat assessments and the creation of five new conservation and community reserves (800 km²). A platform was additionally provided for indigenous rights and conservation action, conservation agreements were piloted in four sites, a number of sustainable agricultural practices were promoted, species recovery and management plans were formulated for 13 priority species - 2 mammals, 4 birds, 7 plants and ecological connectivity of critical habitat linkages was reinforced.

The key challenges in the implementation of the project involved reaching out to a wide spectrum of civil society groups (NGOs, corporate sector, academia and even individuals) and enabling them to access international donor funds, sometimes for the first time; engaging with the individual projects to address issues related to the capacities of the applicants; managing individual and institutional egos at the same time as ideological differences (for e.g. perspectives of wildlife conservation and of tribal rights); facilitating exchange of information, experience and lessons learned among grantees, stakeholders and general public and assisting applicants in matters related to government regulations, particularly the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

The key lessons based on the outcomes of the project included the realisation

that the quality of proposals improves when the scope of the calls are more focused and when the applicants are made familiar with the overall aims and objectives of the funder and the funding project. Having clear objectives and foreseeable outcomes at the conception stage for species conservation initiatives helped in achieving a greater rate of success. A key facilitating factor was the personal involvement and hand holding of the applications by the project co-ordinating team at ATREE, particularly for the later funding rounds. It was also clear that participation of the local people and communities was key to ensuring project success and that projects need to include and to clearly articulate project benefits in terms relevant to local people, such as tenure and rights; and share results with communities at the end of the project.

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