

PROTECTED AREA UPDATE

News and Information from protected areas in India and South Asia

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Protected Area Update

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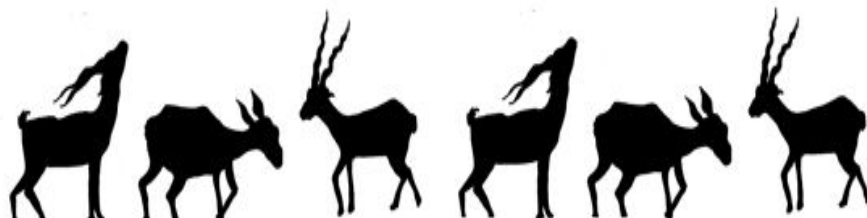
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EDITORIAL

What is (anti) development?

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change's recently re-constituted expert appraisal committee (EAC) on river valley and hydel projects noted in the minutes of its first meeting in December that environmental clearance was being granted after following a set process and they will not anymore entertain representations in the last phase (the appraisal phase) if they [the applicants] have an "anti-development attitude" (Minutes of meeting of the EAC held on 30/12/16; *Indian Express*, 14/01/17). "It was also felt that many of the objections raised are repetitive. Many such kind of representations have an anti-development attitude so that the projects are kept on hold or delayed. This has financial implications to the developers in particular and to the nation in general," the EAC noted. It even prescribed a standard response to Right to Information (RTI) applications that seek clarifications in related matters.

While on the one hand the EAC is asking for the following of procedure, it is striking that it should invoke the (anti) development rhetoric to buttress its stand. This is particularly important because the question of development is a big one, and not one that has yet been settled; doubts and challenges about this 'development' are, in fact, at the very heart of contemporary political and societal debates. Development for whom at what cost is not a question that came from a vacuum – it has been the outcome of the hugely violent and destructive experiences of communities from all over. Dams, mines, power plants, ports, roads and railways, SEZs... all key manifestations of the current model of 'development', have been questioned and opposed and this continues to be the case across the country. For those impacted there was/is no development here – it has only meant loss, deprivation and destruction. Why would they then not challenge what they perceive as destructive?

There is also a lack of sense of historicity that comes through when one talks of an 'anti-development' attitude. Act now with

blinkers on, repent later at leisure seems to be the credo and a number of stories in this issue of the *PA Update* illustrate that quite emphatically. A striking example is of the Kaziranga National Park in Assam. Since the very beginning conservationists and wildlifers had argued against the construction of the Numaligarh refinery in what was a well-known elephant movement corridor (This newsletter itself has been reporting on the Numaligarh issue since the year 2000 (*PA Update* 27)). All the concerns were ignored, of course, the refinery came up and other activities like stone quarries were also initiated here. Huge conflict was created where there was none. Local villagers and elephants are both being impacted and all we are left with is a band-aid solution – trying to find out ways of managing an unmanageable and uncalled for situation!

This is 'development' that is rapidly and ruthlessly chipping away at the ecological security of the country in general and the protected area network in particular. The Ken-Betwa river link that will all but destroy the Panna Tiger Reserve (TR) has been given one more important clearance (by this very EAC, in fact); the State Wildlife Board in Telangana has allowed for Uranium mining in the Amrabad TR and for heavy traffic through the Kawal TR; and in Mumbai in Maharashtra, the Aarey forests have been excluded from the ecologically sensitive zone of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in order to allow for the metro rail infrastructure to come up. And this is only a sampling of what is happening all over the country.

Short-term projects and development goals are riding roughshod over an ecological history that goes back millennia even as it is the only hope for ensuring future sustainability and survival.

The EAC is entitled, of course, to demand that procedure be followed and discussions must happen within prescribed frameworks. But that it should choose to raise the anti-development bogey that is then minuted and given an official stamp of approval is something we need to be very worried about!

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Howarth's Hairstreak butterfly rediscovered near Eaglenest WLS

The Howarth's Hairstreak butterfly *Chrysozephyrus disparatus interpositus* Howarth that was first spotted in Sikkim in 1956 was re-sighted recently in Tenga Valley near the Eaglenest and Sessa Orchid Wildlife Sanctuaries. The sighting has been reported in the latest issue of the *Journal of Threatened Taxa* by naturalists Sanjay Sondhi and Rachit Singh. This record also extends the known range of this species eastward by 350 km from Sikkim to western Arunachal Pradesh.

The butterfly was seen three times in a particular area along forest streams in May 2014. The specific locality where the species was sighted is Tseringpam village in Tenga valley at 1,626 m and is covered with thick green sub-tropical forest. The butterfly prefers shady areas and takes small, swift flights staying 2-3 m above the ground. While perched on leaves, it moves the hind wings (with the tails), creating an illusion of moving antennae.

Surveys in western Arunachal Pradesh have in recent years added several butterfly species that are new to India, including *Gonepteryx amintha tibetana*, *Bhutanitis ludlowi* and several butterfly rediscoveries and range extensions, including *Calinaga aborica*.

Source: Roopak Goswami, 'Butterfly spotted after 58 years', *The Telegraph*, 02/01/16.

Impact on Namdapha TR, non-consideration of FRA forces FAC to defer petroleum, mining lease

The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change (MoEFCC) has deferred permission to a petroleum lease to Oil India Limited (OIL) in Arunachal Pradesh and has sought clarity from

the state government relating to compliance of forest protection laws. The project is proposed in the Ningru extension block of Changlang district. The state government had sought the centre's permission for the lease over an area of 540 sq km of forestland, which would not involve any physical diversion of forestland.

The FAC noted in its meeting held on November 10 that the compliance of Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 was not given. As per the minutes of the November 10 meeting, the proposal was also discussed almost a decade ago, in August 2007. The FAC had advised the project proponent then to consult senior forest officials and to bifurcate the proposal according to the requirement of forest land and to submit separate proposals, one for exploration and another for diversion for oil well drilling and infrastructure facilities.

The committee had also earlier noted that a site inspection report conducted by the regional office of the MoEFCC did not show the reserve forests of Tengapani, Diyun, Honkap, Namgoi and Rima in the Survey of India top-sheet that was submitted. In its recommendations, the FAC has sought the comments of the National Tiger Conservation Authority before moving ahead on the proposal as the proposed area appears to be in Namdapha Tiger Reserve.

Source: Ranju Dodum, 'Mining Lease in Tiger Reserve to Oil India Deferred in Arunachal', www.citizen.in, 08/12/16.

ASSAM

Funds crunch in Manas NP

The Manas National Park is facing a funds crunch because of non-release of central funds by the state government. The Rs five crore sanctioned by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in November 2016 has not yet been released to the park. The total allocation was nearly Rs seven crore of which Rs five crore had been sanctioned as the first installment. Another Rs. 70 lakh allocated under the biosphere reserve programme in 2015-16 too

have not reached the park because of non-release by the state government.

Activities such as construction of anti-poaching camps, watchtowers, new camps, deployment of personnel for anti-poaching and procurement of arms and ammunition, erection of new boundary pillars and digging of trenches, which the money was to be used for have therefore been affected. Forest officials noted that this will also affect the anti-encroachment efforts of the department. Around 600 temporary sheds built illegally inside the Bhuyanpara range of the park had been dismantled in December 2016, and officials said that if new infrastructure and protection measures are not put into place, those who were evicted will come back.

The park authorities are reported to have informed the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC) as well that the forest department has suffered badly because of the funds crunch. The WHC has expressed concern that despite the successful operation of the Manas Tiger Conservation Foundation, the park remains inadequately funded as demonstrated by the slow release of funds by the state government. It has urged the government to ensure that adequate funding is available as it is crucial to address the threats to the park. The state of conservation report is to be discussed at the WHC's next meeting in Poland.

Source: 'Manas hit by funds crunch', *The Telegraph*, 04/01/17.

Initiative to minimize human-elephant conflict in Numaligarh adjoining Kaziranga

In a bid to minimise human-elephant conflict in the greater Numaligarh area, the Kaziranga Wildlife Society conducted interaction programmes between wildlife experts and affected villagers at Kachari Gaon, Pura Jongal and No. 1 and No. 2 Napathar.

A coordination committee comprising people from different fields, including local villagers, to find a lasting solution to the issue was formed by a journalist and an activist. The duo has started a programme called 'Elephants on the Line' under which they have carried out

other work to reduce the conflict. In 2014-2015, a high-level delegation from Bhutan, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh participated in the programme where issues relating to elephant migration and depredations and the steps to control the crisis were discussed extensively.

Measures like making a mixture of chili powder, tobacco and cow dung and tying it to poles along elephant routes were discussed as a solution. The smell of the burning mixture repels elephants and the formula has reportedly worked in Udalguri recently as the number of human deaths in conflicts has come down substantially. Similar strategies were also discussed for the greater Numaligarh area near Kaziranga National Park. (Also see *PA Update* 27)

Source: 'Interaction meets to check man-elephant conflict', *Assam Tribune*, 23/12/16.

GUJARAT

Gujarat HC sets up a committee to report on electrocution deaths of Gir lions



The Gujarat High Court (HC) has set up a 10-member committee to report on deaths of lions by electrocution in and around Gir. The committee was constituted in response to a public interest litigation in the matter and includes as its members, the additional chief secretary, forests and environment department; the principal chief conservator of forests, wildlife; the managing director of Paschim Gujarat Vij Company Ltd. and the inspector general of police, Junagadh range.

The petitioner has raised the issue of safety of lions on the grounds that nearly 168 out of 523 lions live outside the protected area. During the hearing, the court also expressed concern about a lion entering a village that particular week and killing an animal.

Source: 'Electrocution of lions: HC sets up panel', *The Times of India*, 22/12/16.

Reduction proposed for Gir ESZ

The Gujarat Forest Department (FD) has proposed a drastic reduction in the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary. A proposal has been sent to the centre recently where it is being reduced to just 500 m from the sanctuary boundary in place of the earlier ESZ that extended from 8 km to 17.9 km from the boundary of the PA.

While the government maintains that the decision to shrink the ESZ cover was taken following representations of locals, others have noted that there was no such consultation with people living around the sanctuary.

Source: Vijaysinh Parmar. 'Shrink ESZ, be ready for disastrous impact', *The Times of India*, 08/12/16.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Captive breeding of Himalayan monal in Himachal Pradesh



The Himachal Pradesh Wildlife Department is attempting captive breeding of the Himalayan monal *Lophophorus impejanus* in an effort to revive its population. The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) had approved a conservation breeding centre for the bird in 2011. A large breeding centre in Manali has been built which is being equipped with cameras and other equipment. Monals, which have been rescued from many places and are kept in the Monal Rescue Centre, will be transferred to the new breeding centre.

The Himalayan monal breeds between April and August and officials aim to make the breeding centre functional before April.

Source: 'HP wildlife dept to try monal breeding in captivity', *The Times of India*, 06/12/16.

KARNATAKA

Order on Kappatagudda CR reversed to help private firms, claims opposition

Senior BJP leader, Jagadish Shettar, has said that the state government is trying to help private companies by reversing its decision to declare the Kappatagudda forest in Gadag district as a conservation reserve (CR). Shettar, who is leader of the opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, said that the government had issued a notification in 2015 declaring parts of Kappatagudda as a CR. However, he alleged, on November 4, 2016, the notification was withdrawn to help the Baldota group and the Encorn power generating company.

He said that Ramgad Minerals of Baldota group intends to take up mining activities including gold deposit exploration in the area. The company has submitted an application to the government in this regard. While withdrawing the notification, the government should have sought the Supreme Court's permission. But this process has not been followed, he charged further.

Shettar also noted that as many as 20 seers of various *mutts* recently met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and submitted a memorandum, urging him not to allow mining activities in this area.

Source: 'Order on Kappatagudda forest reversed to help private firms: BJP', *Deccan Herald*, 08/12/16.

Authorities step up measures to keep Bandipur and Nagarhole TRs clean

The authorities of the Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves (TRs) have stepped up measures to keep littering inside forest area under check. While the forest staff stationed at various forest gates has been asked to check every vehicle for plastic items and liquor bottles, patrolling by watchers in jeeps has also been intensified. The authorities have also increased patrolling on national highways 212 and 67, which pass through Bandipur. Apart from catching those who dump waste, the watchers also collect the

waste thrown on either side of the road. The collected waste will be segregated and transported to a disposal centre at Gundlupet.

Activists and volunteers from various non-governmental organizations regularly join forest staff in removing garbage thrown in forest areas. A few tons of garbage, mostly plastic covers and bottles, were recently removed from the Himavad Gopalswamy Hills during a cleaning drive.



A new mobile app was also introduced recently in the Nagarahole TR to monitor the entry and exit of vehicles from the forests.

Source: 'Measures to prevent littering inside forest areas stepped up', *The Times of India*, 29/12/16.

MADHYA PRADESH

Ken-Betwa river linking project gets environmental clearance

The Ken-Betwa river linking project that will submerge over 5000 hectares of forest land including 4141 hectares in the Panna Tiger Reserve (TR) has been granted environmental clearance. The standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) had granted its clearance in August 2016 and the environmental clearance was granted on December 30, 2016, by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) for river valley and hydel projects.

The project that will cost Rs. 10,000 crore is currently being examined by the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee (CEC) for adequacy of mitigation measures against its adverse impact on the Panna TR. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXII, Nos. 4, 3 & 2; and Vol. XXI, Nos. 4, 3, & 1)

Source: Jay Mazoomdar. 'Ken-Betwa project on linking rivers cleared for environmental nod', *Indian Express*, 14/01/17.

39 people arrested for poaching

The Madhya Pradesh Forest Department's special task force (STF) recently busted a major poaching network in the Pench-Kanha corridor in Seoni and Balaghat districts by arresting 39 people for poaching three tigers, four leopards and 200 wild boars. The arrested include four *tantrics*, 14 middlemen and 21 poachers. The *tantrics* were reportedly spreading rumours that claws, paws, teeth, bones and whiskers of tigers and leopards held 'powers' that could make villagers rich, give clues to buried treasures and ensure success in gambling.

According to the report by the additional principal conservator of forests (wildlife protection), poachers had buried a tiger in Balaghat district's Sitapathor area. The forest officials exhumed the carcass with the help of a dog squad. Two suspects were questioned, who admitted that they had electrocuted the tiger and buried the carcass. On further investigation and questioning of suspects, the STF exhumed the skeletal remains of another tiger buried near the Seoni-Balaghat border. Interrogations led to the arrests of poachers in various parts of Seoni and Balaghat districts in Madhya Pradesh and Sitasavangi area of Maharashtra.

Madhya Pradesh has reported 28 tiger deaths this year, with Kanha alone accounting for 11 of them.

Source: 'STF arrests 39 people for hunting, busts Pench-Kanha poaching racket', *Hindustan Times*, 20/12/16.

Seven tiger deaths in MP between September and November 2016; 28 in the entire year

Seven tiger deaths were reported in Madhya Pradesh in the three-month period from September to November 2016, taking the total toll in the state in 2016 to 28. The most recent was the death of a tiger in a train accident on the Satna-Allahabad track around 80 km from Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR).

Forest officials said that a radio-collared tigress from the PTR and two other males were moving in the area and that they had written to the railway authorities that they slow

the speed of trains in this sector to avoid further wildlife deaths. They have also asked that railway authorities construct underpasses in this area as these forests are a part of tiger corridors.

Tiger deaths in last 3 months

November 29: Male T-37 kills 20 month-old female cub inside an enclosure at Bandhavgarh TR.

November 22: Carcass of seven year-old male tiger found in Balaghat district's Katangi area with its paws and part of skin missing

November 4: Seven year-old male tiger's carcass found in Bandhavgarh TR. The tiger had been electrocuted.

October 28: Carcass of seven year-old male tiger found in Kanha TR. Body had injury marks, indicating that it was killed in a territorial fight.

October 22: Carcass of eight-year old male tiger found in Kanha TR with its paws missing. The tiger had died due to electrocution.



September 29: One year-old female tiger dies in Pench TR's buffer area due to starvation.

Source: Neeraj Santoshi. 'Tiger hit by train in Satna district, death toll up to 28 this year', *Hindustan Times*, 07/12/16.

6,719 cases of illegal transportation of minerals in 2016 in MP

Madhya Pradesh has registered 6,719 cases of unauthorised transportation of minerals in the year 2016. This is in addition to 384 cases of illegal mining registered in the state for the same year. The state is also witnessing a surge in violence by the mining mafia, which has created terror in many areas like the Chambal. Recently, a 50-year-old farmer was crushed under an excavator by illegal miners for trying to prevent them from taking boulders and rubble from his agricultural land in Chhatarpur district's Hama village.

In August, an inspection carried out jointly by officials of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the Central Pollution Control Board and the

Madhya Pradesh State Pollution Control Board found that the discharges from mining activity in Balaghat were contaminating surrounding water bodies and ground water with heavy metals like lead, copper, chromium, nickel and iron, besides dissolved solids. The illegal mining is also affecting the wildlife in the state; for instance, illegal sand mining along the Son River is endangering the survival of the gharial in the Son Gharial Sanctuary in Sidhi district.

Environmentalists have said that the state government's failure to check illegal mining would have a disastrous impact on the environment in the long run. Mining in the rivers reduces the holding capacity of rivers and this leads to more runoff and less seepage, impacting ground water availability.

Even the central bench of the National Green Tribunal in Bhopal has repeatedly expressed its concern over rampant illegal mining in its various hearings and even lashed out at the state government for its failure to check it.

Source: Neeraj Santoshi, 'Plunder of mineral resource: Over 6,700 cases of illegal shipments in MP', *Hindustan Times*, 14/12/16.

Questions on iron fencing, tiger safaris inside Pench and Bandhavgarh TRs

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has asked the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for its response to a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the erection of iron fencing on the periphery of tiger safaris inside the buffer zones of Pench and Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserves.

The PIL noted that forest officers did not seek mandatory permissions before erecting the fencing and before setting up tiger safaris. It also noted that tigers and other wild animals had been trapped in the iron chain link fencing leading to the deaths, respectively, of eight and two tigers in Pench and Bandhavgarh.

Source: Neelesh Chaudhari, 'MP: High court grants tiger authority 6 weeks to reply to safari PIL', *Hindustan Times*, 08/12/16.

MAHARASHTRA

WCCB releases report on illegally traded species from Maharashtra

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Western Region, recently released its annual report highlighting the top six illegally traded wildlife species from Maharashtra in 2016. Star tortoises, parakeets and spotted black terrapin turtles topped the list of animals traded illegally from Mumbai to different parts of the country this year. The list of most-traded animal parts included pangolin scales, elephant ivory and tiger skin. The conclusions are based on seizures made by the WCCB along with the state forest department and the police during the year.

According to an official, nine cases of star tortoise trade from Mumbai were reported this year. All accused were arrested and sent to jail for three years under the Wildlife Protection Act. In a major case in October 2016, Mumbai Air Intelligence Unit officers intercepted two men with the United Arab Emirates passports carrying 199 endangered tortoises and turtles in four checked-in bags.

There were six cases of trade of Alexandrian parakeets from Mumbai and a few others of other parakeets from different parts of the state. Four cases involved spotted black terrapin turtles.

Some of the other striking cases included the seizure of pangolin scales from Dapoli in April and those of tiger skins from Gondia district in October and Telangana in November (both skins had been transported from Gadchiroli district). There were also two cases of elephant ivory seizures, one from Sangli in January and another in February from SV Road, Mumbai.

The report also highlights the issue of clandestine trade in wildlife taking place through online portals and mobile applications.

Source: Badri Chatterjee, 'Maha demand for tiger skin soared this year', *Hindustan Times*, 25/12/16.

Nine-member panel to study Human Dam project in Tadoba-Andhari TR buffer

The Maharashtra state government constituted a nine-member committee to study impact of diversion of 1925.55 hectare dense forest area for the Human dam project proposed in the buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). The committee will be headed by the principal secretary (forest) Vikas Kharge and deputy conservator of forests (buffer) will be member-secretary. Other members of the committee include the state's chief wildlife warden Shree Bhagwan, TATR field director GP Garad, chief conservator of forest (CCF) of Chandrapur, VS Shelke, a representative of the irrigation department and three top NGOs and SBWL members Deepak Apte, Kishor Rithe and Bandu Dhotre. The mandate of the committee includes studying the impact of the dam on the forests and tigers, views of villagers and other issues. The committee has been asked to submit report by January 2017.

An earlier four-member MoEFCC committee that had been set up in 2014 following the intervention of forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar, had submitted a negative report about the project. The minister had responded saying studies such as these were conducted by experts who were not locals and did not have complete idea about the ground situation. Hence, a new committee of NGOs and officials from the region has been formed now to look into the issues.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar. '9-member panel formed to study irri project in Tadoba', *The Times of India* 09/01/17.

414 leopard deaths in Maharashtra in the last six years

Figures from the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) indicate that a total of 414 leopards died in the state from 2010 to August 2016. The causes for the deaths include falling into open wells, poaching, poisoning, targeted killings in conflict situations and leopards getting caught in snares.

The highest mortality was registered in 2011, when 70 leopards died, followed by 68 in 2012, 66 in 2015, 65 in 2014, 57 in 2010 and 43 in 2013. 45 leopards had also died in the first eight months of 2016, of which 30 were in the Ahmednagar district alone.

Source: Dhaval Kulkarni. 'Tigers overshadow Leopard deaths in Maharashtra' *DNA*, 14/01/17

State wide call centre facility for wildlife related information



The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) is launching a state-wide call centre facility for wildlife related information. The service will operate from Goregaon in Mumbai and citizens will be able to call on a 24x7 toll free number to lodge complaints or get information about a variety of issues related to forests and wildlife.

Queries will be categorised in two segments: general and emergency. Under the general category, citizens can find out about plantations, conservation strategies, basic wildlife information about safaris, social forestry and all other basic information of the FD. In the second category, citizens can complain about illegal wildlife trade, illicit procurement of wild animals, poaching, forest fires, encroachments on reserved land, etc.

The FD has appointed SAAR IT Solutions Pvt. Ltd. for the service. The information technology (IT) director of the FD, signed a memorandum of understanding with the company till August 2017.

Source: Badri Chatterjee. 'First in India: Maharashtra forest department's 24x7 helpline to answer queries from Jan 6', *Hindustan Times*, 21/12/16.

Initiatives to improve security of corridors connecting Nagzira, Navegaon and Tadoba TRs

The Maharashtra Forest Department (FD) will soon be setting up 100 primary response teams (PRTs) comprising of local villagers and three rapid response teams (RRTs) in the wildlife corridor connecting the Nagzira, Navegaon, and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserves.

This is one of the several projects under the Rs 15 crore initiative titled 'Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation and Livelihood Development Programme', funded by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The project will be driven by a consortium of six non-government organizations (NGOs) led by the state FD in two prime tiger corridors - Nagzira-Navegaon-Tadoba and Melghat-Bor-Pench. There will also be three well-equipped RRTs in Navegaon-Nagzira, Navegaon-Umred Karhandla and Brahmपुरi-Tadoba corridors that will be managed by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) in coordination with the FD.

The PRTs will include volunteers from villages who will be trained to handle human-animal conflict situations before the FD arrives. Besides first aid, they will also be given training in identifying animal signs, creating awareness in villages and crowd control. Vehicles assigned to RRTs will be equipped with a tranquillizer gun, trap cages, camera traps, nets, and public announcement systems. These will be manned by a veterinarian, a biologist and a sociologist, for community engagement during conflict situations.

Some officials have noted, however that there is no scheme to reduce forest dependency of villagers settled in the corridors, and this is where this project will play a crucial role in helping protect the corridors.

Source: Virat A Singh and Dhaval Kulkarni. 'Maharashtra tiger corridors to get 2-tier security force', *DNA*, 03/01/17.

SGNP to get advance animal traps

After the Thane Forest Department (FD), the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) will also be procuring 'advance animal traps' to capture and transport wild animals, mainly leopards. The new iron cages will have a CCTV camera fitted in the cage and an alarm that will ring on the phones of six select individuals to alert them when an animal is caught in the cage. Besides the better technology, the cages are believed to weigh less and can be easily maneuvered, therefore. The cages will be developed by Shah Fibrotech, which earlier provided the cages to the Thane FD.

Instances have occurred across Maharashtra including in the Aarey colony and Thane when trapped animals inside the cage were found either dead or in an extremely dehydrated condition.

Source: Rohit Alok. 'Sanjay Gandhi National Park to get 'advance traps' to capture, transport wild animals', *The Indian Express*, 12/12/16.

SGNP ESZ notified; Aarey forests excluded

The final notification for the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) was issued recently by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC). The ESZ covers an area of 59.46 sq km of which 19.25 sq km is forestland while the rest is non-forestland. The minimum extent of the ESZ is 100 m from the park boundary and the maximum four km. The notification mentions that the provisions are subject to orders of the Supreme Court, high courts and the National Green Tribunal.

An area of 1.65 sq km of the Aarey forests has been excluded from the ESZ to allow for the Metro Rail car shed. Nearly 2,300 trees of the deciduous forest will be cut down for the metro car shed and only a fraction re-planted. 27 adivasi settlements will also be displaced. As many as 77 species of birds, 34 species of wildflowers, 86 species of butterflies, 13 species of amphibians, 46 species of reptiles and 16 species of mammals have been documented in

the Aarey forest (*PA Update* Vol. XXI, No. 5). Environmental organizations and activists under the banner of Aarey Conservation Group have not only protested the location but have also suggested seven alternative sites for it in the last two years.

The final ESZ notification has also called for a high boundary wall with fencing in areas around housing societies adjoining the park in view of the large population of leopards here. It says that construction plans already sanctioned will not be affected and that construction shall be permitted within the ESZ according to provisions of the approved development plan, as applicable to commercial buildings, group housing societies, IT parks, roads, power lines, sewage, other civic amenities and the Metro car shed.

Activists have called the notification an eyewash; they say, instead of completely banning construction inside the eco-sensitive zones, the ministry has actually opened it up.

Source: Simontini Bhattacharjee. 'Environment Ministry notifies area around SGNP as ESZ', www.millenniumpost.com, 07/12/16.

Vijay V Singh. 'Aarey Metro car shed gets govt's green nod', *The Times of India*, 07/12/16.

Smruti Koppikar. 'Metro III car shed: The beginning of the end of Aarey in Mumbai?', *Hindustan Times*, 14/12/16.

Major re-shuffle in Maharashtra FD

In a major reshuffle in Maharashtra recently, 15 IFS officers were transferred. Of the 15, three chief conservators of forests (CCFs) have been promoted as additional chief conservators of forests (APCCFs).

Those transferred on promotion include CCFs MK Rao (Kolhapur), Jeet Singh (Pune), and Dinesh Tyagi (Melghat). All will take over as APCCFs. Rao will take over as APCCF (wildlife), West, Mumbai; Singh as APCCF (research, education & training), Pune; and Tyagi will take over as APCCF (headquarters) with social forestry department (SFD), Pune. Tyagi will replace Nitin Kakodkar, who has

been shifted to Nagpur as APCCF (budget, planning and development).

CCF of Pench Tiger Reserve MS Reddy has been shifted to Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR). He will be replaced by Rishikesh Ranjan. CCF of Yavatmal VV Gurme has been shifted to Nagpur in place of Ranjan. Gurme will be replaced by GT Chavan, who was CCF (working plan), Nagpur.

MM Neuli, general manager of South Chandrapur with FDCM, will replace Chavan at Nagpur. Mukesh Ganatra has been posted in place of Neuli in Chandrapur. Sunil Limaye, who was CCF (wildlife), Pune, has been posted as CCF for Thane. Limaye will be replaced by KP Singh, who was in Thane. Vivek Khandekar, who was on deputation with Indian Forestry Research Institute (IFRI), Dehradun, has been posted as CCF of Pune. Deputy conservator (DyCF) Navin Singh has been posted with working plan, Yavatmal, and AP Mahse has been posted in Junnar in place of Anita Patil.

Source: 'Pench chief Reddy shifted to Melghat, 3 promoted as APCCFs', *The Times of India*, 13/01/17.

NAGALAND

Nagaland refuses to accept monkeys from Himachal Pradesh



Nagaland has refused to accept monkeys from Himachal Pradesh claiming that translocation of monkeys may disturb the habit and behaviour pattern of local species. In a letter written to principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife) and chief wildlife warden, Himachal Pradesh (HP), Nagaland's chief wildlife warden has mentioned that there are no suitable and

appropriate habitats in Nagaland for the monkeys from HP.

After finding that sterilization and declaring them vermin had not brought any immediate relief to the residents, the HP state government had come up with the relocation plan (*PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 6).

Source: Anand Bodh. 'Nagaland writes back, says no to relocating monkeys', *The Times of India*, 14/12/16.

ODISHA

1682 crocs counted in Bhitarkanika NP

1682 crocodiles including a dozen albinos were counted in the Bhitarkanika National during a recent estimation exercise. The breakup is as following: hatchlings- 608, yearlings- 334, juvenile-266, sub adult- 172, adult- 302. The crocs spotted included three giant sized animals measuring over 20 feet in length and 18 others that were between 16-20 feet long. The total number is also marginally higher than the 1671 crocs that were counted in the census the preceding year.

The count was conducted in the first week of January in water bodies inside the PA, in riverside villages outside where there have been reports of human-animal conflict, and other water-bodies in and around the Mahanadi deltaic region. The spheres of headcount exercise had to be expanded in view of frequent sighting of these animals in riverside villages.

Source: '1,682 crocs, 12 albino spotted in Bhitarkanika National Park', *The Times of India*, 12/01/17.

Fishermen arrested for fishing in Gahirmatha sanctuary

14 fishermen were arrested in the month of December for unlawful fishing activity within the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary. Two motorized boats were also seized by the patrolling unit of the forest department (FD) near the unmanned Chinchidi Island.

While fishing is prohibited round the year within the sanctuary limits, sea patrolling is stepped up within the sanctuary from November to May every year in view of the annual mass nesting season of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles (*PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 6). At least 172 fishing trawlers were seized from Gahirmatha area during the last turtle nesting season from September 1 to May 31 and 363 fishermen were taken into custody (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXII, Nos. 6 & 1; Vol. XXI, No. 1; Vol. XX, No. 1; and Vol. XIX, No. 6)



Source: '14 fishermen arrested for fishing at Gahirmatha', www.indiatoday.intoday.in, 28/12/16.

RAJASTHAN

17 new wildlife rescue wards for Jodhpur

The Rajasthan State government has sanctioned 17 new wildlife rescue wards in order to provide timely medical aid to injured chinkaras and blackbucks in the Jodhpur region. All 17 wards will be built in the existing veterinary hospitals at the 17 locations chosen by the forest department in consultation with wildlife activists, organizations and villagers. The new centres will come up at Dhava, Poonia ki Piao, Baori, Bhopalgarh, Bilara, Bala, Sathin, Osian, Chamu, Balesar, Lohawat, Shergarh, Dechu, Ketu, Baap, Aau, and Jamba. Currently, Jodhpur has four rescue centres at Khejadli, Luni and Phalodi besides the main rescue centre at Jodhpur zoo.

An amount of Rs. 42.5 lakh has been sanctioned for these wards, of which Rs. 1.5 lakh would go into construction while the rest

would be spent on training, transportation of animals, and medicines. The rate of survival of injured chinkaras and blackbucks, mainly in dog attacks and road accidents, is not more than 20% at the existing four rescue centres put together (*PA Update* Vol. XXII, No. 6). The setting up of the new centres, it is hoped, will bring down death rate considerably.

Source: 'Soon, 17 new rescue wards for antelopes in Jodhpur', *The Times of India*, 15/12/16.

TELANGANA

Forest offices set up in Kawal and Amrabad TRs; other protection, conservation steps also initiated

Two and a half years after the formation of Telangana, the Kawal Tiger Reserve (KTR) and the Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR) in the state will finally have officials working from offices in the field and not from the city. The government recently issued orders to the field directors to set up their offices in Nirmal for KTR and in Achampet for ATR.

On December 3, the carcass of a three year-old male tiger was killed in the Nilwai forest area leading towards Chennur in the south of Mancherial district. A senior wildlife official in-charge had agreed that the killing could be the result of inadequate monitoring of the tiger that moved south from the Kagaznagar forest area. The department staff had also previously recovered a tiger skin in Bejjur area of Adilabad district on November 22.

Further to the arrest of four persons so far in connection with this tiger's killing, two forest department staffers the forest section officer and the local beat officer who were posted in the area where the tiger was found dead too have been suspended for negligence of their duties.

The Chief Wildlife Warden of the state has said that the department has launched an intensive combing of forest in Kagaznagar, Mancherial and Jannaram to locate and remove traps laid by people for wild animals. In addition to the searching for snares and traps, villagers from these forest areas are being

counseled against hunting or attempting to kill wildlife. A system of receiving tip offs to the department on illegal activities in the forest has also been initiated.

Source: 'Officers given orders to set camp in tiger reserves', *The Times of India*, 11/12/16.

SBW approves exploration for uranium in Amrabad TR, heavy traffic through Kawal TR

The Department of Atomic Energy is likely to begin exploration for uranium deposits in the Amrabad Tiger Reserve (TR) following an approval from the State Board for Wildlife (SBW). The SBW recently gave permission for an exploratory survey in 83 sq km of forest area in the tiger reserve in Amrabad and Udimilla in the former Mahbubnagar district (currently Nagarkurnool district) and in Narayanpur of Nalgonda district.

In another decision, the SBW has approved a proposal to allow heavy vehicles to pass through the Kawal TR during the day. In 2013 all heavy vehicle traffic was banned through the reserve in a bid to protect wild animals (*PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 6 and Vol. XIX, Nos. 5 & 3). Both these proposals were among several issues discussed at the SBW's first meeting after formation of Telangana.

The SBW has also approved the setting up of a conservation reserve on an area of about 120 sq km for the long-billed vulture in Bejjur forest range in Kagaznagar, Mancherial district. The move is expected to help not only the vultures here, but also deer species such as the four-horned antelope that live in the area.

Source: 'Uranium mining gets nod in Amrabad tiger reserve', *The Times of India*, 07/12/16.

SBW lifts ban on heavy vehicles inside Kawal

The Telangana State Board for Wildlife's decision to open a 41 km road through the Kawal Tiger Reserve for heavy vehicles has raised concerns among environmentalists and some forest officials. The road within the

reserve is already open for local traffic, including buses and vehicles carrying goods, between Adilabad and Mancherial districts. The latest decision will reduce the distance travelled by heavy vehicles between Nirmal and Mancherial towns by 15 km.

The existing ban on heavy vehicles using this road was to prevent them bypassing the need to pay toll on the national highway. Forest officials have expressed concern on the impact this will have on wildlife, particularly in summer, when animals access the Kadem canal that runs along the road to get drinking water.

While forest officials claimed that a fee at a 'punitive level' should be imposed on heavy vehicles to discourage them from using the road in the reserve, they admitted they don't have a say in it as only the government can fix the amount. Some of the stiffest opposition to the decision has come from forest officials who had previously worked in the reserve. A senior forest official said that when he worked there, he used to pick hundreds of birds crushed by vehicles. The department had also recorded animals including leopards and deer killed on the road during the day. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXII, No. 6 and Vol. XIX, Nos. 5 & 3).

Source: Balakoteshwara Rao. 'Green, foresters fume over road through Kawal Reserve', *The Times of India*, 08/12/16.

UTTAR PRADESH

NOC sought for banned drug for rhino rehabilitation in Dudhwa NP

The rhino rehabilitation programme in the Dudhwa National Park is stuck due to non-availability of a sedating drug, Etorphine (M 99) and also its antidote that are produced in African countries but banned in India. The drug is needed for the relocation of three rhinos to an enclosed area of 14 sq km in the Belraya Range, some 15 km from the present 24 sq km Sonaripur Range's enclosure that has 34 rhinos.

The state forest department has now sought a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the central government to acquire the drug. The NOC has been sought from the agriculture and

environment ministries, and the narcotics department. It is expected to take about three months for the permissions to come through.

Considered an example of one of the most successful rehabilitation programmes in India, rhinos were re-introduced in Dudhwa in 1985. The second phase of the rhino rehabilitation in Dudhwa has, however, been delayed for over 25 years. The Indian Wildlife Board in 1991 strongly underlined the urgency of creating another viable rhino breeding area here and identified a site for that.

There are around 2,768 rhinos in India, of which 2,505 are in Assam as of 2012, 229 in West Bengal as of 2013 and 34 currently in Dudhwa. The rhinos of Dudhwa have now entered the third generation.

Source: 'Dudhwa rhino rehabilitation stuck due to absence of sedating drug', *Hindustan Times*, 25/12/16.

WEST BENGAL

New wildlife division in West Midnapore dist

A new division is being created by the West Bengal Forest Department (FD) in the West Midnapore district. It will have its head office in Jhargram under a Divisional Forest Officer.

The decision has been necessitated by frequent elephant attacks for the past seven-eight years in the region. The division is expected to help monitor human-elephant conflict here and tackle the situation in a more effective manner.

Source: 'Elephant attacks: WB to have new wildlife division', www.indiatoday.intoday.in, 25/12/16.

NATIONAL NEWS FROM INDIA

DNA indexing of rhinos to curb poaching

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) along with the World Wide Fund for Nature – India, the Union Ministry of Environment Forests and

Climate Change and the state governments of Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh will soon begin DNA indexing of rhinos. The move aims at better investigation of poaching cases.

The state governments will adopt RhoDIS, a rhino DNA indexing system developed in South Africa under which an individual rhino's unique DNA profile is compiled in a ready-to-reference database. In case of a poaching incident, the database can be presented as evidence in court to prove that a seized part was from a particular rhino. It is expected to help in achieving a better conviction rate. The system may be rolled out in the country in early 2017 once the protocol on standard practice for DNA sample collection has been prepared. The WII will serve as the official lab to store the rhino DNA database.

16 rhinoceroses have been poached in Assam this year so far while such cases are also on the rise in West Bengal where 12 rhinos have been poached in the past two years.



Source: Seema Sharma, 'DNA indexing to curb rhino poaching in Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal', *The Times of India*, 07/12/16.

117 tiger deaths in the country in 2016: NTCA

According to the official website of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), tigernet.nic.in, there were 117 tiger deaths in the country in 2016. This is based on information of 95 deaths and the seizure of 22 skins. This is 24% higher than the number of 80 tigers (70 deaths and 10 skin seizures) for 2015.

As per statistics on the site, the highest tiger mortality was reported in Madhya Pradesh (29) followed by Karnataka (17), Maharashtra (15), and Tamil Nadu (seven). Other casualties

were reported from the states of Assam, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Kerala. The causes of death listed include infighting, electrocution, natural causes, drowning, accidents, poisoning, eliminated by authorities, and poaching.

22 skins were seized in 2016, with the highest number in Uttarakhand (six), followed by Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Delhi and Chhattisgarh (with two skins each). Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh reported one seizure each.

Source: Nihi Sharma. 'Wildlife conservation body says 95 tigers died, 22 skins seized this year', *Hindustan Times*, 29/12/16.

Initiative to create awareness about python species

Goa based herpetologist and conservationist, Nirmal Kulkarni, has started a nationwide initiative - 'Living with Pythons'- to create awareness about the three python species found in India. The initiative is aimed at promoting acceptance, understanding and awareness about the python through conservation outreach and field-based herpetology techniques.

The year 2017 has been dedicated to pythons and the team will hold field discussions, engagements with communities, youth and forest department personnel. There will be a major emphasis on creating awareness on the issue of human-snake conflicts and a protocol will be set in place for python rescue and release.

All the three species found in India – the Indian Rock python, Burmese python and Reticulated python are under severe threat and the Indian Rock python which is the most common python species is said to be particularly vulnerable due to conflict and habitat loss.

Source: Virat A Singh. 'Now, a project to crush myths about pythons', *DNA*, 02/01/17.

FAC considered diversion of 4377 ha of forest land in its meeting in December 2016

The agenda listing of the meeting of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) for 26 December 2016 listed 27 projects for forest clearance. The meeting agenda was made public on 20 December 2016, and it was noted that the information provided was late as also being incomplete. The EIA Resource and Response Centre (ERC) that issued a release in the matter also pointed out that in many cases the project titles were incomplete and misleading with the possibility that these would not allow for a serious discussion and examination of the proposals before clearance is granted. The details are as follows.

Sector-wise area proposed for diversion (Area in hectares)

No	Sector	Area	%Area	Proposals
1	Mining	3952	90.29	17
2	Wind Power	353	8.0674	2
3	Others	72	1.645	1
-	Total	4377	100.000	20

State and sector-wise area proposed for diversion (Area in hectares)

No	State	Sector	Area	Proposals
1	Chhattisgarh	Mining	1294.474	7
2	Maharashtra	Mining	153.090	1
3	Orissa	Mining	2354.941	8
4	Rajasthan	Mining	149.3002	1
5	Gujarat	Wind Power	297.380	1
6	Andhra Pradesh	Wind Power	55.730	1
7	Karnataka	Others	72.177	1
-	Total	-	4377.092	20

Source: Statement issued by the ERC, 26.12.16

The State of Wildlife in North-East India – 1996-2011

A compilation of news from the *Protected Area Update*

Edited by Pankaj Sekhsaria

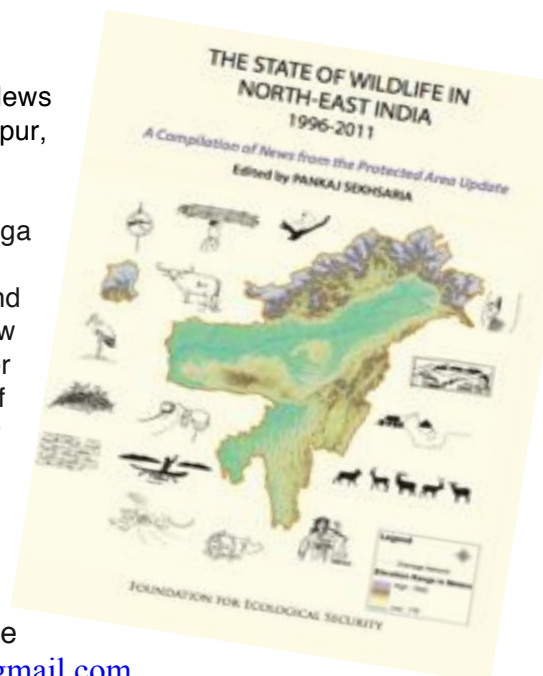
List of Contents: North East India Regional News; News from the States: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura.

Perspective & Opinion: The Print Media's Kaziranga obsession – An analysis (Mehak Siddiqui & C Rajesh Reddi); A case study of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation in western Assam (Sonali Ghosh: Snow leopards in the land of the rising sun (Yash Veer Bhatnagar); Karbi Anglong: A little known wilderness of Assam (Anwaruddin Choudhury); Elephants and other memories of the Garo Hills (Nimesh Ved); Dams in the North East (Neeraj Vaghlikar) and Community conservation of wildlife (Neema Pathak)

Annexures

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INVITING COLLABORATIONS

The *Protected Area Update*, which is now in its 23rd year of publication, has consistently provided news, information and analysis on matters related to wildlife, conservation and protected areas. It has created a credible forum that allows for discussion on a wide-range of often un-addressed issues in the wildlife, conservation and livelihood landscape. It reaches out widely and also represents a wide-range of perspectives and concerns.

We would like to invite researchers, NGOs, journalists and individuals to collaborate and use the *Protected Area Update* as a platform to further common interests in these related subjects. The newsletter can be used as a platform to put out short analyses and synthesis of ongoing work or work that has already been completed. The *PA Update* can also be used, simultaneously and complementarily, as a platform for seeking and gathering information where it is needed.

Please write to the editor at psekhsaria@gmail.com with ideas, queries and suggestions on how these collaborations could be made to work and for specific proposals that are of interest to you.

Important Bird Areas Update

NATIONAL

Project to study Montagu's harrier in India

A study is being initiated to track the journey of Montagu's harrier that is known to migrate to India from Eastern Russia and Eastern Kazakhstan. The principal investigator of the project that is being carried out in association with the forest departments of Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra is Dr T Ganesh of the Bangalore based Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE). The study hopes to understand where exactly the birds travel to, the kind of habitat they use and also their night-roosting sites.

Although the species falls under the least-concern category of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list, its population is believed to be declining fast on account of habitat destruction. Certain areas of Andhra Pradesh's Rollapadu Bird Sanctuary, which were used for roosting by these birds, have for instance, have been handed over for major solar plants in the last few years.

Source: Mayuri Phadnis. 'Journey of Montagu's harrier to be charted', *Pune Mirror*, 02/01/17.

GUJARAT

Construction in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary leads to habitat destruction

Rampant construction inside the Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary in the name of beautification has resulted in the place being turned into a picnic spot along with significant destruction of habitat of the birds.

The wetland is made of numerous small and big water bodies that are separated by elevated bunds. Several bunds have been

extended for a long distance and hundreds of cement benches that have been constructed on the fringes of the wetland allowing visitors to get much closer to the birds. Many of these access points are built at places that were earlier banned for people. Moreover, diesel pumps have been installed to draw fresh water from the wetland to water large number of bottle palms and coconut trees planted along the pathways.

Ornithologists and wildlife experts have pointed out that massive habitat destruction is underway, that the change is scaring away the birds and may also impact roosting and nesting of the birds in the middle of the wetland. Forest officials in charge of the sanctuary have asserted, however, that they are only following a proper management plan to improve the habitat.



Source: Vijaysinh Parmar. 'Khijadiya no more a bird paradise', *The Times of India*, 10/12/16.

KERALA

Workshop on vulture conservation held at Wayanad WLS

A state-level workshop on vulture conservation was held recently at the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). It was organised by the Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department in association with Hume Centre for Ecology and Wildlife Biology to discuss the results of the

ongoing research and conservation programme of the endangered species and for drafting a comprehensive vulture conservation programme for south India. Those participating included District and Sessions judge V. Vijayakumar; C. Sasikumar, vulture specialist group member, IUCN; C.K. Vishnudas, conservation biologist, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru; and R.L. Rathish, a veterinary expert.

The workshop recommended a ban on Ketoprofen in Wayanad district, monitoring of waste dumping near the sanctuary, launching awareness programmes among school students near the sanctuary, and intensifying anti-fire campaign. It was also decided to organise inter-state meetings to involve all sanctuaries and national parks in the vulture habitat, including the Wayanad WLS and the Mudumalai and Bandipur Tiger Reserves, to make the region a vulture safe zone.

Source: 'Stress on measures to conserve vulture population', *The Hindu*, 13/01/17.

PUNJAB

Concern over amphibious bus in Harike

Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal recently inaugurated the 'Harike Water Cruise', an amphibious bus, which will carry tourists for four km into the water. The bus has been acquired from Sweden and the project started with an investment of Rs. 10 crore. Tourists have to shell out Rs. 800 per ticket for the ride.

Bird-watchers and environmentalists have cautioned the government that this tourism project may impact birds, their breeding and nesting. Concerns have also been expressed over the impact this will have on the Gangetic dolphins that inhabit the wetland.

Source: Divya Goyal. 'Harike Water Cruise: Scientists, bird-watchers caution govt, fear human pollution, impact on breeding', *The Indian Express*, 14/12/16.

RAJASTHAN

Work on windmills near Desert National Park continues despite NGT order



Work for the installation of windmills near the Desert National Park (DNP) is continuing despite a September 2016 order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), banning such installation until the final notification of the Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around the park. The ESZ has, however, still not been notified.

The NGT had, in its September order, asked the state government to declare an area of 3,162 sq km around the DNP as an ESZ. Last year, villagers had filed a petition with the NGT when windmills installation companies built roads in the protected area.

The district collector of the area has however claimed that no installations are happening in violation of NGT orders.

Source: Rosamma Thomas, 'Despite NGT ban, work on windmills continues near Desert National Park', *The Times of India*, 28/12/16.



Readers Write

Some thoughts on the *PA Update*...

These thoughts and ideas follow a quick reading of the latest issue of the *PA Update* (No. 124, December 2016). Having worked on the *TigerLink* newsletter (TL), I know how hard it is to produce something like this but I can't help but feel that there is room for improvement. Recently someone had sent me an image of a pride of lions being released into the wild - I'm not sure which paper but thought I may find some news in the *PA Update* about it. It was not there. Was also hoping for some information about the FAC meet in relation to the Panna Tiger Reserve and Ken-Betwa River link. Again not there!

I was quite interested to see in the index of the latest issue an article on the effects of linear infrastructure on PAs. Certainly impacts other than road/rail direct kill ones need highlighting but the piece was disappointing. Most of your audience is already converted, I would guess, so one needs to cater to that level of knowledge and intelligence. The Perspective piece did not reflect the subject's potential nor the importance of the topic. The editorial, in fact, was more informative.

My rule of thumb with TL was don't believe, and therefore don't just copy, what is written in the newspapers unless corroborated by someone on the spot - both as there is no point repeating news that is already available and because it was a specialised publication, more educated information was essential. I think it is the same for the *PA Update*, which has a mandate similar to that of TL.

To air a few more thoughts: Do you have key people in each state sending info? Do you have a team of reliable informers? What do you see as the aim and objective of the *PA Update*? What do you feel it achieves / can achieve? I'm not questioning that it has an important role to play; just useful sometimes to take stock and put it in words. Providing information is important, of course, but to

whom and for what? Is this information they would not/could not get from elsewhere? Actually, it is great just to have it all in one place but I would also like to be sure that it has been sifted to ensure truth and accuracy.

The *PA Update* is a great newsletter and I congratulate you all for the dedicated time of maintaining it all these years. I hope you raise all the necessary funds and can keep it going. But I do think it needs to expand its base - surely there are now more than 2000 conservationists?

- Joanna van Gruisen
Email: joannavg@gmail.com

Much cause for hope...

I just wanted to say that though I don't read the *PA Update* regularly any more, I did click to read the headlines of the latest issue (No. 124, December 2016) and then got immersed catching up on all the areas that I used to be active in.

Reports on developments in the Sahyadris and in Central India, for eg., made for was great reading. Though it might not always seem like it - there actually has been some progress in a few areas - Kolamarkha is now talked about like a known location (!) and hopefully there really are 20 wild buffalo there! And I need to look at Google earth to figure out where Kagaznagar is - now, apparently there are nine tigers there, moving between Chandrapur and Kawal! Who'd have thought this was possible 15 years ago?

- Ashish Fernandes,
Email: ashish.fernandes@gmail.com



OBITUARY

A good lawyer, a great humanist

Videh Upadhyay, Environmental lawyer
(15 August 1971-27 October 2016)

It was as an intern at the Enviro Legal Defence Firm (ELDF), one of India's first environmental law firms, that I first met Videh sometime in 2005. He began by asking us young law students about the difference between law and justice. Thinking back, this question defined both Videh's life and work.

Videh was trained as a lawyer and was in pursuit of justice. At a time when environmental law was largely under-developed an area of practice, he took the risk and the challenge of co-founding the ELDF in 1999. The firm played a critical role in the development of environmental law practice in the country through litigation on environmental issues, policy advocacy and also providing legal inputs to the government, judiciary and civil society organizations. Videh worked on various issues on wildlife protection, natural resource governance, panchayati raj institutions and public interest litigation. It is difficult to provide an in-depth review of his work given its substantive expanse. I will restrict myself to focusing on two particular aspects of his work. First was his work on 'water and the law' and second, on governance institutions – be it panchayati raj or the pollution control boards.

What should be the legal framework for water in India so as to ensure the twin objectives of conservation and access to communities? Given that the Constitutional vision on rivers is restricted to disputes and development, he emphasized on the need for the legal framework to be as inclusive as possible. Through his writings, he highlighted the deficiencies in the customary rights regime in access to water (Customary Rights over Tanks, *EPW*, September 2004), the fallouts of privatization of access to water (River Inc. Is Industry hijacking the Community's right to water? *Down to Earth*, November 2002), judicial decisions on big dams (Relocating Narmada Judgement, *EPW*,

September 2001), proposal for inter-linking of rivers (Judicial Control of Policymaking and Implementation: Interlinking Rivers, *EPW*, March 2012 and River Links and Judicial Chinks, *Indian Express*, July 2003) and challenges of water management at the state level (The Water Question in Jharkhand, *EPW*, Oct 2005 and Water Management and Village Groups, *EPW* December 2002).

A river is invariably a report card of the basin and he therefore believed in developing a holistic approach through Integrated River Basin Management. He drafted the National Water Framework Law that was adopted by the Ministry of Water Resources and was also a member of the drafting team on the National River Basin Law. He provided critical inputs as a member of the Sub-Group on Water Governance, Working Group of the Planning Commission on Irrigation and Command Area Development for the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017). He worked closely with the state governments of Bihar and Orissa in reviewing the legal and institutional framework for Integrated Flood Management. He also represented the state of Goa in the ongoing dispute with the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka over the sharing of the water of the Mandovi River in the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal.

Videh undertook a detailed survey of the relationship between Water User Associations (WUAs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions to understand how political institutions interact with resource based user groups and the implications of this distribution of responsibilities on water conservation and sustainable usage. A detailed ground level survey in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh on Participatory Irrigation Management, Rural Water Supply, and Watershed Development was published as a CSLG (Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, JNU) Working Paper (Beyond the Buzz: Panchayats, Water User Groups and Law in India). It highlighted the tensions on the ground between such resource user groups and Panchayats and that the continued policy fascination with the former has in fact been undermining and diluting that

ability of Panchayats to sustainably manage water resources. Similar arguments have also been made in the context of Joint Forest Management (JFM) wherein the forest department had focused on creating user groups outside the panchayati raj framework and in the process weakened these representative institutions. His work on Panchayat Extension to Schedule Areas Act (PESAA) specifically highlighted how such representative institutions could help greatly in ensuring that tribals have greater voice in governing their own land and resources.

As government counsel, Videh represented the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), Government of Delhi in the High Court of Delhi between 2008 and 2012. His reflections on his work led him to write on the institutional deficiencies of the State Pollution Control Boards and make suggestions on improving their role and functioning (Some Suggestions and Recommendations Towards A Model State Pollution Control Board in India, co-authored with Armin Rosencranz, *Environmental Law and Practice Review* 2011). Similarly his work as arbitration and legal counsel with large-scale infrastructure projects (e.g. Koldam Hydro Project) shaped his writing of the *India Infrastructure Report* (OUP, 2009, 2010 and 2011). He was commissioned by OUP to write a book on the “Regulation For Environmentally and Socially Responsible Infrastructure Projects”, which has been unfortunately left unfinished with his demise.

Videh was a good lawyer but more importantly a great humanist. His life and work will be an inspiration for generations of lawyers and activists who struggle in delivering the promise of justice to those systematically underprivileged and socially deprived. He will be remembered and missed greatly.

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The *Protected Area Update* needs your support

The *PA Update* is now in its 23rd year of uninterrupted publication. It is published six times a year and mailed to nearly 1800 people. Additionally, it goes out in an electronic form to about 2000 individuals via paupdate@yahoogroups.com and is also hosted by a number of websites. There is also now an active facebook page for the newsletter <https://www.facebook.com/groups/protectedareaupdate/> which helps continue the outreach and the discussions.

The *PA Update* has been a key source of news, information and also opinion on protected areas from across South Asia, and particularly India and we keep getting this affirmation via communication we receive regularly from its readers. Continued publication has been possible on account of the generous interest and support of a number of organisations and individuals and we are extremely grateful for all this support over the years.

That being said, raising funds for the publication year on year has and continues to be a challenge. Kalpavriksh and the *PA Update* team is committed to bring out the newsletter regularly as we have done in the past and we seek your help in this endeavor.

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For details of how to send a contribution and for other suggestions and ideas please write to the Editor, *PA Update* at psekhsaria@gmail.com or mail us at the editorial address below

A Decade Ago
Protected Area Update 65, February 2007

GUJARAT

Increased traffic inside Gir posing threat

A report of the Gujarat Forest Department has pointed out that increased vehicular traffic inside Gir, particularly on the Dhari-Una road is posing a threat to the forests and the wildlife here.

One of the reasons for this is the fact that people travelling to Diu take the Dhari-Una road passing through Gir so that they can view wild animals. People also use the road to visit the Tulsishyam temple.

Records with the FD show that four lakh people and one-lakh vehicles use this road every year in either direction.

The FD is planning a wildlife interpretation center at Ambardi, six kms off the Amreli – Kodinar state highway and the Dhari-Una road and says that this could help reduce the traffic inside the protected area.

Source: Rajiv Shah. 'Increased traffic upsets Gir sanctuary's delicate balance', *The Times of India*, 09/12/06.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

Troops in J&K forests affecting wildlife habitat



Large-scale deployment of troops in various parts of the Kashmir Valley including in forest areas is believed to be seriously affecting wild animals and their habitat. Experts say that the entire stretch from Zabarwan, Twin Peak to Tral in Pulwama district is highly militarized, blocking the passage of the wild animals. Forests in Zabarwan have also been fenced with barbed wire, hampering the movement of wild animals like bears and leopards, who normally move to the lower reaches during the winter months. The foothills of the Zabarwan range also house the headquarters of the Army's 15 Corps and the

residences of many senior government functionaries including the Chief Minister and the Governor. The entire belt has also been mined by the army, complicating the situation even further.

Animals like the bear and leopard have frequently been spotted in Harwan, Brein, Buchwara and Gagribal areas, which fall in the Zabarwan range. The Dachigam National Park is also located in the Harwan region here.

There have been many reports in the recent past of wild animals straying into inhabited areas and a situation of increased conflict. The problem has been compounded by the fact that wild animal populations here have increased on account of the hunting ban in the valley for the last two decades.

The problem is also said to be severe in areas like Kupwara, Pulwama and Varmul where the higher reaches are heavily dominated by troops.

Minister for Forests Qazi Muhammad Afzal is said to have acknowledged the problem and taken it up with the Chief Minister. He said, however, that all the troops could not be moved out of the forest areas, but an effort will be made to restrict their movement to prevent disturbance to wildlife. The government is also said to be planning a massive fencing exercise of the forest areas to prevent the entry of wild animals into nearby residential areas

During the past two-years at least 30 persons have been killed and hundreds have been injured in attacks by wild animals. Scores of wild animals including 25 leopards also lost their lives in the incidents. Increasing encroachments, cutting of trees in the forests and illegal grazing have also been blamed for the escalating human-wildlife conflict here.

Source: 'Troops in forests disturb habitat of wild animals: Expert', <http://www.greaterkashmir.com/Home/Newsdetail.s.asp?newsid=1808&Issueid=98&Arch=, 23/12/06>

PERSPECTIVE

A teacher's views on conservation education

The following are some experiences that a child might typically have in the school where I teach:

- An excursion to the rain-forest, camping out and living on the land;
- Bird-watching with one of the most experienced birders in India;
- Spending time outdoors in classes ranging from science and social studies to art and literature;
- Viewing nature documentaries and interacting with eminent environmentalists like Vandana Shiva.

And contrast these, now, with the following experiences that a teacher in my school is likely to have:

- Hearing about a student's safari in Kruger National Park.
- Listening to the plot of an adult American sitcom from a 7th standard child.
- Joking with students about the teacher's 10 year old phone and being told about the benefits of the latest iPhone S7.
- Being asked why the teacher persists in being vegetarian when non-veg is so yummy!

Students and teachers thus seem to be living in parallel realities, with no intersection between the two.

Indeed after five years of teaching biology and interacting with children during excursions and outdoor activities I think that regular conservation education is of little relevance today. Experiential learning in contact with nature is important as is knowledge about global warming and climate change. These, however, fade into the background against the pull of forces such as the media, opinion of parents and peer-group pressures. This leads to a dichotomous existence between a child's life in-school and outside it. The activities done in school tend, then, to be silo-like, complete in themselves and of no relevance to their immediate lives.

Conservation education thus has to be tied to more fundamental questions that deal with a child's life, not just with something 'out there' to be observed and experienced. In discussing these questions with children one finds out their true attitudes to self and nature:

children as young as 10-11 seem to think the natural order is to go from school to a good college (increasingly, one abroad) that will serve as a springboard for a good job, which will then provide financial security for a house in a gated community, a fancy car and the obligatory annual trip abroad.

The connections therefore that need to be made are between choices and their impacts. This allows children to see the links between safari tourism and environmental destruction. Or the links between fast-food chains grooming tastes in a whole new generation and the factory farms of these corporations being the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Of how American media including sitcoms, music videos and talk shows are creating aspirational mindsets and turning us all into Americans in terms of our buying and consumption patterns. How one's choices are contributing to environmental collapse and merely segregating waste, planting trees or volunteering for a worthy NGO is not going to address the issue.

To me it seems clear that discussing these questions is central to any conservation education curriculum. Indeed it seems clear that it should be central to our system of education.

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