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Protected Area Update

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Editor: **Pankaj Sekhsaria**

Associate Editor: **Reshma Jathar**

Illustrations: **Ashvini Menon, Siddhi Jadhav, Shruti Kulkarni, Madhuvanti Anantharajan & Peeyush Sekhsaria**

Produced by **Kalpavriksh** and
The **Environment and Ecology Research Group (EERG)**, C-TARA, IIT Bombay

Editorial Address: **C/o Kalpavriksh**, Apartment 5, Shri Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra, India.

Tel/Fax: 020 – 25654239; Email: psekhsaria@gmail.com

Website: <http://kalpavriksh.org/index.php/conservation-livelihoods1/protected-area-update>

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EDITORIAL

The larger landscape question

It is not a coincidence that the editorial of the previous issue of the *PA Update* (June 2025) also dealt with larger issues of conservation at the landscape level. Titled 'Needed: more-than-a protected area network', it was a reflection on a prominent set of news on wildlife - snow leopards, lions, sea turtles, macaques, tigers - outside of protected areas.

We continue along the same trajectory this time with many such reports that show again that the protected area (PA) is but an island - literally and metaphorically - in the larger conservation landscape. It is quite striking to note how many stories about a PA are only partly about the PA. And there are so many different ways this happens: in Kaziranga, when an extension to the NP and TR is cancelled; in Pilibhit, where seven people have been killed by tigers in their villages; in Palamau TR, where families relocated from a PA have to find land, homes and livelihoods 'outside'; in Karnataka where the government has banned grazing of cattle that is obviously coming from 'outside'; in Maharashtra where 11 people were killed by tigers in the month of May in the forests of Chandrapur alone, many 'outside' of PAs; and at the national level where the MoEFCC has now set up a task force for tigers 'outside' PAs because a staggering 30% of India's tigers live outside these boundaries and in Assam where communities living on the border with Bhutan are re-greening 100-ha of degraded forest to mitigate conflict with elephants.

The most dominant account, as is often the case, is that of the elephant. We get glimpses of this from the range of issues discussed, for instance, in the recently held 21st meeting of Project Elephant: the need for regional (larger landscape level) action plans to mitigate conflict, the issue of nearly 3500 kms of rail track which are considered sensitive

because elephants die here in collisions with trains and the need for inter-agency, inter-institution and inter-state co-ordination for elephant conservation and protection.

The most heart breaking story is of the elephants stranded in Bangladesh - a stark illustration of what happens when humans are not able to resolve issues amongst themselves. These giants that have migrated between the hills of Meghalaya and the plains of Bangladesh for many centuries now find themselves held back in Bangladesh because a wall has been built along the boundary of these two countries. They are literally trapped, with implications that are obvious - an escalation in conflict that includes damage to crops and property and increased loss of both animal and human life. To propose (like has been done) that a PA will solve the problem is as short-sighted and reductionist as it can get. The concept of a limited (and bounded) protected area is in itself antithetical - even violative - of the idea of an elephant. We all also know that boundaries, whether of a PA, of a state, or indeed of nations are human creations that wildlife does not understand and will not follow.



Complimentary to this is the dominant narrative in the media and the conservation community that encroachment 'inside' protected areas is the one of the biggest threats faced by wildlife and habitats. It is not that often, in contrast, that we hear of encroachment 'outside' and 'around' a PA - by growing settlements, real estate development, linear infrastructure, mining projects, dams

and indeed the larger paradigm of development.

These are encroachments that ruthlessly splinter larger landscapes and their ancient connections. Ignoring these encroachments and focussing on just those within PAs is like flogging the wrong horse and answering the partial question if not the entirely wrong one. But we will continue down that track because that is the easier path to take, the easier question to ask and it hides our own culpability.

We can create as many PAs as we want, but if we don't understand and respect the original geographies of the planet, these artificial boundaries will mean and achieve very little.

NEWS FROM INDIAN STATES

ASSAM

Assam cancels proposed expansion of Kaziranga NP and TR

The Assam government has cancelled the preliminary notification, dated 2 September 2020, for the proposed 9th addition to the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve (KNP and TR). The addition was of an area of approximately 25.7 sq. km located in the Tezpur Revenue Circle within Sonitpur District in Assam.

It is as an extensive riverine landscape and identified as a crucial habitat and migratory corridor for wildlife, including for animals like the buffalo, rhinos, elephants, and tigers. The Jia Bhareli River and its islands were noted for their importance in facilitating wildlife movement between Kaziranga and the Nameri NP and TR.

The presence of four rhinos was also recorded here in March 2017.

Source: 'Assam scraps Kaziranga National Park expansion; 9th addition cancelled', www.newnow.in, 13/06/2025.

NGO and JFM committee resume re-greening of elephant corridor in Bhairabkunda forest along Bhutan border

A mission to re-green 100-ha of degraded forest in the Bhairabkunda Reserve Forest on the border with Bhutan to mitigate human-elephant conflict has resumed after a year. Members of Aaranyak, an NGO, and the Dhansiri-Sikaridanga joint forest management (JFM) committee planted 510 saplings of 11 native species. These and others planted earlier are expected to provide food and shelter for elephants in the future.

The area targeted for replenishment comprises grasslands and woodlands with different soil substrata ranging from sandy coarse to rocky and swampy areas. Illegal logging and encroachment are some of the factors that affect the forest patch strategic for elephants.

The NGO initiated the ambitious project of habitat improvement two years ago with support from the SBI Foundation. The plantation drive under the project has been administered by the Dhansiri Forest Division.

Source: 'Planting for elephants: Green step in degraded Assam forest on Bhutan border', www.thehindu.com, 24/05/2025.

CHHATTISGARH

Chhattisgarh to set up Tiger Foundation Society

In a decision taken on 18 June in a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, the Chhattisgarh Government has decided to establish the Tate Tiger Foundation Society (TFS) to focus on tiger conservation. A similar society has been operational in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh since 1996.

The TFS will raise funds from individuals and institutions and be directly involved in activities related to the conservation of tigers and other wildlife, said a

government press release. It further stated that the TFS will ensure the availability of external funds, expertise, and resources for conservation, which will provide new employment opportunities to local communities. The TFS will promote eco-tourism with the participation of the local community. It will also encourage environmental education, research, and training.

Chhattisgarh has four tiger reserves and the state presently has 18-20 tigers.

The Cabinet also made other key decisions, including an approval to transfer the 'JashPure' brand, under which herbal and mahua tea are being produced, to the state government or Chhattisgarh State Industrial Development Corporation (CSIDC). This is expected to help expand the market for these products, boost local raw material demand, and provide employment opportunities for tribal women.

Source: Rashmi Drolia. 'Chhattisgarh govt to form Tiger Foundation Society to control depleting number of big cats', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 18/06/2025.

GUJARAT

FD removes 20 ha of encroachments from Barda WLS



Encroachments from approximately 20 ha of land in the Barda Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), where 24 individuals had cultivated mango plantations, were removed recently.

The encroachers had cleared natural vegetation and trees from the area behind Khambala Dam within the Ranavav range of the sanctuary. They had levelled the forest land for cultivation and installed fencing, iron

wires, and even electrified barriers to protect the unauthorised plantations. Plastic pipes and diesel pumps were being used to irrigate the crops both day and night, said Akshay Joshi, deputy conservator for forests, Porbander.

Around 1,600 mango saplings aged between zero and two years, and approximately 325 saplings aged three to four years, were removed in the clearance drive. At least three notices were issued to the 24 encroachers before action was taken and a first offence report (FOR) was registered under Section 29 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Kanabhai Polabhai Rala, a local resident, has challenged the removal of encroachments by filing a petition in Gujarat high court.

Source: Maulik Pathak. 'Forest dept says it cleared encroachment in Barda, proposed home for Asiatic lions', www.hindustantimes.com, 20/05/2025.

JHARKHAND

79 tribal families relocated from Palamau TR

79 tribal families from Kuzrum and Jaigir villages located within the core of the Palamau Tiger Reserve (TR) in Latehar district have been resettled at Polpol village of Satbarva block. The government has provided them with basic facilities besides residential accommodation in accordance with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines. The process is also on to give them land rights, and work is underway to provide the relocated population with updated Aadhaar and voter identification cards. Reportedly, the villages have been affected by Naxal activities and bringing them back into the mainstream was a major challenge as they needed an assurance that they will not face any issues after relocation.

The villagers who were relocated said they were not benefitting from any government schemes because they were located inside the reserve and no vehicle could reach them because of the absence of motorable roads. This was a major problem when it came to shifting people for medical care and many had lost their lives because of this. Children were also facing many problems in reaching school.

Officials have claimed that the villagers have been relocated very close to a city and will no longer have to travel long distances on foot for availing basic facilities.

The NTCA had laid out a plan in 2013-14 to relocate a dozen villages from the reserve and work on this has been going on for the last one decade. (Also see *PA Updates* Vol. XXX, Nos. 4, 2 & 1 and Vol. XXIII, No. 5).

Source: '79 Families Relocated from Palamau Tiger Reserve', www.etvbharat.com, 22/05/2025.

KARNATAKA

IISc, Karnataka forest department sign MoU to mitigate man-elephant conflict

The Karnataka Forest Department on July 15 signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to undertake landscape-level study to help mitigate human-elephant conflict in Karnataka, especially the Mysore Elephant Reserve and the surrounding areas.

The aim of the five-year project titled 'Landscape-Level Management of the Asian Elephant in the Mysore Elephant Reserve' is to create a scientific foundation to mitigate human-elephant conflict and ensure long-term conservation of Asian elephants across Karnataka's ecologically sensitive and conflict-prone regions. As per FD data, Karnataka houses 6,395 wild elephants. The Mysore Elephant Reserve and the surrounding coffee-growing districts in particular are increasingly witnessing conflict, resulting in

loss of human lives, crop damage and retaliatory action against elephants.

The project will address six core objectives:

- strengthening habitat connectivity by mapping elephant corridors, evaluating barriers and elephant movement using satellite telemetry, camera traps and GIS models
- monitoring demographic and physiological health by assessing population dynamics, body condition and stress indicators through non-invasive sampling
- understanding behaviour and conflict propensity by studying crop-raiding patterns, social learning and identifying high-conflict individuals through social network analysis
- elephant communication and acoustic monitoring by cataloguing elephant vocalisations, particularly in conflict contexts, to develop sound-based deterrents and warning systems
- predictive modelling of conflict hotspots by integrating ecological and behavioural data to forecast future HEC zones under various land-use scenarios
- developing a ten-year Strategic Management Plan by creating a Conflict Mitigation Toolbox (CMT) and Strategic Action Plan (SAP) that informs policy and practice.

Source: 'IISc, Karnataka forest department sign MoU to mitigate man-elephant conflict', www.newindianexpress.com, 16/07/2025.

Karnataka to ban grazing livestock inside wildlife areas

The Karnataka government has decided to enforce a complete ban on grazing livestock inside wildlife areas. This follows an instance in June of the poisoning of five tigers inside the Male Mahadeshwara Hills Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and the findings of an expert committee set up to probe the incident.

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre wrote to the additional chief secretary

(forest), directing him to enforce the ban on grazing highlighting the fact that neighbouring Tamil Nadu already has such a ban in place since 2022.

Source: 'Karnataka to enforce ban on grazing livestock inside wildlife areas', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 23/07/2025.

Karnataka forest minister seeks report on MM Hills as tiger reserve

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre recently took up the long-shelved proposal for declaring the Malai Mahadeshwara Hills (MM Hills) Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve (TR). This follows the incident of tiger deaths in the sanctuary in June (see accompanying story).

The National Board for Wildlife had approved the State Board for Wildlife's proposal to declare MM Hills as a TR in 2021. However, the final approval was shelved by the Karnataka government. Local legislators too had opposed the idea (see *PA Update* Vol. XXVIII, No. 3).

During a closed-door meeting held in early July, the minister issued directions to forest officials to collect public opinion on the proposal, understand their apprehensions, if any, and submit a report. He also directed officials to take all precautionary measures to control unnatural wildlife deaths and loss of human lives in human-animal conflicts. He said jurisdictional officers will be held responsible.

Khandre further directed the officials to create a centralised command and control centre to monitor wildlife movement. He asked officials to prepare a list of vacant posts and immediately start the recruitment process.

Source: 'Minister Eshwar B Khandre seeks report on MM Hills as tiger reserve', www.newindianexpress.com, 09/07/2025.

MADHYA PRADESH

MP begins to develop Nauradehi WLS as cheetah habitat

The Madhya Pradesh (MP) Government has begun work to develop the Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) as the third location for cheetahs in the state, after Kuno National Park (NP) and Gandhi Sagar WLS (*PA Update* Vol. XXXI, No. 3, Vol. XXX, No. 3 and Vol. XXIX, No. 5). A team of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) inspected Nauradehi WLS in May and earmarked a 30 km area spread across three ranges of Mohli, Jhapa and Singpur to be prepared to house cheetahs.

Nauradehi is located on a plateau spread across Sagar and Damoh districts in the Bundelkhand region. While it has deciduous forest, there are also extensive continuous grasslands, which act as grazing grounds for herbivores including four different antelopes and other animals such as wild boar. The forest department (FD) is working to further augment this prey base with the translocation of spotted deer from the Pench and Kanha Tiger Reserves.

In 2010 Nauradehi WLS was one of the priority sites considered for the reintroduction of cheetahs. The idea was dropped owing to the large number of villages that were yet to be relocated from within the sanctuary. According to wildlife officials, there were a total of 93 villages of which 44 have now been shifted. The FD has undertaken the relocation of three more villages, while seven others will be taken up for relocation later this year.

The three ranges of Mohli, Jhapa and Singpur earmarked by the inspection team from NTCA have 13 villages, which will be taken up for relocation. The divisional forest team has sought an additional funding of Rs. 150 crore for their relocation. Nauradehi will also be equipped with veterinary doctors and vacant positions will be filled up.

After going extinct in India in 1952, cheetahs were brought back to the country in

September 2022. Over the past two years, a total of 26 cubs were born to these cheetahs, but only 19 survived. With the 12 adults and 19 cubs, the total number of cheetahs in India currently stands at 31 (see *PA Update* Vol. XXIX, No. 4).

In April this year, two adult male cheetahs who were among the 12 cheetahs brought in from South Africa, were relocated to Gandhi Sagar WLS.

Source: Iram Siddique. 'Nauradehi to be cheetahs' new home in MP. It's preparing by expanding prey base, relocating villages', www.theprint.in, 01/06/2025.

MAHARASHTRA

SGNP residents may be relocated on NDZ land

The urban development department (UDD) has decided to modify regulation 34 under the Development Control and Promotion Regulations (DCPR), 2034 for Greater Mumbai to resettle nearly 2,000 tribal families and 25,000 encroacher families residing within the limits of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) on land demarcated as no development zone (NDZ) in Mumbai.

On June 30, the department issued a notification regarding the proposed modification, inviting objections and suggestions from citizens within 30 days. The notification, signed by the UDD under secretary Amar Patil, said the state had earlier permitted offices of IT companies on NDZ land and a similar consideration would be made for resettling SGNP residents owing to the absence of large, vacant land parcels within the city where they would be rehabilitated.

The Bombay high court had in 1997 directed authorities to relocate all slum dwellers living within SGNP limits outside the boundaries of the park, but the state government and forest department (FD) have not been able to relocate them owing to

multiple reasons including political compulsions.

According to the FD, around 2,000 Adivasi families reside in 43 hamlets scattered along the edge of the park. Another 24,951 families have encroached on various parts of the park and are eligible for relocation.

The notification stated that the SGNP is considered the green lung of Mumbai and Thane as it provides a wide range of ecosystem services that are vital for the well-being of surrounding urban areas. The green zones around the park are classified as eco-sensitive zones, and hence cannot be used to resettle the tribal families and encroachers, it said.

According to the notification, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of the chief minister on February 25 this year to discuss issues related to the relocation of concerned families and encroachers. During the meeting, it was suggested that the existing policy on NDZ be modified to make such land available for rehabilitation. A committee had submitted a report to the government, suggesting new provisions could be added to the DCPR 2034 to allow rehabilitation of SGNP encroachers on NDZ land in the city, the notification said.

Environmentalist Debi Goenka, who had petitioned the high court regarding encroachments in the SGNP leading to the 1997 court order, said the problem could not be solved by destroying another no development zone.

Source: Yogesh Naik. 'SGNP residents may be relocated on NDZ land', www.hindustantimes.com, 02/07/2025.

11 people killed in tiger attacks in May in Chandrapur district

11 people were reported killed in tiger attacks in Chandrapur district in the month of May. Chandrapur district has a rich forest cover spread across 4,800 sq. km, which includes the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve.

The deaths occurred deep inside the forest areas during the mahua and tendu leaf collection season. Tendu leaf collection for use in the beedi-making industry draws thousands of villagers into the forest despite strict government guidelines restricting entry, increasing the risk of fatal encounters with tigers. Officials said that in addition to tendu leaves, timber collection for construction and furniture, as well as firewood collection, had also contributed to the recent deaths. Chief Conservator of Forest, Chandrapur, Dr. Jitendra Ramgaonkar, said that about 45,000 to 50,000 people ventured into the forests during the tendu collection season.

The FD's guidelines prohibit entry before 8 am and stay after 5 pm, but people regularly ignore these warnings. The official said that many people depend on the forest for a livelihood. Since the forest doesn't have a single entry or exit point, people find other ways to enter. People go into the forest early in the morning to collect as many leaves as possible to maximise their income. They enter in groups, but then split up. The attacks happen when a person is alone and in a crouching position. In the last two years, 55 people have died and 886 people have been injured due to tiger attacks.

The May attacks involved multiple tigers at different places. While a single tiger attacked two people in the Brahmapuri area, the attacks in the rest of the Chandrapur forests were carried out by different tigers. The forest department (FD) has already identified the tigers involved in the attacks. A senior FD official informed that they are early adolescent tigers who were just venturing out of their mother's shelter.

Source: Purva Chitnis. '11 killed in tiger attacks in May in Maharashtra's Chandrapur as humans venture deep into forest', www.theprint.in, 14/06/2025.

ODISHA

Orissa High Court issues notice over ban on tribal ritual in Similipal TR

The Orissa High Court has issued notice to the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Baripada, regarding an order prohibiting the Munda tribal community inhabitants of village Jamunagarh from performing their rituals at the sacred place named Jayara which falls within the Similipal Tiger Reserve (TR). The deputy director of the reserve had issued the prohibition order on January 22, 2025.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice MS Raman issued the notice on a writ appeal filed by Nandu Ho and two other residents of Jamunagarh against a single judge's order on March 3, 2025 declining to entertain a petition on the same issue. During the hearing, advocate Afraaz Suhail appearing on behalf of the petitioners submitted that the Munda tribal community have been performing their sacred rituals in Jamunagarh area for generations.

During the hearing of the petition before the single judge, Justice SK Panigrahi, the counsel for the government of India and the state government advocate had submitted that since the 'Tiger Supplementation Programme' is going on in STR, the authorities, in order to save the life of the humans, have not given permission to the petitioners to perform their rituals at Jayara.

While disposing of the petition, Justice Panigrahi had observed that the concern raised by the authorities was genuine. "However, considering the request of counsel for the petitioners, this court makes it clear that after the tiger supplementation programme in and around the Similipal Tiger Reserve gets over, the petitioners may be permitted to perform their rituals at the sacred place," Justice Panigrahi had ordered.

The latest in the matter is not known.

Source: 'Orissa High Court issues notice over ban on tribal ritual in Similipal Tiger Reserve', www.newindianexpress.com, 25/06/2025.

RAJASTHAN

SC warns Rajasthan of contempt; takes serious note of illegal mining inside Ranthambore TR

Taking serious note of illegal mining inside the core area of the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (TR), the Supreme Court (SC) on May 26, warned the Rajasthan government of contempt proceedings and sought a response from the state within 24 hours. The court was responding to an application moved by lawyer and activist Sanjay Kumar, which claimed that tigers here were under grave threat due to uncontrolled movement of vehicles and people inside the reserve, illegal mining and unauthorised construction. The applicant also asked for the deployment of paramilitary forces to deal with the situation.

The application said that around 150 ha of land near the Uliyana village within the critical tiger habitat (CTH) was affected by extensive illegal mining, which is severely impacting the movement and behaviour of wild animals, particularly tigers and leopards. It also alleged that local politicians obstruct the forest department from seizing vehicles involved in illegal mining. It further cited the problem posed by many vehicles and persons visiting the Trinetra Ganesh temple, situated 5 km within the national park. The application stated that on certain days, upwards of 7,500 vehicles are illegally parked along the stretch, causing massive congestion and exposing high-density tiger zones to intrusive human presence.

Advocate Gaurav Kumar Bansal, who drafted the application, urged the SC to pass urgent directions as forest officials were feeling threatened due to the alleged political connections of local mining operators. He referred to the orders passed in Sariska TR

matter on April 17, 2024, where the court categorically held that continuation of mining activities within one km of the boundaries of CTH would amount to contempt of court.

The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) testified that the allegations of illegal mining and vehicular movements were true. Senior advocate K Parmeshwar, assisting the court as *amicus curiae* said that they have received videos of a state minister threatening forest officials. Parmeshwar suggested that the CEC should be asked to inspect and prepare a formal report. The court had undertaken a similar exercise last year by directing a joint inspection by officials from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), the state government and CEC in the Sariska TR.

Source: Abraham Thomas. 'Illegal mining in Ranthambore: SC warns Rajasthan of contempt proceedings', www.hindustantimes.com, 27/05/2025.

Three human deaths in tiger attacks in three months inside Ranthambore TR; "raised" tigers needs to be shifted

A 70-year-old chowkidar of a temple inside the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve (TR) died in a tiger attack on June 9 making it the third fatal attack in less than three months within a radius of 500 m inside the reserve.

Following the first two attacks — one on April 16 by sub-adult tigress Kankati and another on May 11 by Kankati and her unnamed male sibling — a technical committee constituted to examine the issue concluded that the three sub-adult cubs of tigress Arrowhead who were on live bait support since July 2023, have become habituated to people and should be shifted from the reserve. The committee's conclusion was backed by the following three key observations:

1. Arrowhead's three cubs approach people without fear;

2. they are weak and vulnerable to other sub-adult cubs looking to eke out territories in the area;
3. they are a risk to forest staff and visitors because they roam around Jogi mahal, the fort and the pilgrim routes.

On May 14, Kankati was spotted in a millet field outside the TR where the forest staff tranquilised her and placed her in an enclosure. However, Kankati's two siblings were left in the wild. On June 9, when the chowkidar was attacked, of the six sub-adult tigers that frequent the Jogi Mahal and the fort areas, three born to tigress Riddhi were reportedly spotted some distance away near Padam Talao. With tigress Kankati in an enclosure, her two siblings, particularly the male that was involved in the second attack with Kankati on May 11, are the prime suspects for the third attack.

A senior forest official said that the authorities should not have delayed implementing the technical committee's advice to shift the three sub-adult cubs outside Ranthambhore. On June 9, hours after the third death, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), cleared the proposal to shift the three tigers from Ranthambhore. However, the environment ministry's approval was still awaited, said Rajasthan's Chief Wildlife Warden.

A former NTCA official has cautioned against "too much bureaucracy" when prompt field action is required.

Source: Jay Mazoomdaar. 'Third tiger death in Ranthambore: No decision yet on panel's advice to shift three 'raised' tigers', www.indianexpress.com, 11/06/2025.

Only tigress of Mukundra Hills TR captured on camera with a cub

In a first for the Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve (TR), MT-6, the only tigress here was photographed by a camera trap on June 15 with a cub. MT-6 (earlier name T-2301) was

translocated to Mukundra on 9 August 2023 to be paired with male tiger MT-5 (T-110 from Ranthambore), who had arrived earlier on 03 November 2022.

MHTR was expected to ease the pressure on the overcrowded Ranthambore TR. However, it suffered repeated setbacks allegedly due to flawed execution and political interference. Initially, NTCA approved the Seljar range for releasing tigers because of habitat suitability and sufficient prey base. This plan was however altered, and the tigers were shifted to the Darrah range. The decision proved disastrous as between 2018 and 2020, five tigers, including three cubs, died, and one male tiger, MT-1, vanished without a trace. The lone surviving tigress in Darrah, MT-4, was confined to a 24-ha enclosure.

In 2022, acknowledging past failures, the forest department reverted to the original plan and shifted her back to the Seljar range. However, on May 5, 2023, a pregnant MT-4 with three fully formed cubs in her womb, died during treatment in Seljar.

Source: Ajay Singh Ugras. 'Tigress spotted with cub in Mukundra, rekindles revival hopes for the reserve', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 16/06/2025.

FD delaying relocation of villagers from Ramgarh Vishdhari TR

Even after four months of completing its survey, the forest department (FD) has not started the process for the relocation of villages from within the recently notified Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve (TR).

Environmentalists and villagers allege that Bhairupura Antari, Bheemganj, and Bada Dhundhla are ready for relocation but the authorities have neither released the survey list nor identified alternative land. The survey in Bhairupura Antari was completed three months ago, yet the list has not cleared even the initial beat guard level of approval.

According to procedure, the survey list must pass through four levels of scrutiny—beat guard, range officer, assistant conservator of forest, and deputy conservator of forest — before receiving final approval from the district collector. A local resident said that the village of over 300 families had cooperated during the survey but they might now reconsider their willingness to relocate given the delays and confusion. No list of eligible beneficiaries has been prepared yet though the villagers had been assured this would be released within two weeks, and they would be offered a choice between land and cash compensation.

The eight villages proposed for relocation are Keshopura, Bhairupura Antari, Dhundhla Ji Ka Bada, Haripura, Jhawra Ki Jhopdiyaan, Bheemand, Jhawra, Gudha Makka, and Gulkhedi. Of these, only Gulkhedi has seen any progress—its survey list has been issued, compensation provided, and the village expected to move soon. In Keshopura forest block too, land has reportedly been identified, but the survey list remains pending.

Source: 'Forest dept slow as a snail in moving villages out of Ramgarh Vishdhari', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 26/06/2025.

TAMIL NADU

2000 ha of mangroves plantation in Muthupet, part of the Point Calimere Ramsar Site

The Tamil Nadu (TN) Forest Department (FD) has restored and planted mangroves across 2,057 ha in the Muthupet region of Tiruvarur and Thanjavur districts between 2022 and 2025. The three-year campaign was spearheaded by the Tiruvarur Forest Division.

The Muthupet wetland complex comprising 12,020 ha is situated at the confluence of Koraiyar and Pamaniyar rivers. It supports the largest stretch of *Avicennia marina* (grey or white mangroves), the species

that accounts for 95% of the mangrove cover in the state. Other species like *Aegiceras corniculatum* (black mangroves) and *Rhizophora mucronata* (red mangroves) have also been reintroduced to enhance biodiversity.

1,350 ha has been brought under new plantation and another 707 ha has undergone restoration through desilting and canal repair. At 1,482 ha, bulk of the intervention happened in Thanjavur, while Tiruvarur accounted for 575 ha.

The plantations have used both the fishbone design and box design canal models to enhance tidal water circulation that's critical for natural seed dispersal and mangrove growth. Over 1.2 million propagules and saplings were planted, supported by a canal network exceeding 380 km in length as part of the project that has integrated local knowledge through village mangrove councils (VMCs) in six villages, including Veerankoil and Thondiyakadu. These councils, based on joint forest management principles, cover over 10,000 people across 16 fishing villages whose livelihood depends on the mangrove-rich canals.

Besides the ecological benefits, the initiative has also boosted rural employment by generating over 86,000 man-days in plantation and canal formation work. In 2022-23 alone, nearly 31,000 man-days were recorded across four projects. The 2023-24 phase saw a further 32,397 man-days.

Officials said that the Muthupet mangroves, part of the Point Calimere Ramsar site, provide vital habitat for over 100 species of migratory birds and serve as a nursery for fish. Their restoration is expected to improve biodiversity, boost fisheries, and enhance the region's climate resilience.

Source: SV Krishna. 'With 2,000 hectares of replanted mangroves, TN's Muthupet turns over a new leaf', www.newindianexpress.com, 29/06/2025.

TN to carry out elephant profiling across state

The Tamil Nadu (TN) Government is planning to carry out elephant profiling in all the forest divisions across the state in an effort to help mitigate human-elephant conflict. Elephant profiling was done a few years ago in the conflict prone districts of Coimbatore and the Nilgiris. The exercise was however stopped due to administrative reasons.

As part of resuming the exercise, a training programme in elephant profiling and individual elephant characterization for focused conflict management was held for the forest range officers and foresters at the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy (TNFA) in Coimbatore in May. This was conducted by the forest department (FD) in association with OSAI, an NGO. The FD is planning a similar training programme for anti-poaching watchers as well.

The FD said they have identified 105 conflict-prone villages and taken steps to address the issue by creating awareness and taking steps to address the conflict scientifically. A standard operating procedure (SOP) for farmers for warding off wild animals to the forest boundaries is also to be released.

Source: 'Tamil Nadu govt to carry out elephant profiling across forests in state', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 16/05/2025.

TN sends second group of staff to Thailand for learning elephant handling practices

The Tamil Nadu (TN) Government recently sent a team of 15 mahouts and *cavadis* (assistants) to Thailand to participate in a week-long training session on elephant care and management at the Thai Elephant Conservation Center (TECC) in Lampang. The team included staff from the Mudumalai and Anaimalai Tiger Reserves (TRs) who were accompanied by P Manikanda Prabhu, assistant director of Vandalur Zoo, forest

veterinarian K Rajesh Kumar from Mudumalai, and forest ranger M Megala.

A first group of 13 people from the state had visited TECC in 2023 with the purpose of exchanging methods and ideas related to elephant care.

Elephants in TN are maintained in forests camps located in areas such as Theppakkadu in Mudumalai and Kozhikamuthi in Anaimalai, which are staffed by members of local tribal communities like the Malasars and Irulas. So far, training has been given through instruction by retired handlers using traditional methods. The staff have never been exposed to other elephant camps or training centres that adopt practices with a modern scientific approach, an officer of the TN Forest Department said.

Source: SV Krishna Chaitanya. 'TN sends 15 mahouts, cavadis to Thailand for training in modern elephant care', www.newindianexpress.com, 17/06/2025.

State notifies Greater Flamingo Sanctuary at Dhanushkodi



The Tamil Nadu government has declared the Greater Flamingo Sanctuary at Dhanushkodi in Ramanathapuram district. The sanctuary spans 524.7 ha and encompasses both revenue and forest lands within Rameshwaram taluk. The designated area is part of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve. The move aims to preserve a critical stopover point along the Central Asian Flyway for thousands of migratory wetland birds. Chief Minister MK Stalin

inaugurated the sanctuary via video conferencing at the World Environment Day event organised by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Forests in Chennai.

A Government Order (GO) issued on 4 June 2025 noted that according to the recent 2023-2024 wetland bird survey, the Dhanushkodi region recorded over 10,700 wetland birds, representing 128 species including herons, egrets, sandpipers, and both greater and lesser flamingos. Mangrove species such as *Avicennia* and *Rhizophora* dominate the Dhanushkodi lagoon, providing essential breeding grounds and natural defense against coastal erosion. The sanctuary status is expected to encourage responsible ecotourism, generate local employment, and raise public awareness about wetland conservation, stated the GO.

Source: 'Tamil Nadu notifies Greater Flamingo Sanctuary at Dhanushkodi', www.thehindu.co.in, 05/06/2025.

TELANGANA

Adivasis Demand Cancellation of GO No. 49 for Komaram Bheem Conservation Reserve

Various Adivasi organisations, along with MLAs from different political parties including the BRS, BJP, and Congress, have demanded the cancellation of government order (GO) No. 49 that declared the area between the Kawal Tiger Reserve (TR) and Tadoba Andhari TR as the Komaram Bheem Conservation Reserve.

The meeting demanding the same was held in June and was attended by leaders of several Adivasi organisations, MLAs Palvai Harish Rao, Kova Laxmi and Vedma Bojju, MP Godam Nagesh, district collectors, and ITDA project officers.

In response, Minister Jupally Krishna Rao assured that GO No. 49 would not affect lands legally owned by Adivasis, including ROFR (Recognition of Forest Rights) lands *Protected Area Update* Vol. XXXI, No. 4

and Podu lands that have been under cultivation by tribal communities for generations. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXX, No. 2)

Source: Pillalamarri Srinivas. 'Adivasis Demand Cancellation of GO No. 49', www.deccanchronicle.com, 27/06/2025.

Mallyal village to be relocated from within Kawal TR

The Telangana Forest Department (FD) has proposed the relocation of 104 families of Mallyal village located within the Kawal Tiger Reserve (TR). The site for relocation is likely to be near Mulkalla in Mancherial district. The FD has sent proposals to the Central government seeking funds under the Tiger Project, and also requested the state government to allocate funds for the same.

Forest officials said that the adivasis of Mallyal village visited the place proposed for their relocation. They are said to have agreed to the location and also passed a resolution a few months ago confirming their willingness to move.

The FD has already relocated a total of 142 Adivasi families of Maisampet and Rampur villages from the core to Maddipadaga in Kadam mandal. (Also see *PA Update* Vol. XXVIII, No. 6)

Source: Pillalamarri Srinivas. 'Forest Officials To Seek Relocation Of Mallyal Village In Adilabad', www.deccanchronicle.com, 24/06/2025

UTTAR PRADESH

Seven killed in tiger attacks in seven months in Pilibhit

Seven people have been killed in tiger attacks in Pilibhit in a two month period spanning the months of June and July 2025. Wildlife enthusiasts have requested the district

administration for a scientific study to investigate the reasons behind the attacks and instances of unusual behaviour such as tigers entering villages during daylight hours.

The group of people including members of the Wildlife Biodiversity Conservation Society and Save Environment Society, also submitted a memorandum to district magistrate Gyanendra Singh, urging a shift in cropping patterns across 276 villages in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR) eco-sensitive zone — from tall sugarcane to low-height crops like pulses, which are less likely to attract tigers. They have also requested the relocation of tigers to less crowded reserves via the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

During the meeting at Singh's office, Shivam Kashyap, a lawyer, urged him to push the state government to increase compensation for fatal attacks from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh, as per the existing policy in Maharashtra. He also highlighted issues like stray cattle attracting predators outside the forest, a shortage of field forest staff, a lack of rescue vehicles, and delays in completing the tiger rescue centre.

Pilibhit, home to over 71 tigers in its 620 sq. km reserve, is considered one of the most densely tiger-populated reserves in the country and has recorded 67 tiger-related human deaths since 2016 — averaging seven per year. The authorities here have also conducted 30 rescue operations, relocating 25 tigers and six leopards.

Source: Keshav Agarwal. 'Wildlife enthusiasts demand changes in conservation policies amid rising tiger attacks', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 23/07/2025.

WEST BENGAL

FD to create grasslands in protected areas of north Bengal

The state forest department (FD) is planning to create grasslands in the forests of North Bengal

including in protected areas to provide adequate fodder for herbivores and prevent them, particularly elephants, from straying out in search of food.

A grassland over an area of around 300 ha would be developed in the Jaldapara National Park (NP) in Alipurduar district. Similarly, a grassland across an area of 60 ha would be developed in Gorumara NP in Jalpaiguri. The FD is also planning to create grasslands in Buxa Tiger Reserve and the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary.

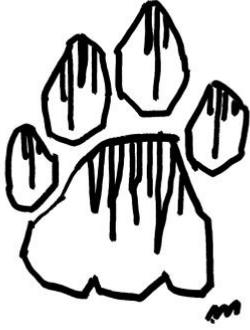
The move comes following specific instructions from Chief Minister (CM) Mamata Banerjee. In a review meeting of all eight north Bengal districts on May 21, the CM asked forest officials to start preparing saplings for grasslands that can develop during the monsoon season. She also directed the FD to take up the task of planting under the social forestry scheme.

Source: 'Bengal forest department plans to create new grasslands for herbivores in forests', www.telegraphindia.com, 24/05/2025.

NATIONAL NEWS

MoEFCC to launch 'Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves' project across 17 tiger range states

The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFFCC) has proposed a 'Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves' (TOTR) project to account for the nearly 30% of the country's estimated 3,682 tigers that are found outside notified reserves. The TOTR project aims at dispersal of tigers from source to sink. To address the issue holistically, the project will focus on the areas outside tiger reserves (TRs). The expected outcome of the project is a reduction in human-tiger conflict in the areas outside TRs.



A copy of the final draft of the project prepared by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) states that 80 forest divisions in 17 states across the country will be covered under the project. These states include Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, which have been reported to have tigers outside TRs.

The duration of the project is three years, from 2025-26 to 2027-28. An estimated amount of Rs. 88.7 crore is required, with Rs. 36.15 crore for 2025-26, Rs. 26.15 crore for 2026-27, and Rs. 26.40 crore for 2027-28.

The project plan includes monitoring of wild animals and their habitat using camera traps, anti-poaching measures, constituting tiger squads from the existing staff, vehicular patrolling, hiring of local youth at the field level for monitoring wildlife through data collection and analysis, formation of rapid response teams, procurement of cages, immobilisation equipment, rescue vehicles, and medicines. Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology will be used for early warning notification to communities as a preventive measure. Capacity building of staff, veterinarians, and civil society organisations, formation of volunteer groups, outreach programs, habitat improvement, and jungle camps for students have also been proposed.

Dr Gobind Sagar Bhadrwaj, member secretary, NTCA, said that many times tigers outside TRs lead to conflict situations.

Looking at the increasing growth rate of tigers (6.1%), coupled with conservation practices, increasing human population, and expanding infrastructure, this human-tiger conflict is likely to increase in the coming years. Therefore, addressing conservation needs beyond TRs and across broader landscapes is essential for the species' long-term survival and maintaining ecological balance.

Source: Harpreet Bajwa. 'Tigers Outside Tiger Reserves project to be launched soon in 17 states to reduce conflict with big cat', www.newindianexpress.com, 18/06/2025.

Wildlife clearance not mandatory for basic public facilities under FRA: MoTA

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has written to the environment ministry recently clarifying that wildlife clearance is not automatically required for constructing essential public facilities such as schools, anganwadis and roads on forest land under the Forest Rights Act (FRA)- 2006, provided they are recommended by the gram sabha.

In an office memorandum issued on July 2, MoTA offered a detailed clarification on Section 3(2) of the FRA, which allows diversion of forest land for basic facilities such as schools, roads, health centres and irrigation projects for the benefit of forest-dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs).

"Section 3(2) of the FRA states that, notwithstanding anything contained in the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, the Central government shall provide for diversion of forest land for facilities (including schools, health centers, roads, etc)... on forest land. The clearance of such a developmental project shall be subject to the condition that the Gram Sabha recommends the same," it said.

In a letter issued in October 2020, the environment ministry had stated that Section 13 of the FRA, which says the law is "in

addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being in force”, implies that “wildlife clearance will be required for implementing Section 3(2) of the Act”. The letter had said that provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, remain unaffected by Section 3(2) of the FRA.

The Tribal Affairs Ministry has now clarified that Section 3(2) of the FRA is rooted in constitutional rights and safeguards, including Articles 14, 19(1)(e), and 21 of the Constitution, as well as the Fifth and Sixth Schedules, which protect tribal rights. The ministry cited landmark Supreme Court judgments, including *Samatha vs State of Andhra Pradesh* (1997) and *TN Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union of India* (1997), to emphasise that the FRA is a legal instrument to balance tribal rights, development needs, and environmental concerns.

The letter further said that the right to divert forest land under Section 3(2) must be read along with Sections 2(e), 4(1), 4(2), and 4(7) of the FRA. These provisions affirm that forest rights are “vested” in tribal and forest-dwelling communities to correct “historical injustices”.

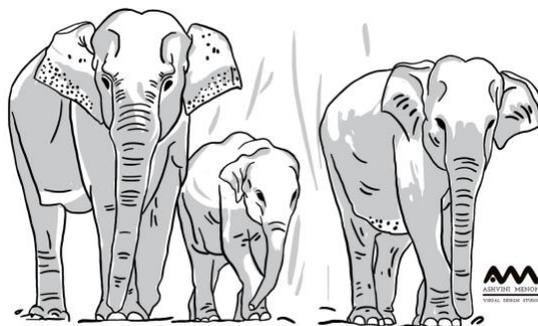
Addressing concerns about potential conflicts with wildlife conservation, the ministry said, “Section 4(2) of the FRA specifies the permissible self-limitation. It introduces the self-limiting exception to the modification or resettlement of forest rights for wildlife conservation, only in Critical Wildlife Habitat.” Referring to a joint 2009 guideline with the environment ministry outlining procedures for forest land diversion for non-forest purposes under Section 3(2) of the FRA, MoTA said that the stipulated procedure provides a “clear understanding that the wildlife clearance is not automatically mandated”.

The memorandum said that the rights granted under Section 3(2), when read with other relevant sections of the Act, are “a statutory entitlement deriving its mandate from the Constitution’s Fundamental Rights, not

contingent on external clearances unless explicitly stated in the FRA”.

Source: 'Wildlife clearance not mandatory for basic public facilities under FRA: MoTA clarifies', www.theprint.in, 08/07/2025.

21st Steering Committee meeting of Project Elephant held in Dehradun



The 21st Steering Committee (SC) meeting of Project Elephant was held on 26 June 2025, at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA), Dehradun, under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Bhupender Yadav. The meeting brought together senior officials, scientists, and field experts from elephant range states, along with representatives from key conservation institutions, to review the progress of Project Elephant and to deliberate on the way forward for elephant conservation in India.

The issues discussed in the meeting included those related to involving local communities as active partners in wildlife conservation, priority dealing with conflict-related matters, improvement of working conditions, and ensuring social security of frontline forest staff and ground-level conservation workers.

Stressing the importance of awareness generation, the minister urged for coordinated efforts with Indian Railways, Ministry of Power, NHAI and mine developers to reduce human-wildlife conflict. He emphasized that institutions like the Salim Ali Centre for

Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), the Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and State Forest Training institutions should work together to ensure effective implementation of awareness and outreach programmes. He also emphasized the need for systematic collection and analysis of data on elephant deaths due to railway accidents, and the importance of knowledge sharing among States, institutions, and experts to scale up best practices across regions.

The meeting included updates on key initiatives such as the preparation of Regional Action Plans on Human-Elephant Conflict in Southern and North-Eastern India, completion of surveys covering 3,452.4 km of sensitive railway stretches, with 77 high-risk areas identified for mitigation, and the progress of DNA profiling of captive elephants, with 1,911 genetic profiles completed across 22 States. The Committee noted that Phase-I of the synchronized elephant population estimation in the North-Eastern States had been completed, with over 16,500 dung samples collected. Work is also progressing on the Model Elephant Conservation Plan (ECP) for the Nilgiri Elephant Reserve, which is expected to be finalized by December 2025.

Important documents that were released during the meeting, include a report on suggested measures to mitigate elephant-train collisions; a comprehensive study on 23 years of human-elephant conflict in Assam, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh; an advisory on safe tusk trimming practices for captive elephants, and the latest edition of *Trumpet*, the Project Elephant quarterly newsletter.

Key future actions discussed included finalization of the Nilgiri ECP, initiation of a three-year elephant tracking study in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, conducting Management Effectiveness Evaluations (MEE) in Elephant Reserves with CAMPA support, and the development of an integrated conservation strategy for the Ripu-Chirang Elephant Reserve, with a focus on the Udalguri landscape.

Source: 'Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav chairs the 21st Steering Committee Meeting of Project Elephant in Dehradun', www.pib.gov.in, 26/06/2025.

SOUTH ASIA

BANGLADESH

Bangladesh to declare PA for elephants in its northeastern region

In response to rising human-elephant conflict, Bangladesh is planning to declare the elephant habitats in its northeastern parts a protected area (PA) for the animal. The country has an estimated wild population of 268 resident elephants, all counted in the southern districts.

The elephants of the northeastern habitat are considered 'non-residents' and were not counted in the census. These elephants have been migrating from Meghalaya in India for generations. The herds used to come to Bangladesh from the hills of Meghalaya during the rice harvesting season between December and May and then return. The herds have, however, not been able to return since 2019 due to the fencing of the international border by India and the closure therefore of the migratory corridor. The elephants have been trapped in Bangladesh, one consequence of which has been increased human-elephant conflict.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, an advisor to the environment ministry in Bangladesh, informed that Bangladesh is working on declaring the area as protected and finding ways to reduce conflicts and damages. At the same time, it will continue to talk to India to find a sustainable solution.

While declaring the conflict-prone zone as a 'protected area' is a good initiative, it will be challenging to maintain its status, said Mohammed Mostafa Feeroz, a zoology professor at Jahangirnagar University in

Bangladesh. He added that the northeastern elephant habitat stretches across a 41 km area in three districts — Sherpur, Mymensingh, and Netrokona — alongside the international border. It is largely occupied by human settlements and agricultural land.

Feeroz said that having a comprehensive management plan, including engaging adequate numbers of the elephant response team (ERT) in the conflict-prone zone, will help to avoid conflicts. ABM Sarwar Alam, IUCN Bangladesh's program manager, suggested changing the cropping pattern in the region from rice and vegetables to alternative crops like green chilli.

Both experts emphasized the need to open the four existing elephant corridors between Bangladesh and India so that the herd can continue its migration. Bangladesh and India signed a protocol in 2020 regarding the transboundary elephant conflicts and their management; finalizing the terms and conditions of operating the protocol is still underway, however.

Besides the protocol, the Siem Reap Declaration for Asian Elephant Conservation was adopted by all 13 Asian elephant range countries in 2025. According to the declaration, elephant range countries — which together hold less than 50,000 wild elephants — are supposed to enhance transboundary cooperation for elephant conservation both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The IUCN has declared the species critically endangered within Bangladesh. According to IUCN Bangladesh data, Bangladesh has recorded the presence of elephants in 44 forest ranges, covering 1,518 sq. km, and 12 elephant corridors. These elephants, in the southern region, reside in Chittagong, Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Cox's Bazar districts.

According to the Bangladesh Forest Department (FD) at least 50 elephants were killed in Bangladesh in conflicts between humans and elephants between 2017 and 2021. The highest annual death toll was 34 in 2021.

In 2018, the government developed a 10-year Elephant Conservation Action Plan to guide the implementation of elephant conservation activities nationwide. Alongside this, under a project called Sustainable Forests & Livelihoods (SUFAL), the FD along with NGOs like IUCN Bangladesh, has engaged local communities in conflict-prone areas by forming ERTs as a conservation tool to mitigate human-elephant conflict.

In 2010 Bangladesh introduced a compensation package for families that lost members and resources like households and crop fields to attacks by wild animals. Later, in 2021, the compensation package was updated to include additional benefits.

Source: Abu Siddique. 'Bangladesh plans new 'protected area' for elephants in its conflict-prone northeast', www.mongabay.com, 18/06/2025.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IBAT Alliance doubled its investment in global biodiversity data from 2023 to 2024

The IBAT Alliance, a collaboration between four of the world's largest and most influential conservation organisations announced on 23 June 2025, that its 2024 investment in biodiversity data reached a record level of \$2.5 million — an increase from \$1.2 million in 2023.

The four organisations that form part of the Alliance are BirdLife International, Conservation International, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre. The increase in investment means that vital funds will be reinvested back into three of the world's most authoritative biodiversity datasets, supporting critical updates and maintenance: 1) The World Database on

Protected Areas (WDPA); 2) The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and 3) The World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas (WDKBA).

This will ensure access to credible, science-based global biodiversity data for accurate screening and reporting, enabling meaningful action for nature. According to BirdLife International, this will ensure access to credible, science-based global biodiversity data for accurate screening and reporting, enabling meaningful action for nature. It will also help build a more complete picture of the state of nature globally, enhancing understanding of threats to biodiversity and driving tangible conservation action.

Another reason why the development is significant as per the statement is that the growth in funds demonstrates that businesses

and financial institutions around the world are investing in authoritative biodiversity data and incorporating it into their decision-making. The datasets available through IBAT, according to BirdLife International, are used for early risk screening, setting goals and

measuring progress towards global biodiversity targets such as those in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

“The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is often referred to as the barometer of life — such is its value in assessing the extinction risks facing animals, fungi and plants around the world. Investment from IBAT allows us to maintain the IUCN Red List as a vital resource for governments, businesses and scientists alike. The investment supports the addition of new species groups to the IUCN Red List, updates of previously assessed species and improvements to systems and data,” Grethel Aguilar, director general, IUCN, was quoted in the statement.

Source: Rajat Ghai. 'IBAT Alliance, formed by four largest global conservation organisations, doubled its investment in biodiversity data from 2023 to 2024', www.downtoearth.org.in.

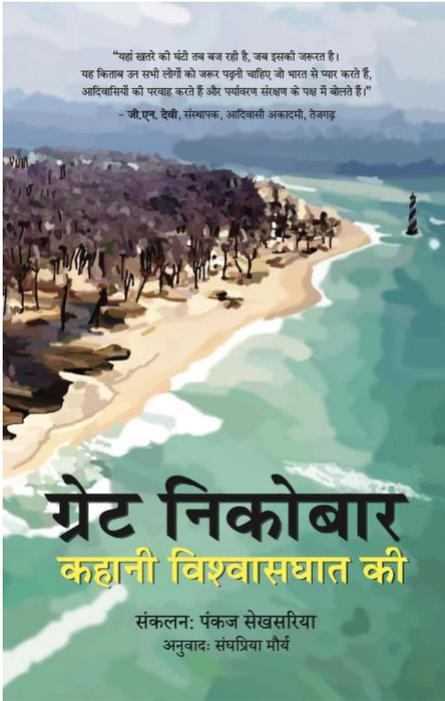


Protected Area Update in Marathi – for Maharashtra

The *Maharashtra Sanrakshit Kshetra Vartapatra*, is a sister publication of the *Protected Area Update*. Started in April 2020, it has now entered its 5th year of publication. The 24-page newsletter in Marathi – a regional language, is published four times a year. The *Maharashtra Sanrakshit Kshetra Vartapatra* provides a curated compilation of news and information related to wildlife protection and conservation in PAs of Maharashtra. A publication in regional language has the potential to play a greater role in environmental education and awareness generation among the regional population. We request you to help us reach out to the Marathi readers.



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Articles by Pankaj Sekhsaria, Aathira Perinchery, Janki Andharia, V Ramesh & Ravinder Dhiman, B Chaudhari, Ishika Ramakrishna, Uday Mondal, Mahi Mankeshwar, Shrishtee Bajpai, S Harikrishnan, Manish Chandi, Ajay Saini, and Norma Alvares. Foreword by: Madhav Gadgil.

Endorsement: "Here is an alarm being rung, when it needs to be. This book is a must-read for anyone who loves India, cares for the Adivasis, and speaks in favour of environmental upkeep." - G.N. Devy

In English: *The Great Nicobar Betrayal*, pg xii+100+10 colour plates, Price: Rs. 499

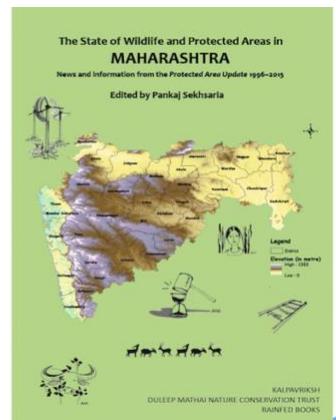
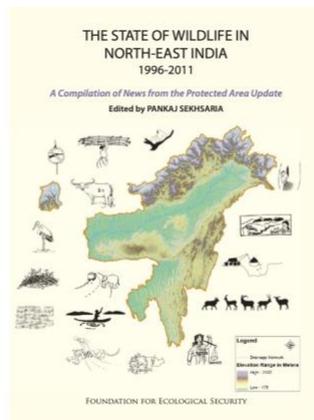
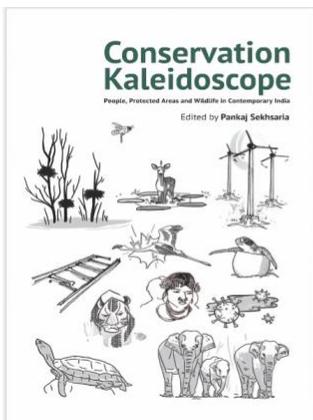
In Bengali: *Great Nicobar - O Kicchu Prashna*, pg xx+116+ 8 colour pages, Price: Rs. 300



BOOKS FROM THE PA UPDATE

- 1) *Conservation Kaleidoscope: People, Protected Areas and Wildlife in Contemporary India*, 2021, 450 pp, 140 line drawings., Price: 650
- 2) *The State of Wildlife and Protected Areas in Maharashtra: News and Information from the Protected Area Update 1996-2015*, 2019. 250 pp, 100 line drawings, Price: Rs. 400
- 3) *The State of Wildlife in North-East India 1996-2011: A compilation of news from the Protected Area Update*, 2013, 330 pp, 100 line drawings, Price: Rs. 300

For more details and to order copies, please write to psekhsaria@gmail.com



MAHARASHTRA

Tadoba Andhari TR to get high-tech surveillance system

The Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve would soon have a high-tech surveillance system. Aerially-mounted 360-degree view cameras would be installed to provide 24x7 inputs on movements of animals and villagers, forest staff, guards and poachers. Thermal cameras would be mounted on an elevated platform or masts and the mount would also have solar panels to keep the cameras running. The feeds would reach a control room, which would have multiple-screens to have real-time view.

State Forest Minister Sudhir Mungantiwar said that this is being done on a pilot basis and the experiment, if successful, would be replicated elsewhere in the state.

Source: Mrityunjay Bose, 'Tadoba tiger reserve to have hi-tech surveillance', *Deccan Herald*, 14/06/15.

48 tigers outside protected areas in Chandrapur district

As many as 48 tigers have been found inhabiting forests outside protected areas in the Chandrapur district in Maharashtra. The estimation was done jointly by the Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) and the Maharashtra Forest Department (FD), in forests situated outside PAs in the Chandrapur, Bhandara, Wardha, Nagpur, Gondia and Yawatmal districts of Maharashtra. The first phase, which covered 2,000 sq km of tiger habitat outside PAs in Chandrapur district, was conducted under the WCT-USAID Tiger Programme, in collaboration with the FD and the NGO, Panthera.

As many as 600 camera traps were deployed simultaneously across forested areas in Chandrapur. The forests of Chandrapur were divided into several blocks for logistical convenience. Every block was further divided into 3 sq. km. grids and one camera trap pair

was installed in each block for 25 days, fulfilling the guidelines mandated by the National Tiger Conservation Authority. The technique of DNA identification through scat collection was also used to identify the movement of tigers. The exercise involved data collection of over 18,000+ camera trap nights, through which the WCT's research team was able to identify 48 adult tigers, including 15 breeding females.

As per the survey, the total number of big cats in the district stands at 120, including 60 in core area and 12 in buffer area of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve. A particularly interesting aspect of the study was that tiger density in some reserve forest blocks was found to be higher than that of some tiger reserves. For instance, tiger density in the Kanhalgaon (a proposed wildlife sanctuary)-Central Chanda block - is 2.34, which is more than that of the Melghat Tiger Reserve. In the Junona-Central Chanda block, tiger density stood at 1.77, higher than that of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve.

Source: '48 tigers in non-protected Chandrapur forest areas: survey', *The Hindu*, 26/05/15;
Anish Andheria, 'Tigers Outside Protected Areas In Chandrapur', www.sanctuaryasia.com

The Blue Mormon is Maharashtra's 'State butterfly'

The Blue Mormon *Papilio polymnestor* has been declared the state butterfly of Maharashtra. The decision was taken at a recent meeting of the State Wildlife Board, making Maharashtra the first state to have a state butterfly.

The Blue Mormon is a large, swallowtail butterfly found primarily in Sri Lanka and India, the Western Ghats of Maharashtra, South India and coastal belts. It may occasionally also be spotted in the Maharashtrian mainland between Vidarbha and Western Maharashtra.

Source: Omar Rashid. 'Maharashtra gets 'State butterfly' *The Hindu*, 23/06/15.

PERSPECTIVE

Double tracking into a fragmented future

Recently, several infrastructure projects have been pushed by the Centre despite objections from local communities, experts, organisations, and even rejections from the concerned forest departments. One such is the doubling of the railway track from Tinaighat to Kulem, part of the larger project, the Hospet-Hubballi-Londa-Vasco Da Gama railway line. A project of the Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd., it seeks to connect the iron-ore mining regions of Hospet to the port of Vasco da Gama.

This project was recommended for cancellation by the Central Empowered Committee, and the wildlife clearance was also withdrawn by the Supreme Court of India in its Order dated 9 May 2022. The reasons for the cancellation - destruction of the eco-sensitive zone, no clear economic benefits and no increase in train traffic demand remain the same to this day. And yet, the same project has now resurfaced with a fresh EIA and mitigation measures from the Wildlife Institute of India, seeking permission for forest diversion (124 ha) and approximately 25,000 trees to be logged.

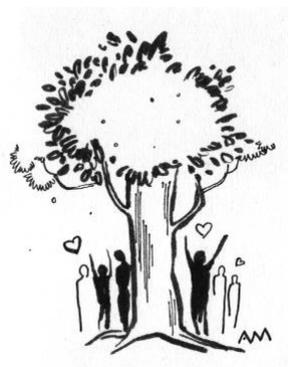
Within Goa, the line passes through Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and Mollem National Park, and has faced widespread public opposition in the state. In Karnataka, this line cuts across the sensitive Western Ghats region and biodiverse-rich Kali Tiger Reserve (KTR). The area where the double-tracking is proposed is prone to landslides and has seen multiple large mammal-railway collisions, a fact which has been conveniently left out in the new EIA. The Karnataka State Board for Wildlife (SBWL), too, is reluctant to allow the project and is facing immense pressure to reconsider.

A technical committee has been formed by the SBWL to study the mitigation plans submitted. If the proposal gets through, we are looking at linear fragmentation of close to 15 km along the railway track for the KTR.

KTR has been hailed by NTCA as showing signs of increased tiger numbers compared to other tiger reserves in the region. Such improvements will easily be wiped out by taking up this double-tracking since no amount of mitigation will counter the immense disturbance the project implementation is bound to pose on this sensitive zone for many years to come. The resulting fragmentation of the landscape running across the KTR will divide the population, impacting the recovery of wildlife, for benefits that no one seeks, as observed by the SC in its verdict in 2022.

- **Aparna Kolekar** is a wildlife researcher based in Bengaluru.
Email: aparna.dandeli@gmail.com

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