

TigerLink

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THE RANTHAMBHORE FOUNDATION

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TigerLink is a knowledge centre, providing access to up-to-date information on the tiger. The journal *TigerLink* collates and analyses news on the tiger across its range countries with particular focus on India, and seeks to support and strengthen on the ground initiatives and influence governments. It serves as an information base for the media, policy-makers and all organisations and individuals concerned with tiger conservation.

We regret if any error has been printed in this document.

We welcome views and information. Please send your feedback to: tigerlinknetwork@gmail.com

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“Prime Minister Manmohan Singh instructed (Jairam) Ramesh 20 months ago in a meeting of the National Board of Wildlife to immediately create a new department of forest and wildlife under the umbrella of the ministry. A lot of work was done by Ramesh on its structure. But it’s still not seen the light of day, as it traverses through the corridors of the bureaucracy. This delay is coming at the cost of the natural world of this country that begs for priority. (Jayanthi) Natarajan’s first job is to find out why no one follows the Prime Minister’s instructions. There were many more instructions from the Prime Minister’s office in 2005-6, which have never been attended to—especially the initiatives that would have created better wildlife science and independent audits of our protected areas.”

Valmik Thapar, The Hindustan Times on July 19, 2011

Another directive by the PM that has been ignored is his missive to states in August 2007 to recruit frontline staff to tackle the issue of increased poaching. The directive came following a meeting where the PM reviewed the implementation of the report of the Tiger Task Force, which said a large number of frontline posts in the forest department were lying vacant in several states. “This may have happened on account of recruitment bans imposed at a time when state finances were under stress. The situation has changed and states should fill the vacancies at the earliest,” a release from PMO said, quoting the Prime Minister.

Five years after the letter, in the reserves, on the ground where it matters most—the situation remains the same. The acute staff shortage continues ranging from 30 to a staggering 80 per cent.

If even the Prime Minister’s missive goes ignored, what will work?



TIGERLINK

A Network of Concerned People and Organisations
Across the Globe to Save the Tiger

NEWS

REVIVED VOL-9

AUGUST-2011

From the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

Lot of water has flown since our last publication of *TigerLink* in the month of March 2011. The biggest change was shifting of Mr Jairam Ramesh to Rural Development Department as a Cabinet Minister. Rural Development is extremely important from conservation point of view. With my past more than 45 years of experience with forests and wildlife, it is my considered opinion that the pressure on the forest and wildlife is due to failure of rural development sector.

According to the latest information available, even today more than 50 per cent people live below poverty line—a large majority of these are forest dwellers. In spite of the fact that thousands of crores of rupees have been spent for rural and tribal development, forest dwellers are the poorest section of the society. Proper implementation of myriad government schemes and programmes could have brought them into the main stream of development. However, this is not the time for blame game, nor would I like to indulge in it. But because Mr Ramesh understands the intricacies of forests and forest dweller relationship therefore through this medium I appeal for comprehensive implementation of rural development programmes so that the poorest section of people are brought into the mainstream. This will also help take the pressures from our forests and wild tiger habitats.

Not only India, but the whole world is concerned in protecting tiger in the wild. In the last one year many meetings have been organised toward this objective. But I would like to stress again that in India, which

harbours more than 60 percent of wild tiger population, focus must be given to protection. But protection is weakened by the increasing conflict between tiger and the people that live within and surround tiger habitats. Effective protection can happen only when the competition between tiger and the surrounding people is reduced to minimum. Toward this end, it's important that the Government at centre and the states come together to save the tiger forests which will ultimately save the entire eco- system. Government of India's initiative to make the tiger forests inviolate is yet to catch up in full swing—it's a sensitive exercise and takes its time, while the other reason for delay can be insufficient funds. Some of the states who have received sufficient funding are slowly implementing the project. And while full impact have not been systematically studied, studies done before, on relocations in Bhadra show how both wildlife and relocated people have benefited. Yet, in the name of civil society, many actors have started playing the role of messiah and misguiding those forest dwellers who are interested in receiving the package and shift outside. The amount being given by the government is quite substantial and has many taker—as it will help poor forest dwellers who live in desperate conditions inside the reserve, with no means of livelihood. Their children will have access to education and health care. However, the government must ensure that those opting for the cash package should go out of the tiger forests and settle in such a way that they either live in a cluster or move to such areas where they can join main stream of comfortable living.

P.K. Sen

Editorial

Hello! It's been a happening, newsy four months since we met last. For one, we have a new minister for Environment and Forests, Ms Jayanthi Natrajan. Jairam Ramesh is now a cabinet minister, heading Rural Development. His was an eventful time—he certainly shook the ministry from its slumber, and made it centre stage in the volatile debate of Environment vs. Growth. His enthusiasm for tigers was infectious. He paid special attention to lesser-known reserves, visited many parks—always eager for the forest, and tigers—when on tour; exciting new tiger pictures, particularly of cubs, were promptly circulated. We hope that this enthusiasm is carried forward to his new portfolio, the Rural Development ministry, which has a major role in conservation— as discussed in detail in the Director's note.

We warmly welcome the new minister, with faith that she will do right for the task she is entrusted with and set new standards. There is encouraging news: She stood firm on not diluting environmental norms as recommended by the BK Chaturvedi committee, at a recent Group of Ministers meeting on mining. The minister made a strong case on how, if the Chaturvedi committee report were accepted, it would lead to huge environmental degradation and devastate forests.

The other big event has been India's new tiger estimate: 1706—keep that in your mind, and engrave it in your heart. It's the new magic figure—the number of wild tigers in India, the outcome of a massive exercise done involving forest staff, biologists and NGOs over the past year across tiger states.

Expectedly, the tiger estimation generated excitement, and a fair share of criticism. For the moment, I will not dwell on those. But I will like to touch upon two or three points.

Given that we had 1411 tigers earlier, does this mean we have registered an increase in tiger numbers? Strictly speaking, it is essentially a reflection of including more areas in this time's exercise. It did however indicate a stability in most source populations.

The census also threw a loss of over 12,000 sq km in tiger occupancy—a nearly 13 per cent decline since the last count, four-years-back. Beyond the cold statistics—is the reality of rapidly shrinking forests, forests that have been silenced of the roar of the tiger... all those far-flung Sariskas we never hear of.

Here is proof—again—of tiger corridors and habitats being eroded, pillaged and choked by mines, highways and hydroelectric dams, or simply being taken over by the spread of man.

Nothing brought this issue up so poignantly as the crushed still face of a three-month old cub that landed in

my inbox at the dawn of 'International Tiger Day'. She was killed as she hurried to keep up with her mother when crossing a road in Corbett tiger reserve. A road? In Corbett Tiger reserve? That is the reality of even the one per cent of land that tigers occupy: Tiger sanctuaries are slashed and and fragmented by roads, rail, dams, coal.

We know that when we push tigers further and further into tiny pockets, we seal their fate. Tigers in isolated forests, with no remaining corridors connecting them to other tiger forests, are caught in a genetic dead end. We cannot claim to save tigers, and then write off their corridors. Development imperatives must take into account wildlife concerns—where possible good tiger areas like Ramnagar, Lansdowne, Moyar, Mhadei must be brought under the umbrella of Project Tiger. Other, less fecund corridors—be they plantations, or paddy fields connecting two tiger forests—must at least be made 'tiger permeable'. In simple terms, hospitable enough to give the great cats the right of passage.

Or bid the tiger goodbye—or perhaps worse—confine him to tiny, safari-like parks—taking the wild out of the tiger.

Lost amongst the headlines of tiger numbers, were the results of the results of the Management Effectiveness Evaluation across reserves. While not going too much into the findings, what struck me was that staff issues continue to plague reserves. The same, oft repeated story, as old as Project Tiger. Four decades—and India poised to be a technical, economic powerhouse—and we still can't pay or care for our green sentinels. Why? I am still grappling for an answer.

Another thing I noticed when we read out the estimation exercise is the eagerness of states for higher tiger numbers. It warms the heart that having more tigers is a matter of prestige. But, here is the worry : Fact is, there is equal zeal in pushing coal mines or highways in tiger habitat or the fact that states fail to take on board a tiger reserve-as it will 'harm' development interests. I worry too about our obsession with numbers. Sure, they are important, and a vital indicator—but shouldn't we be aiming for optimal densities rather than clamouring for numbers? A rainforest has huge biodiversity values-yet it will never have nor is it meant to have huge tiger numbers.

I have a feel good story for this issue that i would like to share: With so much distress on loss and fragmenting habitat, Andhra Pradesh has achieved the feat of adding core critical habitat to Nagarjuna Sagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve. More ground for tigers to roam...

Prerna Singh Bindra

NATIONAL NEWS

Jairam goes: Jayanthi is environment minister

On July 12, in a minor cabinet reshuffle, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh shifted the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh*. **He is replaced by Jayanthi Natarajan, who moves from being a Congress spokesperson to the hot seat as environment and forest minister.**

Ramesh's shift from MoEF comes after he had taken on a string of ministries and even the Prime Minister's Office in a series of letters questioning his government's policies—from ecologically damaging hydel projects in Arunachal Pradesh to nuclear power, the Navi Mumbai airport project, South Korean steel giant POSCO's multi-billion-and-controversial-project in Orissa and the 'Go-No Go' classification for coal mines and forest areas. Of course, a chunk of the 'no-go' areas were later opened up for coal by Ramesh, admittedly under pressure from his cabinet colleagues and also the Prime Minister's Office. Ramesh admitted in May this year that he has been under "pressure" to overlook environmental violations while clearing certain projects. "I am guilty in some cases to have condoned environmental violations," said Ramesh referring to power plants and ports being built in the country violating environmental laws. As minister with independent charge, Ramesh reported to the Prime Minister.

On June 29th, at a select press meet, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh admitted that he had pressured Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh to reverse many decisions related to the environment ministry.



Credit: Rohan Chakravarty

Ramesh was branded as anti-growth and anti-development by many for stalling big-ticket projects. Ramesh took an active interest in tiger conservation, and visited many tiger reserves during his tenure as the minister. He personally intervened—writing to and meeting chief ministers—on various critical issues including setting up of buffer areas for reserves, inclusion of Lansdowne and Ramnagar as part of Corbett TR, filling up of, and capacity building of staff, strengthening neglected TRs like Simlipal and NSTR, etc. He refused the Adani coal mine in the buffer of Tadoba TR and stood firm on the NH 7 issue (which cuts the Kanha-Pench corridor) even though it pitched him against a senior colleague and the then Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Kamal Nath. He also took a stand against mining around Sariska, and refused the Neutrino Observatory in Singara, just outside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

But, cautions conservationist Valmik Thapar, in *The Hindustan Times* that much of what Ramesh talked rarely translated into action, "Two years ago, Ramesh talked of creating such a force (Special Tiger Protection Force) for Corbett National Park. Nothing happened. The new minister needs to fathom why when the finance minister sanctioned Rs 50 crore in Parliament five years ago for the creation of a tiger protection force, nothing happened in that regard.

Ramesh, as the chairman of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), wrote more than 50 letters to chief ministers about pending issues in states and their levels of poor governance. But little has changed. His letters were ignored most of the time. The NTCA itself has written hundreds of advisories in the last many years. But who's listening? *We are all playing paper tigers and impacts in the field are minimal. (Jayanthi) Natarajan must realise that the weakest part of Ramesh's tenure was in the field of forests and wildlife. There was a lot of endless talk, but little follow-up and action. This was mostly because he was powerless and depended on states that govern this area. So the ministry needs an overhaul."*

The new minister

Ms Jayanthi Natarajan who assumed the charge Ministry of Environment and Forests on July 13th, said that she expects to continue the good work done by her predecessor, Jairam Ramesh. "I am aware of the

*Most of the news items are from the time when Jairam Ramesh was the MEF, so he is not referred to as the former minister, for that period, for the sake of clarity and convenience.

spectacular work done by this ministry and it is crucial and of absolute importance. This is a large ministry dealing with various subjects ranging from the Ganges to animal welfare, forest and pollution,” an official statement quoting Natarajan said. “I am determined to do work for national welfare. The future of the country depends on the work we do here and will give priority to environmental concerns,” Natarajan told the officials of Environment Ministry in her first interaction after reviewing various programmes.

In her first interview to CNN IBN Natarajan assured the corporate world that steps will be taken for promoting growth and “one window” fast clearances for big projects. “I think, certainly there should be some sort of one window clearance and there should be complete clarity,” she told on Karan Thapar’s *Devil’s Advocate* programme on CNN-IBN. She also said she will ensure speedy decisions on major projects. At the same time, she stressed that she would “do everything to protect the environment.”

However, there isn’t expected to be any backsliding in policy, “because Ramesh has spotlighted it permanently,” says a senior government official on condition of anonymity, “what we can see, though, is some more flexibility because she may have come with a mandate to be sympathetic towards industry given our imperative to grow.” Also, her party faces national elections in 2014. Given that, Natarajan will be expected to follow policy that does not upset voters in the rural areas and millions of tribals living in the resource-rich forests and mountains of India. This will have ramifications both for big-ticket projects which impact tribals/villagers as well as community issues in context of the tiger.

Reuters notes that Natarajan is a green enthusiast and a member of her local state environment group. She wrote in an article in June that environment is “an issue that is crucial to our survival as a democracy and even as a people.” She has been a past minister, including running the civil aviation department.

The reshuffle has failed to address a basic concern: the portfolio remains structurally weak, and has not been upgraded to a cabinet post.

Source: *The Indian Express*, ‘Jairam receives a curious mix of visitors on last day’, *Business Standard*, July 13; ‘Rejuvenated green Ministry to miss Jairam’ July 13, 2011, Moushumi Basu; *The Pioneer*; Reuters; Gopal Krishna, ToxicsWatch Alliance.

India: The 2010 Tiger Count

After a four-year-gap, India announced the second all India tiger estimates. Given below is a

background, snapshot, critique –and the drama that accompanied the new, and much-awaited tiger census.

Background

At turn of the 19th century, the Indian subcontinent is believed to have had 1,00,000 tigers. Relentless slaughter for trophy and skin, coupled with destruction of huge tracts of forests for settlement of refugees post-partition, agriculture, industrialisation, hydel projects, roads etc saw a dramatic decline in tigers—so much so that a census for the country in 1970 showed that only about 1,800 tigers survived in India. The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, and the launch of Project Tiger (1973), helped recover tiger populations and in the first two decades, tiger numbers rebounded. In the early 1990s, the cat hit another crisis, as poaching to meet the demand for skins and bones—mainly from China—peaked. Yet, even as the tiger was dying in the forests, it thrived in government files as the pugmark census was manipulated to show a steady incline in tiger populations.

Then in 2004-5, came the extinction of tigers in Sariska. The Sariska-shock led to the formation of the Tiger Task Force, and though much of their recommendations were critiqued, one positive fallout of the Prime Minister appointed TTF following the Sariska debacle in 2005 was the discontinuation of the unscientific and discredited ‘pugmark census’. In 2006, India announced the first all India tiger census using a refined methodology i.e. the camera trap method. ‘The Status of the Tigers, Co-predators, and, Prey’ was conducted over three phases from 2006-8, and estimated 1,411 tigers. (1165-1657). Though it generated a fair amount of controversy—largely to do with the efficacy of the model and its application, the general consensus was that the move to a more scientifically rigorous methodology was welcome.

Expectedly, there was a media outcry at the drastic decline in tigers though these were essentially incomparable to the previous estimate of about 3,500 by the flawed pugmark method. NTCA and WI maintained that the two numbers could not be compared.

The 2010 Estimation: A snapshot

The Second All India Tiger Estimation was conducted between December 2009 to the following December. The following is a summary of the findings:

- The new tiger estimate of 1706 tigers (1571-1875) was announced in March this year. This was followed on July 28 with the release of a detailed report on the exercise based on the data collected

INDIA TIGER ESTIMATE-2010

Tiger Landscape	State	Mean Tiger Population 2006-8	Mean Tiger Population 2009-10
Shivalik & Gangetic Plains Landscape	Uttarakhand	178 (161-195)	227 (199-256)
	Uttar Pradesh	109 (91-127)	118 (113-124)
	Bihar	10 (7-13)	8
	TOTAL	297 (259-335)	353 (320-388)
Central India & Eastern Ghats	Andhra Pradesh	95 (84-107)	72 (65-79)
	Chhattisgarh	26 (23-28)	26 (24-27)
	Jharkhand	N.A.	10 (6-14)
	Madhya Pradesh	300 (236-364)	257 (213-301)
	Maharashtra	103 (76-131)	169 (155-183)
	Orissa	45 (37-53)	32 (20-44)
	Rajasthan	32 (30-35)	36 (35-37)
	TOTAL	601 (486-718)	601 (518-685)
Western Ghats	Karnataka	290 (241-339)	300 (280-320)
	Kerala	46 (39-53)	71 (67-75)
	Tamil Nadu	76 (56-95)	163 (153-173)
	TOTAL	402 (336-487)	534 (500-568)
Northeast Hills & Bramhaputra Floodplains	Assam	70 (60-80)	143 (113-173)
	Arunachal Pradesh	14 (12-18)	N.A.
	Mizoram	6 (4-8)	5
	Northern West Bengal	10 (8-12)	N.A.
	TOTAL	100 (84-118)	148 (118-178)
Sunderbans	West Bengal	N. A.	70 (64-90)
	TOTAL	N.A.	70 (64-90)
India Grand Total		1411 (1165-1657)	1706 (1520-1909)



Courtesy: The Hindu, Chennai

in 2009-10 across tiger range states. As compared to last time, India's tiger numbers show an increase of 20 per cent. This increase is mainly a reflection of the inclusion of new areas that were not sampled in the 2006-8 census of 1411 (1165-1657) such as the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, parts of North East and Maharashtra. Also, according to the report, there has been some increase in density in tiger populations in a few reserves in Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. The lead authors maintain that the increase is mainly a function of inclusion of such new sites. The current estimation was clearly a more extensive and intensive exercise.

- Worryingly, the study indicates a **12.6 per cent decline** (Area occupied by tigers down to 81,881 sq km in 2010 from 93,697 sq km in 2006) in tiger occupancy in connecting habitats, indicating that it has lost ground within connecting habitat corridors and marginal habitats.
- Most populations in source sites have largely remained stable.
- Evidence of new areas populated by tigers, e.g. Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Shivpuri National Park in Madhya Pradesh.
- The **single largest concentration of tigers in the world is in the triangle of Kerala, Tamil**

Nadu and Karnataka

- Karnataka came out tops with about 280 tigers, while MP showed a decline—about 257 in 2010 from 300 in 2006-8. MP contested the census and asked the WII to do another survey of the six tiger reserves in the state. Since that could not be done immediately the state took on the task, though the survey was restricted to Phase I. At the release of the report, WII admitted that MP survey did indicate more occupancy which would mean a higher estimate. The survey would be taken forward and the new estimates be included in the next census, said WII.
- The assessment of tigers, co-predators and prey included 17 States with tiger population and involved 4, 77, 000 work-days by forest staff and 37, 000 work-days by professional biologists, making it the largest exercise of its kind in the world. It is done once every four years and is a collaborative initiative between the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Wildlife Institute of India, tiger States and outside expertise.

The good news... and the bad

On March 28th, the MEF Jairam Ramesh revealed the much-awaited results of the 2nd countrywide estimates which indicated that India's tiger population had increased to 1,706, from the last census which put the

number at 1,411—though this had not covered Sundarbans and a few other areas, included in this census. As mentioned before, the increase is more to do with the inclusion of new areas, and more intensive trapping. Therefore, the mid value of 1411 cannot be compared with 1706 (as it includes tiger populations of Sundarbans, parts of NE, and parts of Maharashtra that were not assessed in 2006)

The three phases of the tiger estimation procedure included data collection at the beat level (signs of tiger presence, prey abundance, canopy status) across tiger landscapes by the forest department staff using a standardized protocol. The second phase analyzed the habitat status of tiger forests using satellite data, while in the third camera-traps were set up in selected pockets for capturing tiger images to identify the number of individuals in a sampled area. Cameras were deployed in select sample areas covering 11,192 sq km over 29 tiger sites. A total of 81,409 trap nights yielded photographs of 635 individual tigers, captured and identified using their unique stripe patterns. These results were extrapolated to reach the final figure of the tiger population. The total cost of the exercise was Rs 9.1 crores.

The report also reiterated that high tiger density was a function of wild ungulate prey and anthropogenic pressures. High tiger densities were found in remote forests where prey densities were high, and no human habitations.

Tiger occupied areas down by over 12%

A significant but very worrying find was the decrease in the area occupied by tigers—the 12.6 per cent decline in tiger occupancy in the past four years has occurred primarily from marginal tiger habitats—mainly sink and corridor habitats, having low tiger densities. This decline in occupancy therefore has not resulted in noticeable decline in numbers, as the source populations are stable. The occupancy decline is the real story—it means that tiger corridors are fast shrinking and fragmenting. Worse, the commitment to conserve them is simply not there (See under ‘Corridors’). These corridors are lifelines for tigers—as most ‘source’ populations are small given the small sizes of the reserves. Within each landscape there exists some habitat connectivity—enhancing the probability of their long term persistence and highlighting the importance of maintaining these corridors.

Writes Janaki Lenin in *Firstpost.com* (Monster Cubs vs. Nine percent GDP) “In just four years, tigers have lost almost 22 percent of their habitat outside reserves according to a recent report of the MoEF (*On March 28th the MoEF announcement said 22 per cent, which was later corrected to 12.6 per cent!*-Editor). The large cats can never regain use of this space; this is a more realistic indication of our conservation performance than the ‘increase’ in tigers reported during the same period. In our zeal to do more for tigers, we can’t afford to ignore their basic long term requirement: the habitat to support them. India’s aspiration for a nine percent GDP in the next five years is going to place more pressures and strains on the wild. If we cannot prevent these marginally protected forests from being increasingly diverted to other use, we run the fatal risk of imprisoning tigers in their forested islands, as they were in Sariska and Panna.”

The census was released at the inaugural session of a three-day International Tiger Conference in Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi on March 28th, 2011. The event was represented by most tiger range countries and was also attended by Water Resource Development Minister Salman Khurshid and Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia. Alluding to his colleagues, Ramesh—in his usual flamboyant manner—said that both-Ahluwalia and Khurshid were invited as they represented “the greatest threat to tigers”! He clarified that the race for a high GDP, or the growth imperative, which meant more demand for coal, energy, power, roads, and the consequent impact on tiger habitat represented the single biggest threat to tigers. “*The decrease in tiger occupancy clearly indicates that tiger landscapes and corridors are under severe threat. We can deal with the threat of poachers, but it’s much harder to deal with the developmental dynamic,*” said Ramesh, pointing to energy projects — whether coal, hydel or nuclear — irrigation schemes, and highway proposals that destructed and fragmented habitats and corridors. He said that the forests of Central and Eastern India were particularly under threat from coal and thermal power plants, while hydel-projects were a major issue in the Northeast, and in the Terai.

“A country of 1.4 billion cannot survive on solar, wind and biogas alone, so we do need commercial sources of energy, but we also need to conserve these forests,” he told Ahluwalia. “We must decide whether we can afford a nine per cent growth agenda, which would destroy our forests and the cultures and livelihoods that depend on them.” Pointing to Khurshid, Ramesh said while the

minister was a great support, his ministry was another matter. “River linking, hydel and irrigation projects could destroy the Panna, Buxa and Palamu tiger reserves,” he said.

Palamu TR (Jharkhand): In case the Kutku dam gates are allowed to be closed, and the dam made operational, then nearly 28,000 hectares of core critical tiger habitat will be submerged.

Panna TR (Madhya Pradesh): Under the Rs 10,000-crore project, water from the river Ken in Uttar Pradesh will be diverted into river Betwa in MP, submerging huge tracts of forest in the heart of Panna.

Buxa TR (West Bengal): The 4060 Sankosh Multipurpose Project (SMP) will comprise two dams to feed a 141 km canal, 128 km of which would be inside India (the rest in Bhutan). It would cut through Buxa Tiger Reserve, Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary and several other forest tracts. It is learnt that there is pressure from PMO office to clear this proposal, however MEF Ramesh had communicated his concerns on the impact to Buxa.

Note: *The Sankosh-multipurpose project raised concern in 1999 and Malhotra Committee did a thorough inquiry into the proposal by visiting the site with other members comprising of the then Project Tiger Director PK Sen, Asha Rajvanshi and a representative of the West Bengal forest Department and the Irrigation Department. The Committee visited the Bhutan side and traversed through the entire alignment of the proposed canal. This canal was supposed to feed the Teesta barrage, the ultimate objective being to transport water from the Teesta barrage to the Hooghly River to save the Kolkata port. The report suggested that the canal would pass through Bihar which is very fertile agriculture land. It stressed that the project will mean death of Buxa tiger reserve, Gorumara NP, Jalpadara and Chapramari sanctuaries.*

Tiger Landscapes

***Shivalik-Gangetic plains: 353 (320-388):** Corbett Tiger Reserve has a population of 214 tigers, as compared to 164 in the last count. It is the source—from where tigers spread both eastward and westward. The landscape has shown a 30 per cent increase in tiger occupancy and 19 per cent population increase. Comparisons are again not wise as there was more intensive counting, especially in the area adjoining Corbett.

A very significant find is that forests outside Corbett i.e. Ramnagar forest Division and Lansdowne forest Division support a substantial number of tigers at about 50-70. Ramnagar has a population density of 14/100 tigers—way more than many tiger reserves support. This, if nothing, else should provide the impetus to declare the area part of CTR. The report calls for “urgent intervention to secure the corridors between Corbett and Ramnagar.”

The Corbett-Rajaji linkage is vital for tiger survival in this landscape. It may be noted here that most of Rajaji’s tigers are ‘fed’; by Corbett, which is the source population through the Lansdowne division. Studies have indicated that these corridors are regularly used by tigers, but are increasingly threatened by encroachments etc.

* Central India Eastern Ghats: 601 (518-685)

Madhya Pradesh showed a dip—both in tiger numbers, 257 from the previous estimate of about 300, and occupancy fell by about 20 per cent. The state has contested the findings, as explained above.

As Ramesh pointed out at the release, this landscape and the connectivity between TRs is under the severe threat from coal, iron ore mining and thermal power plants. Mining, thermal power plants, highways, rail lines are fragmenting the central Indian landscape, isolating source populations.

Orissa threw up a population of about 32 tigers, while Andhra is said to have 65—almost all concentrated in Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR) NSTR has the potential to hold NSTR and adjoining landscape has the potential to support larger tiger densities than currently reported.

North Andhra recorded the highest forest losses, which including in Adilabad district which has the Kawal Wildlife sanctuary (and proposed Tiger Reserve). As explained in the last issue of *TigerLink*, Kawal has suffered heavily as a consequence of the Forest Rights Act. Over 1500 acres in the sanctuary were illegally clear felled.

* Western Ghats: 534 (500-568)

The Western Ghats reports a strange paradox of a substantial decline in tiger occupancy at 11 per cent, with a whopping 32 per cent rise in tiger population. This is explained as “loss of tiger occupancy from marginal low tiger density areas in territorial forests.”

Karnataka can be called the current ‘Tiger State’ with the maximum tigers in the country at 300. With

382 tigers, the Nagarhole-Bandipur-Mudumalai-Wayanad complex constitutes the single largest tiger population in the world.

*** Brahmaputra flood plain, Northeast hills: 148 (118-178)**

The estimation was done only partially in the NE, with only Assam conducted a full Phase I. Kaziranga, the single biggest source here with over 100 tigers, is connected through Karbi-Anglong to the south, and through a riverine forest to the east (Orang) and North (Nameri). The other 'hub' is Manas, along with Buxa, Gorumara and Singhaaila. The single largest landscape unit of about 1,36,000 sq km extends from Pakke to Namdapha (Arunachal) in the east and toward Dampa (Mizoram) in the south.

*** Sundarbans: 70(64-90)**

The census indicated **that Sundarbans has a population of 70 (64-90) tigers, with a density of about 4.3 per 100 sq km.** The landscape presented a challenge as tiger signs were washed away with the tide. The mark-recapture was based on intensive camera-trapping and radio collaring in limited areas. Satellite telemetry showed that tigers often traverse between India & Bangladesh and hence a collaborative effort to for conservation is critical.

According to the report, currently only a few populations Nagarhole-Bandipur-Mudumalai-Wayanad-Moyar-Segur, Corbett, Sundarbans (India & Bangladesh and Kaziranga-Karbi-Anglong have the required population for long term survival—even without migration. Populations that currently have corridor connectivity and exist as meta-populations include Corbett-Rajaji, Dudhwa-Katarniaghat-Kishanpur (along with Bardia & Shuklaphanta in Nepal), Satpura-Melghat, Pench-Kanha, Bhadra-Kudremukh, Parambikulam-Indira Gandhi-Eravikulam and KMTR-Periyar. Landscapes with potential for metapopulation but in urgent need of conservation inputs include Nagarjunasagar Srisaillam, Similipal-Satkosia, Bandhavgarh-Sanjay-Guru and Ghasidas-Palamu.

For the full report go to: http://www2.wii.gov.in/publications/researchreports/2011/tiger/staus_tiger_2010.pdf

Expectedly, the announcement of the tiger numbers were accompanied by a fair share of drama, criticism and protests—some of which is summarised below.

Non-functional faulty camera traps

Jay Mazoomdaar questions the functioning of the camera traps, the analysis of data and the veracity of the methodology in *The Economic Times*. ('Tiger Census: What Lies Beneath the Numbers', April 4)

"Phase III was compromised by too many malfunctioning camera-traps. WII purchased around 500 Moultrie camera-traps for the second all-India estimation, out of which 300-odd malfunctioned. The official stand remains that the manufacturer replaced the faulty sets. Sources in the field, however, report a different picture. In Corbett, around 60 camera traps were installed in two phases (pre and post-monsoon) in 2010. Within days of installation, most cameras reported an activation lag: when an animal passed by, the camera would take several seconds to recover from the sleep mode and click an empty frame or only the animal's hind portion. Even if the faulty cameras were replaced after monsoon, areas surveyed in the pre-monsoon phase with faulty sets were not covered again. In Maharashtra's Tadoba-Andhari tiger reserve, around 60 camera sets malfunctioned when the pre-monsoon camera trapping began last year. While a WII field team returned with replacements after monsoon, it barely spent a month in the field. In some reserves, camera-traps reached only in late October. In reserves like Similipal and Palamu, camera traps were not placed at all. WII used about 100 cameras to cover just 120 square km of Nagarjunasagar-Srisaillam. Only seven tigers were identified in that area. Based on these seven tigers in just 120 sq. km, somehow the estimate extrapolated a figure of 60 for a 2342 sq. km-area of this reserve.

Back in 2006, an international team of experts led by John Seidensticker from the department of conservation biology at Smithsonian's National Zoological Park in Washington, DC did a peer review of the new estimation method. In its report, the team questioned the feasibility of the exercise given that more than 40,000 forest units would have to be sampled, adding that the new method, too, relied on the "integrity of the primary data collectors, data compilers and their supervisors." On the extrapolation process, the 2006 peer review cautioned that "there is also no detailed write-up of the technical analysis, explicitly identifying the analytical techniques to be used in each phase of the framework." The 2008 report did accept "high variances" in estimation.

The estimation process has also not been made public in the last nine years. Only one scientific paper, *Can the abundance of tigers be assessed from their signs?* (2011), has been published and that too explains only a part of the method.

K Ullas Karanth, senior scientist, and head, Centre for Wildlife Studies in Bangalore, pointed out that “the full process of how these tiger numbers are generated for individual tiger populations and landscapes, has not been made public in a scientifically acceptable manner.” He found “serious deficiencies” in the partial methodologies which were published in the sole scientific paper on the subject. While he was unwilling to comment on the specifics of this year’s census figures, he sounded skeptical about the growth trends reversing the earlier shrinkage of tiger populations. “Since various threats faced by tigers do not appear to have diminished in last four years, it is difficult to explain the claimed reversal of the decline of tigers,” he said

States Unhappy

Some states protested the 2010 estimates. Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Karnataka communicated their reservations on the estimates. The dissatisfaction of some was expressed in the media. Elucidated below:

Orissa: ‘We have over 100 tigers’

“Orissa could have more than 100 tigers, and will conduct an independent survey to know the exact number,” said a senior wildlife official, questioning the 2010 national tiger census figure which put number of big cats in the state at 32. ‘The survey has not taken into consideration at least five to six other tiger habitats like Sunabeda, Kuldiha, Kotgarh and Karlapat,’ Chief Wildlife Warden PN Padhi told IANS.

‘Similipal and Satkosia are home to 20 and six tigers respectively, if we go by the previous All India estimate. In the latest survey, they said the number has increased to 23 and 8 respectively in these two habitats, and if so, there must be an increase of population in other habitats also. I do not accept their total number for Orissa,’ Padhi said, adding that he believed there could be more than 100 tigers in the state.

He said they will consult experts and soon conduct an independent survey using both the pugmark and camera trap method to know the exact status,’ he said, adding that such an exercise may take some time.

Source: IANS, Bhubaneswar, April 1, 2011

We have more tigers, says UP

The UP forest department has conveyed its dissatisfaction over the tiger estimates saying that the 2011 census has missed out on Bijnore landscape that

makes tigers in UP ‘under-assessed’. The Dudhwa field director Shailesh Prasad also did not agree with the figure of 113 against the park’s name. He pegged it to be “at least 145”. Besides Dudhwa, the census estimated five tigers in Suhelwa and one in Sohagibarwa taking the total number of tigers in the state to 118 sans Bijnore. BK Patnaik, the Chief Wildlife Warden, UP said that, “It is surprising that Bijnore landscape has not found a mention though the 2008 census reported 3-4 tigers here. He said that the area has tiger signs and there have been cattle-lifting incidents reported from the area. Bijnore is important as it has a dispersing population of tigers from Corbett Tiger Reserve. NTCA has given the in-principal approval for including Amangarh Forest Division in Bijnor as a tiger reserve as a buffer for Corbett, but the state is yet to notify it.

Source: Neha Shukla, TNN, Lucknow, 7, April 2011

Comment: *It’s nice to have states concerned about the estimates, and clamoring to prove higher tiger numbers. One wishes for the same enthusiasm in protecting the tigers and their habitats. As the MEE results showed, Satkosia’s management needs urgent attention, while Sunabeda is (still) waiting to be notified by the state as a tiger reserve. Protection in Kuldiha, Kotgarh and Karlapat is negligible.*

Amangarh in Bijnore is the weak link in the Corbett landscape—it is Corbett’s very vulnerable southern border, and poaching and retaliatory killing are a very serious problem here. The state should well-consolidate these tiger habitats and provide stringent protection—tigers are bound to recover then, in these currently marginal habitats.

Source: ‘Bijnore Tigers left out of Census 2011’ TNN, The Pioneer April 7, 2011

MP: fresh survey shows higher count

MP’s dissatisfaction with the tiger census was proven right when their reassessment threw up higher occupancy and abundance of tigers. Unhappy with the latest census, Madhya Pradesh decided to carry out a fresh census in Kanha tiger reserve that has shown a major decline from 89 in the last census to 60. The state’s request to recheck the data with the Wildlife Institute of India was rejected, prompting it to announce a fresh count from April 25 to 27.

The report notes that “MP reassessed the Kanha landscape in 2011 by Phase I data collection which showed an increase in occupancy and abundance of tigers.” This will be further studied and incorporated later.

Source: Milind Ghatwai, TNN, Bhopal, April 19, 2011

Note: Bihar has also protested against the current tiger census, essentially saying that their camera trips have captured more tigers than the number estimated, and say that the numbers would be a bit more than estimated.

West Bengal junks Sundarbans count of 70

West Bengal stuck to its complaint that the 2010 tiger count had grossly underestimated the tigers in Sundarbans. The 2010 census shows the number at 70, while the state count indicates about 270 tigers—which has been highly disputed. Making a presentation on managing tiger-human interface after the census report was released, Sundarbans field director Subrat Mukherjee said, “Some radio collars were not working due to saline water.” The exercise should be conducted again, he said.

***Note:** Scientists urge that the mangrove forest of Sundarbans with its scarcity of sweet water, shifting tides and low prey base is not optimal habitat of tigers and the current density of 4.3 is good for the habitat.*

Keeping tabs: Annual tiger monitoring

Tiger conservation got another fillip when India announced Phase IV of the national tiger estimation programme, thus initiating intensive, annual monitoring of tigers across 41 reserves in the country. The decision was taken at the ‘Best Management Practices in Tiger Conservation’ workshop held in early May. The exercise is to commence from November 2011.

Phase IV of the All India Tiger Estimation exercise will begin the process of intensive, annual monitoring of important ‘source’ populations of tigers. The methodology will be developed by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), in consultation with experts, and will use statistically sound procedures to estimate numbers of both tigers and their prey.

NTCA informed that the tiger monitoring protocol will use camera traps, at a density of 25 double-sided cameras per 100 sq km, and a minimum trapping effort of 1000 trap nights per 100 sq km. This will provide a yearly indication of the status of critical tiger populations around the country, and will be critical to long-term management and conservation of tiger populations.

Prey population monitoring will be conducted simultaneously, using distance-sampling protocols.

Distance sampling will be conducted along line transects already established in Phase I, and will use a minimum of 30 spatial replicates for 2 km each, and a total effort of 300 km.

Source: MoEF

NTCA strengthened

The NTCA headquarters have been strengthened with more officers joining in. HS Negi joins as DIG, (NTCA)—he is from Madhya Pradesh cadre and served as the Kanha director in his last stint. Two AIGs have also joined, Sanjay Pathak is from the Uttar Pradesh cadre and was the deputy director of Dudhwa earlier, while Rajiv Sharma is from the West Bengal cadre.

The NTCA Central India regional office at Nagpur, and the South India regional office at Bangalore are now operational, with AIGs joining in both offices, while the Guwahati office is expected to start shortly.

TIGER LOSING GROUND

Coal destroying tiger forests

The loss and fragmentation of tiger habitats to development is the key threat to tigers today. Though poaching is the biggest factor in the rapid elimination of tigers, the fragmentation of the tiger’s habitat by infrastructure and industry are a much more insidious threat. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Central Indian tiger landscape covering areas of Eastern Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, as well as parts of Orissa and Jharkhand, and spanning several tiger reserves, including Tadoba, Kanha, Bandhavgarh and Satpura. Unfortunately for the tiger, this is also where much of India’s coal reserves lie, under forests home to the tiger and other endangered wildlife. These forests are being destroyed and fragmented—not just by the open cast coal mines themselves, but also by the attendant infrastructure like thermal power plants, roads, railways and transmission lines. This has had a devastating impact on wildlife, water sources and forest-dependent communities. Of course, once this coal is burned, it adds to the CO₂ burden in the atmosphere and to Climate Change.

However, the push from the PMO, the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Coal is immense to free forests for coal and other projects: Environment and forest law is merely a hurdle.

Under Jairam Ramesh, on the request of the Coal ministry, the MoEF had prepared a categorisation of ‘Go & No-Go’ areas for mining. The ministry had marked about 35 per cent of the total area as a ‘no-go’ zone, where no coal mining could take place as these are ecologically rich and fragile supporting excellent forest cover. The ‘go’ and ‘no-go’ areas were demarcated after a thorough study, including the use of satellite pictures.

But this move to rationalise, and restrict the opening up of forests for coal was met with stiff resistance, not just from corporates who had vested interests and the ministries of power, coal, mining who had their targets to meet—but also the PMO. The go-no-go areas became a bitter joke—with many ‘no-go’ areas being thrown open for mining: five in Orissa, nine in Chhattisgarh, including those in Hasdeo-Anand—which Ramesh cleared in spite of the Forest Advisory Committee recommending against it. According to a Greenpeace report, **the land covered under No-Go zones has shrunk from 3,20,684 hectares in 2010 to 140,311 hectares now**. It may be remembered that all forest areas are essentially ‘no-go’, but now, even the most vital tiger and elephant corridors have been opened up for mining. “Mining companies would rather work in heavily-forested areas, since it is easier and cheaper to extract coal, lignite or bauxite from a forest where they are found on or near the surface. Digging up minerals from poorly managed mines is a more expensive process because the companies need to dig deeper at greater cost,” explains NBWL member Bittu Sahgal.

While clearing the coal blocks in Chhattisgarh, minister Ramesh said his decision came from the “imperative to sustain the momentum generated in the 11th Plan in terms of capacity addition... I have necessarily to keep the broader development picture in mind and balance out different objectives and considerations.”

In a very welcome move, at the meeting of group of ministers on “go-no go areas”, or environmental issues relating to mining, saw Environment & Forest Minister Jayanthi Natarajan rejecting the dilution of forest clearance process suggested by the BK Chaturvedi panel. The Chaturvedi committee had recommended drastic changes in the process, which included doing away with public hearing for the expansion of existing coal projects and withdrawing the environment ministry’s order requiring forest clearance to precede grant of

environmental clearance. These proposals, if accepted, would enfeeble the Forest Conservation Act and Forest Rights Act. **On her part, Natarajan is learnt to have said this proposal was unacceptable as it went against the Forest Conservation Act. Natarajan reportedly did not agree with most of the recommendations saying most coal mining zones are India’s worst environmental areas. Air pollution level in most of the coal mining areas was double of the national standard and water quality was equally bad. Sources said the minister’s stand got the support of Home Minister P Chidambaram and Road Transport and Highways Minister CP Joshi.**

Source: Environment minister Jayanthi Natarajan rejects demand to dilute forest clearance process, *Economic Times*, August 3, 2011

Death on road: Two days, two tigers

July 28th, Eve of ‘Tiger Day’, 9 pm. India has just released the detailed report of the latest tiger census which shows a higher count than the previous census, new hope, tinged with the bitter reality—the tiger was fast losing its home with an over 12 per cent loss of tiger forests. Ironical and profound then, that the same day a three-month-old female cub met an untimely, cruel death—crushed under a speeding vehicle in the Corbett Tiger Reserve, as she tried to keep pace with her mother and three siblings when crossing the road in Corbett Tiger Reserve. This was the Ramnagar-Jhirna road in Dhela range in Corbett. The stretch of road, where the cub was killed is part of the Corbett tiger reserve and there are forest check posts flanking the road. But the vehicle or suspects are yet to be traced.

There is a demand to upgrade this road ‘The old Kandi road’ as it is popularly known, runs along the southern boundary of the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR). Part of this road also passes through notified core/critical tiger habitats viz. Jhirna, Dhara, Kothrow—which are rich in wildlife. Data from the 2010 Tiger Estimation indicates that this area has high tiger densities and also a breeding tiger population.

The next night, July 29th. Another tragedy. A young tigress, about three, is killed under the wheels of a jeep on the state highway (Bhira-Mailani road) in the Kishanpur Sanctuary of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. The vehicle was apprehended at Pilibhit the next day. The driver, his assistant and the owner of the vehicle have

all been arrested. On February 9, 2008, a tiger was killed in the same Mailani range—the body of the tiger was found lying on the road between Khutar and Gola. Just three months before on December 6, 2007, another tiger had been knocked down in the Bahraich range-and succumbed to his injuries in Lucknow zoo later.

Both the deaths this July occurred on roads that slash through tiger reserves—core critical tiger habitat deemed to be inviolate. These cases, so close to each other sharply highlight the devastating impacts of roads on wildlife: Roads kill. But besides that which is visible to the eye—the tragic accidents that crush rare wild creatures, there are other not-so-obvious but equally lethal fallouts of roads in protected areas. Roads fragment an already highly fragmented habitat. They break contiguity, impinge on forests and well-worn migratory paths of animals, break tree cover, slice vegetation. Crucially, they give accessibility—they are the first step to ancillary development and an increasing human footprint in the area. (The impact of roads has been extensively discussed in the last two issues of *TigerLink*).

Yet, there is no letting up on the constant pressure for construction of new roads, widening and expansion of existing roads in tiger reserves.

Committee to appraise coal, roads impact

Understanding the critical threat to tigers by development projects and the pressure to ‘free’ tiger habitats for mining, highways etc, NTCA has formed a 10-member committee for appraisal of mining, road and rail construction on tiger conservation. The panel will do a country-level appraisal of the extent of tiger habitats, corridors and other crucial areas for conservation based on recent All-India Tiger Estimation 2010 and appraise the ongoing demand for tiger habitats for development projects. It will also look at global best practices to minimise impacts and safeguard conservation from development projects.

The committee, which comprises NBWL member MK Ranjitsinh, Asha Rajwanshi (WII), VK Sharma CGM, NHAI, Firoz Ahmad member, NTCA, T Chandni and HK Chowdhury of MoEF, Qamar Qureshi of WII and SP Yadav, DIG NTCA, will submit its report within six months.

NBWL considers 59 projects in 2.5 hours

At its 22nd meeting on 25th April 2011 in New Delhi, the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife

chaired by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh considered—and largely cleared—59 infrastructure and other projects in/around wildlife habitats in just over two hours.

A large number of proposals—29—were received only two days before the meeting, on 22nd April, which was a weekend, leaving no time for members to study documents or make any kind of informed decision. Some of the non-official members protested at this surreptitious sneaking in of major proposals. They were ignored. Senior member MK Ranjitsinh pointed out that when land from PA is diverted for non-forest purpose or a part of PA denotified it must be compensated with equal if not more amount of land that should be added to PAs, **“for otherwise the Standing Committee and hence the NBWL, would only be party to the reduction of the PAs with no areas ever to be added in the future, which cannot be the mandate of these two august bodies, especially in view of the fact that, as we all know, the only hope for the long term survival of India’s natural heritage lies in our protected area system.”**

Serious objections were also raised to the hasty manner in which proposals were dismissed-and cleared, the late receipt of agenda items. Members Prerna Bindra and NCF member Koustabh Sharma pointed out that such late receipt of agenda item was unconstitutional given that the Ministry’s 14 September 2010 Notification states that “the agenda items must be circulated it to all members at least fifteen days prior to the date of such meeting.” Members also pointed out to the poor governance of wildlife and said that relevant and urgent conservation concerns have not been heard or discussed in the past three meetings, which only focus on clearance matters. **Says Ranjitsinh, “In view of the very infrequent meetings of the full NBWL, the Standing Committee is the only fora where conservation issues can be raised by the members and if even this opportunity is denied, then the Standing Committee would only be a project clearance committee and nothing more.”**

A number of clearances were given in and around Protected Areas, including tiger reserves—some of them in spite of protests by members. Besides the fencing and border road through Dampa Tiger Reserve (explained in detail under ‘*Tigers Sans Borders*’, decisions that impact tiger habitats are detailed below:

- Permission was granted for **construction of underground pipeline of 2100mm diameter through Jawahar Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary**

under Chambal- Bhilwara. The diversion involves 14.8 ha land of the sanctuary, part of the Mukundara hills proposed tiger reserve, which is aimed to function as the satellite core of Ranthambhore TR. The NTCA has given ‘in-principle’ approval of the same. **A road through Darrah WLS**, also part of the proposed tiger reserve has been cleared. This is a five km gravel road.

- The committee also cleared of **16.09 ha of forestland from Keladevi sanctuary for the Dohari minor irrigation project.** Keladevi is part of the Ranthambhore Tiger reserve. Strangely, when this was pointed out by a member, the state dismissed this by saying, that “it was 150 km from Ranthambhore!” Another proposal cleared was the diversion/denotification of 0.75 ha for laying optical fibre cables by Idea Cellular Limited, from the Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary, also part of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve.
- The diversion of 879.666 ha for coal mining by a private company M/s Jaiprakash Associates, was also up for consideration. It was put before the committee last time, and on protest by non-official members was deferred, and then referred to the NTCA. The coal block partly falls in the Pench-Satpura corridor (see report below) and it was decided that those parts of the forest which fall in the corridor, as determined by WII, would not be granted while the rest of it would be allowed to be mined. The problem is the monitoring of the mining—how will it be ensured that mining is restricted to the ‘non-corridor’ areas? Importantly, the impact of mining goes far beyond the actual physical area consumed—for example, the mining will bring in labour that will settle and meet their needs for fuel, fodder etc from the forest. Another major issue is transportation. Transporting the coal will require roads, and a heavy traffic of trucks.
- The denotification of 14.12 ha area (10.98 ha for submergence and 3.14 ha for dam construction) in Radhanagri—Maharashtra’s oldest sanctuary and a corridor for tigers—was also cleared for the Savarde minor irrigation project. The sanctuary is crucial for the long-term conservation of tiger habitat in the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. There is reported to be a functional, but very tenuous, connectivity between the Radhanagari sanctuary and the Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve in Karnataka and with Chandoli National Park (Sahyadri Tiger Reserve). The construction of the project will involve the submergence of large tracts of forest, construction

activity and establishment of labour colonies and other allied disturbance, dooming the forest. “It will mean the end of Radhanagri,” said a member of the committee, but the plea went unheard.

A TigerLink report

Mining threatens Pench-Satpuda corridor

A study by WWF India found that dispersing tigers in the Pench-Satpuda corridor complex would face their biggest hurdles in the Damua and Navegaon blocks where most of the current and proposed mines in the corridor are planned. Within the Satpuda-Maikal Landscape, the Pench and Satpuda Tiger Reserves are connected by forest corridors that are part of the Chhindwara and Betul Forest Divisions of Madhya Pradesh. Expansion of coal mining, combined with other associated developmental activities such as roads and railway lines has resulted in the degradation of forest cover adversely affecting the movement of wild animals, especially tigers between the two reserves. Realising the serious impacts on the corridor, the NTCA requested WWF-India to prepare a restoration plan for the Pench-Satpuda corridor. In order to understand the scope of the assignment and to assess existing threats and potential for corridor restoration, a rapid survey was carried out in selected portions of the corridor in Navegaon and Damua blocks.

In the survey, two sizeable patches of forest, the Damua and Navegaon blocks, were identified as stepping stone corridors for large carnivores. A major discontinuity was found between the north of Navegaon and the Damua blocks. This is the link which also connects Satpuda with the Damua range and the latter with the Navegaon block of Jamai range. The major threat within the linkage is the proposed as well as ongoing coal mining. The forest cover was found to be fragmented in both Damua and Navegaon—the weakest link in the corridor—and wild prey was scanty. Two major roads, one from Parasia to Damua and another from Chhindwada to Saoni to Amala cut through the corridor at two crucial linkages. Both open cast and underground coal mining are also devastating the area. This preliminary survey indicates the potential of Pench-Satpuda corridor for tiger conservation, if restored and protected. Tigers and prey can still use the existing forests as ‘stepping stones’ to move within the landscapes, but any further degradation would prevent this movement. One of the unique features of the Satpuda Maikal Landscape in Central India, and one

that makes it so important for tiger conservation, is the connectivity between the tiger reserves. Without this connectivity, the ability of this landscape to support large tiger numbers with relatively low conflict with humans would be severely jeopardised, and isolate tiger populations.

Source: *WWF-India*

MEE rates tiger reserves

A Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) exercise initiated by the NTCA-WII to assess conservation efforts in tiger reserves has dubbed the management of 15 reserves as 'very good', 12 as good, eight as satisfactory and four are considered poor.

Over the past year, starting June, 2010, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in partnership with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) undertook an independent Management Effectiveness Evaluation of all 39 tiger reserves in the country. The evaluation was done by adapting a globally used framework that is used in over 140 countries. All 39 tiger reserves were evaluated by five teams, which included independent evaluators. The reserves were divided into five clusters, and there was a separate category for those impacted by left-wing extremism. Management in such parks is particularly tough—the staff has limited access, and work in such areas carries considerable risk. Reserves where tigers had gone extinct but now had recently translocated tigers were also considered a special category.

The MEE scores as per their clusters are given below:

- Central India-Eastern Ghats Landscape: 79
- Western Ghats Landscape: 75
- The North East Hills, Brahmaputra Flood Plain and Sundarbans: 66
- Sivalik Gangetic Plains and Eastern Ghats Landscape: 64
- Red Corridor (Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh): 42

The MEE Assessment 2010-11 indicates most tiger reserves have complied with statutory requirements such as declaration of buffer zone, tiger conservation plans and have a fair assessment of the threats to the reserve. But the chronic problem of staff shortage—on an average of 30 per cent across TRs—continues to persist. The existing staff is ageing, with an average age of 50—and is hence unfit for vigorous duty, untrained and is poorly equipped to deal with the demands of the job. The report stressed the urgent need for fresh

recruitment and capacity-building. The findings also indicated that there continue to be huge biotic and anthropogenic pressures even within core critical tiger habits.

The five tiger reserves in the 'Red Corridor' require special attention and focus. The use of M-STrIPES, a monitoring system for managers to assess the status of protection, ecological and biotic pressures of tigers has also been recommended.

WPSI director Belinda Wright and NBWL member Biswajit Mohanty raised questions to the independence of the evaluation teams since it was dominated by forest officers. "With so many IFS officers in the committee it cannot be called an independent evaluation," said tiger expert Valmik Thapar.

For the complete report go to: http://www2.wii.gov.in/publications/researchreports/2011/tiger/mee_tiger_2011.pdf

source: A *TigerLink* report; inputs by Chetan Chauhan, 'Experts question independence of evaluation of tiger reserves' July, 30, 2011, *The Hindustan Times*

'No one follows the PM's instructions'

"Prime Minister Manmohan Singh instructed (Jairam) Ramesh 20 months ago in a meeting of the National Board of Wildlife to immediately create a new department of forest and wildlife under the umbrella of the ministry. A lot of work was done by Ramesh on its structure. But it's still not seen the light of day, as it traverses through the corridors of the bureaucracy. This delay is coming at the cost of the natural world of this country that begs for priority. (Jayanthi) Natarajan's first job is to find out why no one follows the Prime Minister's instructions. There were many more instructions from the Prime Minister's office in 2005-6, which have never been attended to—especially the initiatives that would have created better wildlife science and independent audits of our protected areas."

Valmik Thapar, 'Natarajan Challenges' The Hindustan Times on July 19, 2011

Another directive by the PM that has been ignored is his missive to states in August 2007 to recruit frontline staff to tackle the issue of increased poaching. The directive came following a meeting where the PM reviewed the implementation of the report of the Tiger Task Force, which said a large number of frontline posts in the forest department

were lying vacant in several states. “This may have happened on account of recruitment bans imposed at a time when state finances were under stress. The situation has changed and states should fill the vacancies at the earliest,” a release from PMO said quoting the Prime Minister.

Five years after the letter, in the reserves, on the ground where it matters most—the situation remains the same. The acute staff shortage continues ranging from 30 to a staggering 80 per cent.

If even the Prime Minister’s missive goes ignored, what will work?

A future for orphaned tigers?

The unseen face of poaching and conflict deaths are the cubs—either doomed to die, or condemned to captivity—left behind in case the victim is a lactating tigress. To tackle this issue a committee comprising of PC Tyagi (WII), Dr YV Jhala (WII) and SP Yadav, NTCA as member convener was constituted for examining issues relating to abandoned /orphaned tiger cubs from the wild, so as to explore the feasibility of their in-situ rearing and release in low tiger density habitats. The terms of reference of the Committee are the country wide assessment of the wild caught orphaned/abandoned cubs, identification of low density tiger reserves and giving recommendations for rehabilitation of such cubs’ vis-à-vis the NTCA.

The committee will also look into prescribing ‘minimum standards’ for creation of tiger safaris, though the objective of this exercise is yet unclear. The scope of the committee also extends to examining the feasibility of ex-situ to in-situ linkage in the context of tiger, and the committee is expected to give its report by August end.

Forest cover rising? Greenwash, says study

India’s latest ‘Status of Forest Report 2009’ claims a five per cent growth in the country’s forest cover between 1997 and 2007. Though technically correct, this is grossly misleading according to a research paper ‘Cryptic Destruction of India’s Native Forests’ that appeared in Conservation Letters authored by Jean-Philippe Puyravaud, Priya Davidar and William F. Laurance. Fact is, our forest cover has been decreasing. The paper explains that large chunks of this cover were actually made up of exotic tree plantations such as eucalyptus and acacia.

The Forest Survey estimates forest cover by using automated algorithms to analyse satellite imagery—an

approach that fails to distinguish native forests from tree plantations, which are often monocultures of exotic species. Since the early 1990s, tree plantations have expanded in India at an estimated rate of roughly 15,400 km²/year. When **the plantations were subtracted from the total forest cover, the figures showed a 1.5-2.7 per cent shrinking of India’s natural forests each year. Shockingly, according to the paper, “India has already lost 80 per cent of its native forest cover”. “The situation really is getting critical. In many ways, the biodiversity crisis is worse than the climate crisis,” say the authors.**

Native forests are natural ecosystems that have evolved over millions of years. They protect the soil, purify our air and water, regulate our climate and are rich in biodiversity. They harbour many endangered species such as the tiger and the elephant. Plantations are very different. They are often made up of only one tree species, and that species is often foreign to India, and cannot support native biodiversity.

The government has claimed the paper to be exaggerated, saying that it is relying on insufficient data. While the authors concede that the data is insufficient, they explain that, “The Survey of India defines forest cover very simply as any place bigger than one hectare that has at least 10 per cent tree cover. This broad definition includes both native forests and tree plantations, which are extremely different things. We have attempted to cross-check government data with data provided by the UN’s Food and Agricultural Organisation. That is the only reliable data available on plantations. Doing so paints a very worrying picture of the condition of India’s native forests.” say the authors.

The authors also caution that many nations now rely on satellite imagery to discern changes in vegetation cover, and these frequently lump together native, exotic, and degraded forest types. Without sufficiently high-resolution imagery and adequate safeguards, such approaches could paint a misleading picture of the fate of the world’s native forests.

Comment: *This has ominous impacts for the tiger, for plantations—monocultures cannot support carnivores, except as transients. A loss of 80 per cent of native forests implies a considerable loss of India’s tiger forests. Loss of habitat is the single biggest threat to tigers today, and the above report is yet another indicator of the enormity of the loss, especially by something as seemingly ‘benign’ as plantation and increasing green cover.*

A TigerLink Report

CAMPA: For the destruction of forests?

Reports from the field suggest that CAMPA funds are being misused, and are contributing to the destruction of natural forests to make way for plantations, in contravention to the centre's guidelines which clearly state that CAMPA funds are to be used for the conservation of wildlife and existing forests.

The Wildlife Society of Orissa drew the attention of the National Board of Wildlife to the harmful practices being carried out under CAMPA in Orissa. Biswajit Mohanty, Secretary, WSO, and NBWL member said there was "rampant burning of forest undergrowth" to clear them for plantations. Similarly, cutting of creepers like *bahunia*, etc., which is useful fodder species for elephants, to make way for plantations, is leading to increase in man-elephant conflict.

He stressed that, "under CAMPA programme, practices as plantations, clearing and burning of weeds, civil works including plush rest houses, barracks in the core areas of tiger reserves, PAs, etc is being done."

The incidents of "harmful forestry practices" are particularly being reported from CAMPA beneficiary states of Orissa, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. From Andhra Pradesh too, serious concerns are being raised regarding the misuse of CAMPA.

The Andhra Pradesh forest department has reportedly instructed the clear felling of 4900 ha of prime standing forests and its conversion into a monoculture plantation of Clonal Eucalyptus under CAMPA. It is believed that targets have been given to CFs and DFOs for carrying this out. It is reported that funds are being used to construct concrete walls around urban forests, barbed wire fencing of plantations and other civil works.

When such issues was raised at the last meeting of the Standing Committee of the NBWL, chaired by MEF Jairam Ramesh, the MEF said that he was concerned about such reports coming in, as the guidelines for CAMPA were very clear. He proposed to call a meeting of all states to discuss CAMPA.

Source: *Pioneer News Service*, New Delhi, May 2, 2011; Reports from *Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society (HyTiCoS)*

Comment: *Monoculture plantations are often termed as 'ecological deserts'. These do not have any biodiversity conservation values like natural forests and are commercial in intent. Exotic tree species such as eucalyptus have been found to be harmful to*

wildlife and groundwater and their plantation is being actively discouraged. Besides, it is well known that over 90 per cent of plantations in the country have failed.

To replace existing, natural forests with such monocultures to meet forest cover and fund expenditure targets is destructive to biodiversity and has been reported from most states. Ironically, in the MoEF's guidelines for the expenditure of CAMPA funds, the first two 'Aims and Objectives' are, respectively, "(a) conservation, protection, regeneration and management of existing natural forests; (b) conservation, protection and management of wildlife and its habitat within and outside protected areas including the consolidation of the protected areas;". In a high level meeting chaired by minister Jairam Ramesh it was recommended that emphasis would be on protection and natural regeneration of forests in buffers of tiger reserves and tiger corridors and meeting the short gap of funds in tiger reserves and PAs.

The reports regarding misuse of CAMPA funds must be verified on priority. It has been suggested in a Standing Committee (NBWL) meeting that a committee be set up for monitoring the use of CAMPA funds.

Draft guidelines for village relocation

One of the key recommendations of the Prime Minister appointed Tiger Task Force was creation of inviolate zones for tigers. Given the sensitivity of the task, the MoEF came up with a draft guideline for village relocation with a purpose to "facilitate the State implementing agencies in carrying out voluntary relocation/rehabilitation" from tiger reserves, in compliance with the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the Forest Rights Act, 2006."

The 'Draft Protocol/Guidelines for Voluntary Village Relocation in Notified Core/Critical Tiger Habitats of Tiger Reserves' was released on 26th May and reiterates the need to secure a minimum inviolate habitat of 800-1200 sq km area which can support a viable tiger population with at least 20 breeding tigresses. Further, around this inviolate 'core area', an ecologically sensitive buffer zone of at least 1000-3000 sq km is required to sustain displaced, old and surplus breeding tigers.

Equally, the draft stresses that the core area must be kept inviolate for tiger conservation without affecting

the rights of forest dwellers and, therefore, voluntary relocation of forest dwellers is necessary due to the absence of other co-existence options. It touches upon the conditions of voluntary relocation as laid under the Section 38V of the WPA, 1972, amended 2006, and stresses on the requirements of consent by the gram sabhas, settlement of rights, consultations with an ecological and social scientist familiar with area and a resettlement package confirming with the requirements of the National Relief and Rehabilitation Policy.

The draft seeks to clarify the confusion regarding the compatibility issues between the WPA, 1972 with the FRA, 2006 vis-à-vis relocation, elucidating that the phrase 'core/critical tiger habitat' is defined only in the WPA and *not* under the FRA. Conversely, 'critical wildlife habitat' is defined only under the FRA and *not* under the WPA. Core/critical tiger habitats, it is emphasised, are separate from critical wildlife habitats with disparity in their definitions and notification procedures. The steps involved in establishing core/critical tiger habitats as inviolate are as per the Section 38V of WPA and are specific to tiger conservation. But significantly, the provisions of Section 38V of the WPA, 1972 are not only compatible with, but are more stringent than the FRA, 2006 which defines critical wildlife habitats.

The draft emphasises that the relocation is voluntary, to be executed only if people are willing to move and asks for the state to constitute monitoring committees at the district and state levels for such relocation.

On the subject of identification/notification of core/critical tiger habitats and village relocation, the guidelines state that while the identification of core/critical tiger habitat is to be done under the WPA, 1972, it has to be read with the FRA, 2006 if relocation is necessitated.

Identification of priority villages for relocation based on the extent of human-tiger conflict, presence of tiger den sites, grazing areas for wild ungulates, etc. is critical and is the responsibility of the Field Director.

As regards the compensation package, there are two available payment options under the revised Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (2008)—either the entire package amount of Rs. 10 lakh per family shall be paid directly, if the family so wishes, or it may be broken up to help rehabilitate the family by procurement and development of 2 ha. Of agricultural land (35 per cent of total package), settlement of rights (30 per cent of total package), homestead land and house construction (20 per cent of entire package), incentive (five per cent of total package) and community facilities viz. access road, irrigation, drinking water, sanitation, electricity, etc.

(10 per cent of entire package). The free, informed and written consent of the gram sabhas is required confirming the package option.

For those families choosing to receive cash compensation directly, the draft outlines has elaborated procedures to ensure sufficient saving and investment options for the beneficiaries so that the entire amount isn't used up callously, but saved and spent judiciously and with proper financial guidance.

Meticulous guidelines on how the payment is to be made and handled, plus a village relocation proposal format is also provided.

The draft concludes with a clarification of the term 'family' defining it as "a person, his or her spouse, minor sons, unmarried daughters, minor brothers, unmarried sisters, parents and other relatives residing with him/her and dependent on him/her for their livelihood". The term 'family' also includes nuclear families.

A TigerLink Report

Comments: Concern has been raised on the option of the monetary package. If the villagers opt for this, it becomes impossible to monitor where they went, as is usually seen, some come back-or leave some stragglers or their cattle behind, thus negating the entire process. In many cases, the forest dwellers squat in some other forest, merely shifting the problem elsewhere.

The relocation package has provision for agriculturists, but not all forest dwellers practice agriculture. Many live off minor forest produce or are herders, and it is suggested that the package offers flexibility for livelihood options for the 'non-farmers'.

The main, and the root issue, is how does one proceed with the relocation when the process of recognition and determination of rights is not yet complete. Acquiring of land for Forest Rights has not yet been identified.

The other things the draft guidelines lack clarity is in the procedure in context of the consent of gramsabhas for relocation from those tiger reserves which were declared before the Forest Rights Act came into force.

It is felt that there may be provision of an ACF level officer (under the field directors) with two or three support staff for relocation work, as it is a time-consuming, sensitive task. With staff shortages running upto 50 per cent—and more—relocation gets stuck in procedural delays resulting at times in loss of faith on part of the villagers.

For the detailed draft check: http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/draft_relocatoin_protocol_26.5.11.pdf

Ecotourism guidelines create uproar

Wildlife or rather ‘Tiger tourism’ has been grabbing headlines in recent times, triggered by the Corbett tourism report, which found that crucial tiger corridors are blocked by tourism infrastructure and resorts—blatantly violating wildlife and environment laws. With the Prime Minister stepping in to urge states to curb insensitive and intrusive tourism in tiger reserves, the MoEF has introduced a draft ‘Guidelines for Ecotourism in and around Protected Areas’ on 2nd June. They were put up for scrutiny and inputs by the public on the MoEF website until 30th June, and have invited criticism, particularly from the tourism lobby.

The imperative that drove the guidelines, says the ministry, is that most wilderness areas across India are fragile ecosystems while also being major tourist attractions. More often than not, uncontrolled mushrooming of tourist facilities has cropped up around them leading to their unsustainable exploitation, disturbance and misuse. Such unplanned tourism in wilderness areas can destroy the very environment that attracts such tourism in the first place. There is a need; it is stressed, to move towards a model of tourism that is compatible with these fragile landscapes. “Adequate provisions must be made to ensure that ecotourism does not get relegated to purely high-end exclusive tourism leaving out local communities,” the guidelines state, adding that the first beneficiaries should be local people.

The document lays out a detailed set of framework guidelines on the selection, planning, development, implementation and monitoring of ecotourism in India. The directives in the draft will be applicable to all PAs including pilgrimage spots located within them and other forested areas.

Some of the important points are:

- State governments to develop a ‘State-level Ecotourism Strategy’ to ensure wilderness conservation, local community participation and benefit sharing, community capacity building, conservation education, monitoring of ecotourism impact, etc. Implementation of ecologically sensitive land use policy in the area is critical. It must be ensured that revenue from PAs is ploughed back to the PA, and not the state exchequer.
- Each PA must develop its own Ecotourism Plan—to be approved by the CWW and the NTCA, where

applicable—to assess carrying capacity for tourism, identify ecologically sensitive areas around the park, develop generic guidelines for acceptable practices, etc.

- Specifically for tiger reserves, the guidelines advise that if the core area is larger than 500 sq km, 20 per cent of it may be made part of tourism zone subject to the condition that 30 per cent of surrounding fringe/buffer habitat must be restored for wildlife in five years. Those with less 500 sq km core, 15 per cent will be permitted for tourism provided 20 per cent of the buffer/fringe is restored to wildlife. **Any core area in a Tiger Reserve from which relocation has been carried out, will not be used for tourism activities.**
- In compliance with the WPA, 1972 and directives of the Supreme Court, no new tourist facilities are to be set up in forest lands.
- A “local conservation cess” as a percent of turnover toward conservation and local livelihood development of all privately run tourism facilities within 5 km of the boundary of the PA has been advised. Half of the energy requirement of tourism facilities should come from renewable source and the vehicles used by tour operators should run on eco friendly fuel.
- In order to encourage communities and individuals to convert privately owned land into wildlife habitat and carry out ecotourism from there, financial assistance and incentives have been advised.
- The guidelines ask for the phased removal of residential facilities from core-critical tiger habitats to revenue lands/buffers outside within five years. The guidelines also list sustainable practices for lodges and other tourist facilities to adhere to. In order to allow free passage to wildlife, development has been advised to be sensitive to corridor values of the area.
- Pilgrim sites within PAs will have to be designated as sacred groves with strict building and expansion controls. All rules that apply to tourist facilities will also apply to pilgrim facilities.
- For regulating tourism, the ministry has recommended a two tier structure -a state level steering committee under the Chief Minister and a district level advisory body with district collector as chairperson.

The ministry has given time till December 31, 2011 to the state governments to constitute various committees and create the fund so that the guidelines become applicable from January 2012.

The guidelines have been formulated based on deliberations by a seven member committee, though some members have said that the guidelines are unimplementable in their present form and at variance with the discussions and deliberations.

Source: *TigerLink*, 'Cess on wildlife tourism on cards,' Chetan Chauhan, *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, June 02, 2011

Comments: *The root issue here is: Is it within the jurisdiction of the MoEF to formulate eco-tourism guidelines, given that there is separate ministry of tourism? However, given that tourism is impacting tiger conservation the concerns reached are very valid. The guidelines certainly address tiger concerns but the question remains how will NTCA implement these guidelines, especially in the case of tourism facilities outside reserve boundaries?*

FOCUS: TIGERS SANS BORDERS

International border areas are among the best—and last remaining—tiger habitats largely due to their inaccessibility. As far as India is concerned, its tiger habitat is contiguous to Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China. The remoteness of these regions—more than anything else—provides the tiger protection. But slowly, the tiger's last frontiers are being eroded, not just by the march of development sans ecological concerns, but also by pressing security reasons and the expressed imperative to protect national borders. There is no denying that national security is of paramount concern, but what needs to be understood is that equally critical is the ecological security that the tigers and its forest provide.

India's border tiger reserves face increasing threat: by the demand for border roads, fencing, disturbance due to presence of security personnel, cross border smuggling, etc. Some of these concerns which came up in the recent months are listed below:

End of the road: 62 km fence, road in Dampa

On April 25th, the National Board for Wildlife gave its nod to the construction of a **62-km fence and patrol road along the Bangladesh boundary in Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram**. The ministry of home affairs plans to construct a three-line wire fencing, besides seven border outposts. The decision, it is reported, was taken keeping in view the interest of

national security. The fencing and patrol road will not only ruin the huge tracts of forest, but will impede the movement of tigers and other wildlife.

The site inspection team comprising of NBWL member Dr. MK Ranjitsinh and Dr Rajesh Gopal, Member Secretary, NTCA, in its report, submitted to the NBWL points out that the **total area to be diverted from Dampa Tiger Reserve amounts to almost 1,500 ha instead of 69.26 ha as originally estimated**. The team has recommended a detailed survey to be undertaken by the BSF along the entire 62 Km stretch and involving representatives of the State Government/ Dampa Tiger Reserve. They also stipulated that the forest clearance should be obtained only after the exact area is worked out and that the patrol road and the border outposts should be on the Bangladesh side of the three line fencing to ensure minimal disturbance. They have warned against any stone quarrying, dumping of debris and stressed that the diverted forest land from Dampa should be compensated by adding an equivalent amount of land to the said tiger reserve elsewhere or to another Park or Sanctuary in Mizoram. It said the fence and road should be built as close as possible along the international boundary to minimise the loss of animal habitat at the 500 square km tiger reserve, which was brought under Project Tiger in 1994.

The expert team constituted by the NTCA in its report—submitted in October 2010—had opposed the construction of fencing and patrol road along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Dampa as it would have an impact on the movement of wildlife.

“The team feels that if the border outpost and concrete road and fence are constructed, the movement of animals across the border to use the suitable forest areas for ecological needs of the species concerned would vastly reduce if not completely stopped. This could hamper conservation of tiger and other key species in Dampa Tiger Reserve. If migration of species is stopped because of the construction of border outposts and concrete patrolling roads and fences within the reserve, this could attract disrespect for the conservation of migratory species at global level,” the report submitted to the NTCA had said. The state was also opposed to this construction, the Forest Secretary of Mizoram, and the Chief Wildlife Warden had not recommended the proposal, while the State Wildlife board had conceded ‘reluctantly’.

A senior official of Dampa TR said the proposal for construction of fencing and patrol roads would hamper the movement of wildlife. The Kassalong Reserve Forest in Bangladesh is located on other side of the

border. “There should be talks between officials of India and Bangladesh on the issue of wildlife movement as has been done in case of India and Nepal,” the official said.

The National Board for Wildlife has now written to the Ministry of Home Affairs about the recommendations of the site inspection team.

The above underlines the pressing need for trans-boundary cooperation on PAs spanning across boundaries of multiple countries or sub-national entities, where the political border sections that are enclosed within its area are abolished, allowing free migration of animals within the area. A perfect example is the move by China and Russia to establish the first cross border tiger conservation reserve for the rare Siberian tiger along the border. The two countries have agreed to establish a reserve along the Jilin province of China and Primorsky in Russia, bordering areas that are home to the Siberian tiger.

Road threat to Neora Valley, Pangolakha

Responding to the severe criticism to build a road from northern Bengal to Sikkim through the Neora Valley National Park and Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary, the MoEF appointed a high -profile team, headed by the Director General and Special Secretary Dr PJ Dilip Kumar who visited the site. The decision was taken following the meeting of Committee of Secretaries (CoS) on ‘Review of NH-31A and alternate route to Sikkim’ held on 25th February, 2011 at Cabinet Secretariat, which directed that the DG Forests and officials of the Ministry of Defence, Border Roads Organisation and the Forest Department of West Bengal would jointly visit the site to finalise a feasible alternate route.’

The army’s proposed road starts at Khunia More in the Dooars and ends at Aritar near Gangtok, cutting through the pristine forests of Neora Valley in North Bengal and Pangolakha WLS in Sikkim. Neora Valley is a unique hill ecosystem of the eastern Himalayas with amazing biodiversity. Of equal concern is that the proposed road will also cut through Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in Sikkim, which within its 128 sq km has a diversity of ecosystems from wet temperate rainforests, high-altitude lakes, alpine-juniper and rhododendron forest and the cold desert. **The Neora-Pangolakha (and also transboundary Torsa Strict Nature Reserve in Bhutan) landscape has four species of big cats—snow leopard, clouded leopard, common leopard and the tiger. This is a unique tiger habitat,**

with the big cats roaming at over 10,000 ft. Other rare, endangered species include the red panda, marbled cat, takin, serow, Asiatic black bear, the Tibetan wolf, musk deer and four species of pheasant—the Monal and Blood pheasants, Satyr Tragopan and the endemic Tibetan-eared pheasant.

The first tiger census conducted by West Bengal in Neora Valley (in 1998) indicated 14 adult tigers, and four sub-adults/cubs. According to the report, **a large part of the tiger population was concentrated at Rachela—from where the proposed road is expected to pass. The 2004 census of the West Bengal forest department indicated 20 tigers, with Rachela being one of the best tiger areas.** Rachella, significantly, has a natural water body called Jorepokhri, also the origin of the Neora River, the lifeline of Kalimpong and Algara towns and other rural areas, and it is also the source of water to the defence establishments. The West Bengal Forest Department appealed to consider rejecting the proposal and to widen an existing narrow road from Bagrakote to Kolekham via Lava and extend it to Aritar. The area is contiguous with Sikkim and Bhutan at its northern and northeastern boundaries respectively and is an integral part of the common landscape in which transboundary conservation has tremendous prospects.

Neora Valley National Park in West Bengal, Pangolakha WLS in Sikkim and Torsa Strict Reserve in Bhutan are part of single landscape and used by wild animals in trans-boundary movement thus enriching the genetic pool of Neora Valley NP, which has been proposed to be included in the Unesco heritage site list. **Stop Press:** The DG’s report has been submitted and impresses the above points, particularly its biodiversity and the significance of forest as an important catchment area for rivers that feed lakhs downstream. It is learnt that the DG’s report has said that the Bagrakot-Chuikhim-Nimbong-Kafer-Bakhim-Algarah-Rhenok route offers a viable alternative to the current proposed road and be taken up as the alternate route to Sikkim. Being a forest road, it may be used by the Army alone so that ecological pressure is not increased and also that the security needs are safeguarded.

Road through Manas National Park?

Sources confirm that a road has been proposed on the Indo-Bhutan border, which would run for over 150 kms, cutting right through the Manas NP. Conservationists have expressed alarm over this proposed road, “which cannot come through if we are to save Manas. A road

bisecting the Manas landscape will fragment the habitat and destroy the reserve,” they stress.

Regular readers of *TigerLink* will also remember the **Balipara-Bhalukpong road in Sonitpur district in the buffer of Nameri TR**. The BRO had started massive hill-cutting to facilitate construction and a large part of the road has already been constructed and widened inside the buffer despite the MoEF not issuing the mandatory clearance.

A *TigerLink* Report with inputs from ‘Nod to border fence near tiger reserve—National security fears prompt move’, Roopak Goswami, *The Telegraph*; ‘Conservation team opposes fencing, ‘Experts feel construction along the border in Dampa will impact wildlife,’ *The Telegraph*, November 1, 2010

FOCUS: CORRIDORS



Credit: Rohan Chakravarty

Protecting tiger corridors impossible: Ramesh

In a major setback to tiger conservation, the MEF Jairam Ramesh emphatically stated that **there can be no policy to protect tiger corridors**. Talking to *The Times of India* on April 27th, MEF Jairam Ramesh said that protecting corridors was impossible “as all development would come to a standstill. We cannot come out with a policy on corridors,” he stressed.

This comes as a shock particularly as the 2010 tiger estimates show a 12.6 per cent decline in tiger occupancy. According to the NTCA, this has occurred primarily from marginal tiger habitats—mainly sink and corridor habitats, therefore having low tiger densities. Said Ramesh, when releasing the new estimates, “The decrease in tiger occupancy clearly indicates that tiger landscapes and corridors are

under severe threat,” pointing to energy projects—whether coal, hydel or nuclear—irrigation schemes, and highway proposals that destroyed and fragmented habitats and corridors. However, no assurance on the protection of corridors is forthcoming—quite the contrary.

This was a bit unexpected, as the minister has earlier reiterated his ministry’s commitment to conservation, including conserving tiger (and elephant) corridors. He has been quoted as stating that, “The Ministry of Environment and Forests has cleared 98 per cent national highway projects. **We have not, and will not, approve the project (highway) that passes through or impacts tiger corridors or dense forest area.**” Speaking to top conservationists earlier in March, he conceded that protecting connecting corridors was critical to tiger conservation but that it was going to be very difficult given the pressure for growth. Senior officials in the MoEF felt that the statement was made under pressure from the PMO as highways, coal, mining, thermal and hydel projects were being stalled due to tiger—and green concerns. Ramesh has publicly said that the race for a double digit GD, with the consequent demand for more coal, more power, more roads is the single biggest threat to the tiger today—more so than even poaching.

Corridors are critical, if tigers are to have a future. Most of our reserves are too small to hold genetically viable populations. Corridors facilitate species migration and allow populations to interbreed resulting in genetic exchange that leads to greater health and vitality. According to the WII, a population of 20 breeding tigresses in a critical core habitat of about 800 sq km is essential. A fall in these numbers to say 15 breeding tigresses, and the probability of extinction becomes very high. Taking Sariska as an example, while the immediate cause of tigers going locally extinct in Sariska, is poaching, the root cause is a small population (high probability of extinction) in an islanded reserve with no connectivity. For the safe future of tigers, 75-100 tigers in our TRs are required. Most of our reserves are too small to hold such populations, or the desired number of breeding tigresses. For these to be viable, corridors (multiple use forest corridors) connecting our critical tiger habitats with source populations is a must. In the absence of corridors, populations get islanded, causing them to suffer inbreeding depression, leading to disease, overall population degeneration and inevitable extinction.

One misconception that must be erased is that corridors are *not* Protected Areas (the usual reason why governments denounce corridors). Corridors do not have to be pristine parkland but could in fact include agricultural areas, orchards, tea or coffee plantations, and other multi-use landscapes—just as long as they

are “tiger permeable.”) It is important though to factor in tiger concerns in land use plans or development activities in tiger corridors and landscapes.

Corridors under threat

Tiger corridors are slowly being eroded by development projects viz. highways, hydel projects, canals, mines, etc. Some such projects have dominated headlines are listed below:

- Corridors between Kanha-Nagzira-Pench, Navegaon-Nagzira, Tadoba-Melghat are under threat from encroachments, road widening, mining, power and other developmental projects
- The expansion of NH 7 which runs through the Kanha-Pench corridor slashing over 60 km of crucial tiger habitat, while NH 6 cuts through Navegaon-Nagzira and has ripped the ecological corridor connecting Kanha and Nagarjunasagar Tiger Reserve. And further in the east, it encloses the Similipal TR from two of its sides. NH 37 circumvents Kaziranga—having amongst the world’s highest density of tigers—and is an impediment to animals moving between Kaziranga and Karbi-Anglong. The Chilla-Motichur corridor in Rajaji National park has been slashed by highways, canals, railway line and an army ammunition dump, while the Kosi river corridor which circumvents Corbett has tourism resorts, encroachments and a highway cutting the animals’ access to the Kosi River, and the Ramnagar forest division.
- Mining in tiger habitats is the other very serious threat especially in context of the Central Indian tiger landscape. A series of **coal mines in the periphery of Bandhavgarh TR** and the forest corridor between the Bori-Satpura and Pench Tiger Reserves have been proposed. **A bauxite and iron ore mine is proposed south of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra.** As detailed before, a coal block was recently given (partial) clearance on the Pench-Satpura corridor. Coal mining threatens to destroy pristine forests in Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Jharkhand—some of which will cut through vital wildlife habitat.
- A series of projects—mining, thermal power plants, and a nuclear power plant have been proposed near Catigao and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries in Goa, Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri in the Konkan region in Maharashtra. These forests are contiguous to Anshi-Dandeli tiger reserve.
- There are active and proposed mines bordering Mhadei wildlife sanctuary and proposed tiger

reserve. The mining lobby is said to be pressurising the government to put the proposal for Mhadei as a tiger reserve in the back burner.

- The proposed highway connecting Vijayawada and Ranchi will pass through 1,200 kms of Orissa, fragmenting the state’s largest and most compact tiger and elephant landscapes.

Source: A *TigerLink* Report, Vijay Pinjarkar, *TNN*, Nagpur, 28, April 2011

NEWS FROM THE STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

NSTR making a solid comeback

Camera trapped images of a tigress and her three cubs, about four-five months old, feeding on a buffalo kill have raised hopes for the Nagarjunasagar Srisaillam Tiger Reserve (NSTR). The camera trapped pictures taken on the night of 6th and 7th July, were hardly at a distance of one kilometer from field director Ajay Naik’s office.

The 3,568 sq km NSTR, located in the Nallamalai Hills of the Eastern Ghats, is the largest tiger reserve in the country. Contiguous to it is the 1,140 sq km Gundla-Brahmeswara Wildlife Sanctuary (GBM), which is proposed to be added to the core area of NSTR, together the two PAs form a compact, protected tiger landscape of nearly 5000 sq km. Unlike NSTR, GBM is largely free of cattle grazing and human habitation, containing only a handful of hamlets.

Although NSTR came under Project Tiger in 1982-83, it had been a conflict-ridden area with heavy left-wing insurgency ailing it for over a decade. With the state succeeding in overcoming the insurgency problem, the AP Forest Department—supported by the NTCA—is making concerted efforts to revive the tiger reserve. The management has also employed over 250 Chenchu tribals for protection duties. According to MEF Jairam Ramesh, “The involvement of Chenchus in tiger protection is very significant and is a model we want to replicate elsewhere.”

The recent estimation by the NTCA and the Wildlife Institute of India in 2010 indicated a population of 60 tigers (lower limit 53, upper limit 66). Andhra Pradesh, along with Madhya Pradesh was the only state in the Central Indian and Eastern Ghats landscape that has recorded a decline in tiger numbers in the India Tiger Estimate, 2010.

The management is using 30 pairs of camera traps to monitor tiger presence through continuous capture-recapture method, besides collection of other evidence in the field during day-to-day patrolling. The reported

presence of around 20 tiger cubs in the reserve is an indication of habitat recovery.

Source: A *TigerLink* report; inputs from ‘Tigers feasting on kill boost hopes of population recovery in Andhra reserve’, G Ananthakrishnan, *The Hindu*, July 8, 2011

Comment: *NSTR has the potential to be one of the finest tiger reserves. But with the good news, comes trouble. The presence of a tigress so close to human habitation—Srisaigram, a temple town is worrying, as is the future of the dispersing cubs, when they reach adulthood. The management must gear up in anticipation of increased human-tiger conflict situations as the reserve’s tigers recover their population.*

Stop Press: Gundala Brahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary has been added as an extended core of NSTR, making it a large contiguous tiger reserve. Extending such a huge chunk of core critical tiger habitat is a tremendous achievement, and NSTR-GBM (largely free of human habitation) is now nearly 5000 sq km—India’s largest tiger reserve by far.

New lease of life for Kawal tigers

Deputy Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly Nadendla Manohar declared on 20th June that the Central government has given “in principle” approval to recognise Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve. Manohar heads the Legislative Assembly committee for Wildlife and Environment, which first met in October 2010. He adopted Kawal as pilot project aiming to revive the sanctuary, which has suffered from years of neglect.

Sustained efforts to bring Kawal into focus have been ongoing for over a decade. Says Imran Sidiqqi, wildlife biologist, of the Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society (HyTiCoS) “With its current prey density of 13 ungulates per sq km, Kawal can hold around 20 tigers”. This is also critical as it is contiguous to the Tadoba Tiger Reserve.

In April 2011, HyTiCoS along with actor and activist Amala urged the Deputy Speaker to revive the committee and conserve Kawal. They took the cause to the CM and soon the committee was revived with Kawal as its agenda. Manohar visited Kawal on 31st May. Five other members of the panel had accompanied him on a trek in the forest. A Kawal advisory committee with representation from local communities and conservationists was also established. Taking the cue, the state forest department proposed Kawal for tiger

reserve status and was immediately given ‘in-principle’ approval by MEF Jairam Ramesh, who was briefed about Kawal on his visit to Hyderabad.

When the final notification by the state comes through, Kawal will become AP’s second tiger reserve after NSTR. It is spread over 892 sq kms and is 270 km from Hyderabad, in the Adilabad district. An Advisory Board has been formed under APCCF AV Joseph and this committee is overseeing the implementation of the proposal.

There are 27 enclosures with 45 hamlets inside Kawal. many settlements inside the sanctuary have demanded relocation from the villagers that has been pending since 1988.

In a heartening note, politicians in AP have played a major role in achieving this success. The local MLA from Manchhila, G Arvind Reddy has shown keen interest in declaring Kawal as a tiger reserve. Nadendla Manohar, along with seven other MLAs is planning to visit Tadoba and Nagarhole TRs to understand issues and adapt best management practices for Kawal.

Inclusion under Project Tiger will focus the forest’s management towards tiger and wildlife concerns and will bring in funding from the Centre. The state government has offered Rs 25 crore for the management of the forest.

Kawal is a vital tiger habitat and is part to the Central Indian tiger landscape through its contiguity to the Tadoba-Indravati landscape. It has suffered tremendously over the past decade due to massive anthropogenic pressures. Kawal has also seen the devastating effects of misuse of the FRA, which has led to over 1500 acres in the sanctuary being illegally clear felled.

Source: ‘Kawal sanctuary to become tiger reserve’ *The Hindu*, Hyderabad, June 21, 2011; inputs by *TigerLink*

ASSAM

Good News: Manas no longer ‘in danger’

The Manas National Park has finally been removed from the ‘World Heritage in Danger’ list by the UNESCO, which had been imposed on it in 1992 given the then civil unrest in the region. The sanctuary had become a safe haven for militants and there was rampant poaching, wiping out the resident rhino population and reducing tiger numbers to a few stragglers. Manas Tiger Reserve was one of the nine tiger reserves created during the launch of Project Tiger in 1973 and was listed as a World Heritage site in 1985.

The decision to remove the 'in danger' tag was announced during the 35th Session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) in Paris, held in June. "India scores a winning goal for Manas," said Jagdish Kishwan, Additional Director General (Wildlife), who led the Indian delegation at the session. A UNESCO/IUCN monitoring mission to the sanctuary earlier this year noted the progress made so far to increase the population of key species, including tigers, Indian elephants and great one-horned rhino.

Other threats such as illegal logging and wildlife poaching in the Pambari Range have declined significantly and the park infrastructure has improved, according to the mission's report. It, however, pointed out that the status of swamp deer is critical in the reserve and shall not recover unless artificially supplemented.

The turnaround in Manas' fate came about in the early 2000s. The political situation in the area began improving and culminated in the creation of the Autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council under the Bodo Accord, February 2003. Since then, there have been concerted efforts by the governments and local people assisted by committed NGOs and individuals to revive Manas. The flagship great one-horned rhino—which had also been wiped out by poaching during the insurgency years—have been reintroduced. Rhinos were translocated to Manas from Kaziranga and Pobitora in which WWF has played a major role—and are now breeding successfully.

The protection and management of Manas was enhanced through training of frontline staff, provision of equipment and facilitating and encouraging involvement of local communities in conservation.

The state has proposed to expand more than 300 sq km of the national park on the western side. The part proposed to be included is good forest reportedly with tiger occupancy and would increase the core critical habitat to 840 sq km. The area of Manas was also increased with declaration of the Greater Manas Landscape, tripling its area.

However, there are major development projects and other construction activities coming up that threaten the integrity, and the future of this critical tiger habitat. The proposed road on the Indo-Bhutan border through the park has been discussed above.

The eastern side of the park has seen recent encroachments like the coming up of ashrams and other such construction.

Source: IUCN, Paris, 21, June 2011; *Jagran Post*, June 22, 2011

Camera traps poachers

Camera traps set up in the Orang National Park by Guwahati-based NGO, Aaranyak, supported by Panthera to monitor tigers in the park have revealed some unwelcome intruders—armed poachers. The tigers in the 78 sq km park face a major threat from human-tiger conflict and the 60-70 rhinos there are also targeted by poachers. Following the poaching of a rhino in the park, Aaranyak's field staff checked their camera traps in the area and were surprised to find that just four days prior to the rhino being poached, the camera traps had captured three people walking down a park road with 303 rifles. The pictures helped in identifying and locating the accused, from a village on the eastern border of the park. Aaranyak's staff quickly informed the park management of the evidence. The pictures were printed onto posters and a reward of Rs 25,000 was announced for information on the poachers. Hours later they were identified and two out of the three surrendered themselves while the third fled.

Source: www.panthera.org, May 17, 2011

Firing range in Sanctuary: FD objects

The Assam Forest Department issued orders for dismantling the firing range at Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary in Sonitpur district and served a notice to the Army to vacate the camp. There are two firing ranges inside the 220 square km sanctuary. The short firing range, on the southern fringe of the sanctuary, is behind the Lama Camp at Kalamati and the long firing range is at Kamengbari, on the northern side, 15km apart.

The final order came after SP Vashishth, DFO of Western Assam Wildlife Division, Tezpur, under whose jurisdiction the sanctuary falls, wrote twice to the army station commander at Missamari. The first letter was written on 29th January, and the second one on 11th March which says. "It is regretted that your office has not appreciated the value of a wildlife sanctuary vis-à-vis the need of firing practice for preparedness of troops. While firing practice may be a necessity for operational preparedness of the army, a wildlife sanctuary is not the right place to do so. "Your troops have been carrying out long firing practice at Kamengbari also which is illegal and firing in a sanctuary amounts to attempt to hunting, an offence punishable with life imprisonment under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 (amended)." The forest officer said the movement of elephants gets disturbed whenever firing takes place and there is a water body about 20 meters from the firing range.

According to an earlier agreement, the Lama Camp was to be shifted to the area marked for the ammunition depot in Charduar reserve forest outside the sanctuary.

Sources said that though the firing practice was stopped after the letters from the DFO, there is no guarantee that it would not resume. In a letter, the army replied that the short firing range had been in existence for more than 30 years and firing has been conducted since then. But the range fell into disuse because of routine redeployment of forces from the camp.

On April 4, the forest department had issued a notice to the army asking them to vacate the camp, which lies within the wildlife sanctuary. However, the department got no response in reply. On April 12, a team of 20-25 forest personnel led by the DFO were prevented by army personnel from dismantling the firing range. The forest department then issued a fresh notice asking the army to dismantle the camp themselves within a week, failing which the department would be forced to do it by itself and file a case.

However, there were no further developments post that. A lukewarm letter from the MoEF, while asking the army not to practice there until necessary clearances are obtained, has ruled out dismantling the firing range.

“This is a setback to us as we wanted to dismantle the firing range. It is against the wildlife laws to have a firing range in a wildlife sanctuary”, said CWW Suresh Chand.

The ministry had taken up the issue after it received representations from various quarters, including the members of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, on the construction and use of the firing range behind the Lama Camp inside the sanctuary. Sonai-Rupai is an important tiger corridor linking Nameri and Manas tiger reserves.

Source: ‘Army blocks razing of firing range in Assam wildlife sanctuary’, Roopak Goswami, *The Telegraph*, April 12, 2011; June 2, 2011

Note: It was later learnt that the forest department is working to identify an alternate site for the firing range.

Sonai-Rupai fights encroachers

The Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary has been quietly making a comeback in the last five years. Before 2007, the sanctuary had lost 85 sq km to over 12,000 illegal encroachers, but after that period, not a single case of encroachment has come to the fore. Frequent patrolling and the creation of a fear psychosis in the minds of the encroachers by the forest department have brought the

encroachers under control. However, there is no move to reclaim the encroached land due to political pressures since the encroachers form a major vote bank.

Between 2001 and 2005, the sanctuary had lost 35 per cent of its forest cover, the worst affected being the central areas of Batasipur and Golai. But things have started looking up. There had been no movement of boulders or timber logs on the 15km road from Kamengbari, on the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh, to Kalamati range in the sanctuary since 2007. Revamped infrastructure has ensured that at least 20 to 25 per cent of the forest guards can now stay with their families at Kalamati range.

Source: “Sanctuary on revival route- No encroachment, deforestation reported in Sonai Rupai in the past four years”, Roopak Goswami, *The Telegraph*, June 21, 2011, Sonitpur

Pobitora to ease Kaziranga’s tourism load

In an effort to reduce the fast increasing tourism pressure off the Kaziranga National Park, the Assam Forest Department is planning to shift the burden to the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. According to CWW Suresh Chand, Pobitora, on the southern bank of the River Brahmaputra, is a microcosm of Kaziranga with the exact terrain and biodiversity.

Also, given the concern over the increasing pressure of tourism, officials have also been asked to check the mushrooming of hotels and other tourist facilities around Kaziranga.

Source: ‘Tiger population gives birth to sister sanctuary’, *Hindustan Times*, Guwahati, June 2, 2011

BIHAR

Responsible tourism in Valmiki

In a State Wildlife Board meeting held in May 2011, a decision was taken to promote Responsible Tourism in Valmiki Tiger Reserve that would benefit the local communities and not be intrusive to the reserve’s wild heritage. Toward this end, a committee was set up comprising members from the NTCA, Tourism Ministry, members of the State Wildlife Board, state forest officials, park management and district authorities.

CHHATTISGARH

New tiger reserve proposed

In a letter to Chief Minister Raman Singh dated 29th June, MEF Jairam Ramesh has asked the Chhattisgarh

government to submit a proposal to the NTCA for declaring the Guru Ghasidas Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve. The sanctuary, pointed out the minister, lies in between Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve and Jharkhand's Palamu Tiger Reserve and is also contiguous to MP's Sanjay-Dubri TR. Preserving this forest for the tiger "would ensure (use of) the largest landscape within this part of Central India for tiger conservation", wrote Ramesh.

Noting that the area was surveyed by the Wildlife Institute of India last year, the minister added that although the prey population in the habitat is very low at present, with good management and protection under Project Tiger, the area has the potential for supporting a viable tiger population along with the Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve. Preserving this landscape that connects so many source tiger populations in central India would result in facilitating genetic exchange between them, restoring the tiger population in beleaguered reserves like Palamu and further strengthening and stabilising the largest tiger landscape in India.

Source: 'Chhattisgarh asked to propose tiger reserve status for Guru Ghasidas park', *The Hindu/PTI*, June 30, 2011; inputs by *TigerLink*

Centre presses for tiger reserve in Goa

Regular readers of *TigerLink* will recollect the campaign for declaring Goa a tiger state (*Campaign: Goa a 'Tiger State'*, *TigerLink*, *Revived Volume 8*, March 2011) and also in the October 2010 issue.

Member of NBWL Prerna Singh Bindra supported by local NGOs and individuals i.e. wildlife biologist Nirmal Kulkarni and Rajendra Kerkar of Mhadei Bachao Abhiyan wrote to MEF Jairam Ramesh in June urging him to request the Goa government to consider declaring a tiger reserve based around the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary, given that the forests of Goa have consistently been showing evidences of tiger, including the presence of a breeding tigress. They also represent the northern end of the Western Ghats—perhaps one of the most populous tiger landscapes in the world with about 500 tigers.

Following the note, Ramesh, in a letter dated June 28th, wrote to the Chief Minister Digambar Kamat that, "there is evidence that tigers in Goa are not merely transient animals but are a resident population in the State. Mhadei, situated in Sattari Taluk of North Goa, is a "contiguous tiger landscape" to Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka to its southeast and to Anshi Dandeli Tiger Reserve to its south which has around 35

tigers." Ramesh also referred to a study carried out by the Wildlife Institute of India, which said that the protected areas of Goa and their contiguous forests in Karnataka and Maharashtra are possibly some of the best potential tiger habitats in the Western Ghats region and they need protection.

Noting that there is "considerable local community support" for creation of a tiger reserve and for wildlife conservation, the Minister said that "by declaring Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve, we would also ensure the long—term protection of biodiversity—rich areas. I urge you to give this idea the most serious consideration and submit a proposal to us so that we can take it forward quickly." He added "You may also want to expand the tiger reserve beyond the existing Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary".

The Government of Goa seems to have put the plan to "cold storage." Sources say that though the CM immediately took a meeting of senior forest officials on receiving the letter, the message sent out was to 'lie low'. While CWW Shashi Kumar has said that there are a lot of local factors yet to be taken into account before setting up of a tiger reserve, Goa's State Forest & Environment Minister Aleixo Sequeira maintained that "there was popular resistance to the proposal" and that the issue "needs thorough deliberation before a final stand is taken by the Goa government".

The reluctance to declare the reserve, stress environmentalists, is more to do with the mining interests that ring the reserve. Mining for low-grade iron ore has destroyed large tracts of forests and illegal mining continues in and around PAs, even in the face of intense local resistance. Incidentally, the CM also holds the mining portfolio. Conservationist Rajendra Kerkar says that mining leases surrounding the Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary were discouraging the government from taking active steps towards setting up the reserve. He said that "if the state's handful of sanctuaries are notified as tiger reserves, mining—illegal and legal—around these, carried out with the blessings of the politicians and state administration would have to cease."

In a letter dated July 21st addressed to the Chief Minister of Goa, Bindra stressed that the notion that the move to declare the tiger reserve is anti-people was unfounded. "The reserve is pro-people. Mhadei is the catchment area of important rivers like Mhadei (the lifeline of Goa), Malaprabha, Pandhari, Bailnadi and Tillari and making it a tiger reserve will help consolidate the habitat and address the water security issues of Goa for posterity". Besides, Mhadei is already a notified wildlife sanctuary; the declaration of the tiger reserve

will impose no further restrictions on the area. Inclusion under Project Tiger will only channelise and focus the sanctuary's management towards tiger conservation and will bring in much needed funding from the NTCA to ensure the continued survival of tigers in this landscape.

Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (situated in Sattari taluka of North Goa and spread over 208 sq km) though tiny within itself, is part of a larger tiger landscape and is contiguous to Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka and onward to Anshi Dandeli Tiger Reserve which has 35 tigers.

The 2010 tiger estimation describes the “the Goa stretch of the Western Ghats an important tiger corridor” between Anshi-Dandeli in Karnataka and the Sahyadris in Maharashtra, and confirms occupancy of tigers in the state's forests.

Source: *TigerLink*, with inputs from: *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, Jul 2, 2011; *IANs*, Panaji, July 11, 2011; Paul Fernandes, *TNN*, Panaji, July 23, 2011, July 30, 2011

JHARKHAND

Committee for impact of Kutku dam in TR

A committee constituted by the Government of India with members that included former secretary (water resources), former director (Project Tiger), DIG (NTCA) went on a site inspection in June 2011 of the Kutku dam to examine the possibility of the closure of the dam gates and the expected impact on the Palamu Tiger Reserve. The dam was completed in 1986 but the sluice gates have not been closed because the irrigation department of Bihar did not comply with terms and conditions laid by the Directorate of Project Tiger by MoEF. If the gates are closed nearly 28,000 hectares of core critical tiger habitat will be submerged spelling the end of this tiger reserve.

A *TigerLink* Report

GPS, camera traps aid Palamu tiger monitoring

In a run up to the implementation of annual Phase IV tiger monitoring exercise across India's tiger reserves, over 40 camera traps are to be installed in 30 identified zones of the Palamu Tiger Reserve. At a training programme arranged for the reserve's frontline staff at Betla on 6th June, SEH Kazmi, Field Director, PTR, said that 40 staffers were trained in the usage of the traps. During the same period, 20 forest staffers were given a three-day crash course on the usage of the Global Positioning System (GPS) to monitor the reserve. Kazmi,

who was here as DFO in the mid 1990s was appointed as Field Director of the Palamu Tiger Reserve in March replacing P Upadhaya.

Just three days after the training program, a tiger was photographed by one of the camera traps. This was the first ever tiger to be photographed in Palamu in the past 15-20 years.

Source: “Camera trapping in Palamu Tiger Reserve”, *TNN*, Daltonganj, June 6, 2011

Wild dogs make a comeback in Palamu, Dalma

After an absence of almost nine years, *Cuon alpinus*—the Indian Wild Dog or Dhole, has been ‘rediscovered’ in the Palamu Tiger Reserve. A pack of eight dholes was seen in the Chetma Protected Forest inside the TR when. The reserve authorities believe, however, that the dholes had never ‘disappeared’ at all. They believe that the collapse of the reserve management over the past decade due to increased insurgency had led to laxity in monitoring and patrolling.

The 193 sq km Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, close to the city of Jamshedpur, also saw the return of the dhole when six of them were seen during an elephant census on 18th-19th May. The presence of dholes in Dalma could be a sign that the prey base in the sanctuary might still be adequate support large carnivores. In 2004 a tiger, possibly from the nearby Similipal Tiger Reserve in Orissa, had been found wandering in Dalma.

Source: Raza Kazmi on email

KARNATAKA

BR Hills, Kudremukh to be TRs

On a visit to the Bhadra Tiger Reserve on 8th May, former MEF Jairam Ramesh said that the Centre had given ‘in principle’ approval to declaring BR Hills WLS in Chamarajanagar and Kudremukh NP in Chikmagalur districts the nation's 40th and 41st tiger reserves. Observing that the shifting of 700 families living in the Bhadra Wildlife Sanctuary was one of the most successful examples of relocation in the country, he said that the 1,300 families in Nagarhole and 300 families in Kudremukh, who were living in the core area, needed to be rehabilitated. He reiterated that there would be no forcible eviction, and that the relocation would be fair, voluntary and incentive driven.

The minister pointed out that the biggest threat to forests was from mining. He said he had written to Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa that permission would not be granted for mining in the reserve forests.

He also said that the forest department had distributed 30,000 LPG cylinders to families living on the periphery of the Bandipur Wildlife Sanctuary in order to discourage them from collecting firewood. This was a good model for emulation in other parts of the country.

Dismissing fears about a police or military academy being set up in the township built by the Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd., he said permission wouldn't be given for such ventures and that the township would be used to promote wildlife and other ecological causes.

Source: "B.R. Hills, Kudremukh forests set to become tiger reserves", *The Hindu*, Chikmagalur, May 9, 2011

Bandipur tiger walks 350 kms to Bhadra!

This one is for the Guinness Book of World Records: A young male tiger traversed a straight-line distance of 280 kms from Bandipur Tiger Reserve to Goma Village in Shimoga district in 15 months. The actual distance walked by it could be as much as 350 kms, according to Dr K Ullas Karanth, Director, WCS-India.

The incident came to light when the tiger was cornered by villagers in a betel nut plantation near Shikaripur in Shimoga district. In the melee of the stone-pelting mob, the tiger attacked and killed one person. It was then tranquillised and taken to the nearby Bhadra Tiger Reserve where it was released in the presence of MEF Jairam Ramesh on 7th May. The release operation conducted by Forest Department officials, in collaboration with scientists of CWS/WCS and local NGO partners from Wild Cat-C.

Experts initially thought the animal had strayed out of the Bhadra Tiger Reserve, but surprisingly camera trap results of Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program revealed that the animal originated as far south as Bandipur Tiger Reserve. It was reliably identified as male tiger BPT-241, last camera trapped in Gundre, Bandipur Tiger Reserve on 11th and 18th February 2010!

Nature's ability to throw up surprises is unmatched. In a span of 15 months (or perhaps lesser) the animal had covered an aerial distance of 280 km, one of the longest ever movements recorded for wild tigers. In 2006, a young male tiger, BDT-130, was camera trapped in Bhadra forests and then again in Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve, 200 kms away, in 2008.

Meanwhile, more camera traps have been placed in Bhadra to track the fate of BPT-241.

Source: Sanjay Gubbi, WCS, sanjaygubbi.blogspot.com/"Tiger treks 280kms in search of own territory", *Deccan Herald*, June 10, 2011

Comment: Late last year, a young male tiger found itself cornered near Mathura in western UP. Experts at the WII believed it had come from Ranthambhore in Rajasthan. The tiger then made its way to the Bharatpur bird sanctuary (and has now been translocated to Sariska). Readers might recall that a tigress that is believed to have strayed from Pillibhit, near Dudhwa TR to Barabanki and then Faizabad, beyond Lucknow—she is believed to have covered over 500 km in a month—but was eventually shot, in a manner that created much controversy, as a 'man-eater'.

Although modern technology like camera trapping is revealing such secrets about tigers to us now, such long distance travel in search of hospitable territory is something that must be routine among tigers. Such incidents only highlight the criticality of conserving corridors. Tiger populations in some of the protected areas act as sources and connecting these sources is central for the dispersal of these wandering tigers. This will also help in genetic exchange and positively contribute to demographics in wild tiger populations. Needs of animals that are large-bodied and wide-ranging such as tigers and elephants are critical components of landscape planning around PAs and tiger reserves.

New road to bypass Nagarhole

In a major development, the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj has transferred 14 km of an alternate road bypassing the Nagarhole National Park to the Public Works Department for upgradation.

This upgradation will reduce a 10 km stretch from within the National Park. This key decision was taken at a meeting of the monitoring committee of the Mysore-Mananthawadi road repair/formation, constituted by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) of the Supreme Court.

The committee, which met on January 12 under the chairmanship of Kaushik Mukherjee, Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment Department, had sought the immediate transfer of the 14-km stretch of road between Dammanakatte and Udbur Junction.

The principal secretary, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department, has assured the committee of all help. The secretary has informed the panel that the chief executive officer, Zilla Panchayat, Mysore, in his letter dated August 13, 2010, had already requested the Public Works Department to implement the road upgradation.

The committee resolved that the Government will seek the CEC's permission for repairing the 1.7 km stretch within the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve. The Karnataka State Highway Improvement Project Authorities (KSHIP) had reportedly failed to set up adequate speed breakers. Hence, the co-mmittee resolved that wildlife expert Sanjay Gubbi, chief conservator of forests (Project Tiger) and superintendent engineer, KSHIP, should address this issue soon.

Over a hundred rare endangered animals have been killed by speeding vehicles along this stretch that connects Karnataka with Kerala—the most recent case being of a female dhole or wild dog that was run over. .

Source: “New road to bypass Nagarhole”, Subhash Chandra NS, *Deccan Herald*, Bangalore, May 7, 2011, WCS

178 forest watchers transferred to TRs

In a surprising decision, the government has ordered the transfer of 178 forest watchers to the wildlife division. The order copy (No 38/2011-12) issued from the principal chief conservator of forests has directed all the deputy conservators of forests, assistant conservators of forests and range forest officers to relieve the watchers immediately to take their positions in the four Project Tiger areas of Nagarhole, Bandipur, Bhadra and Anashi-Dandeli.

The order transfers 60 watchers from various territorial divisions to the reserves. While this will help strengthen protection in tiger reserves, conservationists are wary of this mass transfer as reserve forests in the Western Ghats—which are rich repository of biodiversity and serve as crucial wildlife corridors—will now be very vulnerable to timber smugglers and poachers.

Source: M Raghuram, *DNA*, July 8, 2011

Bandipur tourism block to be shifted

Following guidelines of the NTCA that no tourist infrastructure will be permitted inside core critical tiger habitats, the tourism block at Bandipur—a familiar sight on the way from Mysore to Ooty—which falls within the core will be relocated. The department has decided to shift the entire tourism block of Bandipur to Melakamanahalli at the entrance of Bandipur connecting Gundlupet, about 14 km away from the existing tourism block. Some of the dormitories, interpretation centres and management centre will either be pulled down or used for anti-depredation activities, said an official. The old guesthouse will be retained for use of officers on duty.

Even the staff quarters at Bandipur will be moved out to a newly constructed block at Melakamanahalli making the park largely free of any tourism and other infrastructure. According to the management, the biggest task before them now is to ensure dependency on fuel wood by dwellers around the fringes of the park is reduced and grazing of livestock prevented. The reserve is surrounded by 230 villages and their residents are dependent on forest for their daily needs.

Officials said the distribution of cooking gas to villagers in the ongoing program to reduce dependency on forest for fuel, is almost complete.

Source: “Bandipur tourism block to be shifted”, Subhash Chandra NS, *Deccan Herald*, Bangalore, July 2, 2011

Temples in Bandipur, Nagarhole

A number of small temples are mushrooming in the Bandipur and Nagarhole Tiger Reserves that are already being islanded and fragmented with villas, resorts and housing layouts. It has been alleged that the illegal structures have been trying to exploit religious sentiments to pursue illegal activities.

Temples have come up in Hosur on the Hunsur-Gonikoppa Road. A Chowdamma temple has come up in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve in the Handigere reserve forest area. A Mastamma temple has also come up on the Mysore-Mananthawadi Road. A few more temples near Hosur bus station, Kadegadde Hadi and an Ayyappa temple at Bavali on the Mysore-Mananthawadi road are new structures in Nagarhole.

Similarly a number of temples have been built recently in the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. These include a Madeshwara temple in Hediya wildlife zone; a Bommadevara temple in Moliyur; a Marigudi temple in Alaganji, Karnegala and a shrine dedicated to Gundre Maramma in the Gundre wildlife zone are some of the structures built recently in the reserve.

Residents from nearby villages gather at the temples to sacrifice animals, chop trees for firewood to cook food and dump leftovers and meat waste. This attracts predators and will only lead to more conflict. The disturbance by the constant traffic of pilgrims is also a worry. It has been pointed out that these temples have encouraged construction activity in the vicinity of the NPs, and intrusion into forest areas are happening on the pretext of religious events.

Though environmental activists have brought this issue to the notice of the forest department, no action is reported to have had been taken so far.

Source: PA Update #91; Rajesh Srivana, ‘Temples, new threat to State forests’, www.deccanherald.com, March 17, 2011

KERALA

License to kill wild boars

On June 15th, the Kerala Cabinet decided to grant special permission for killing wild boars that destroyed crops. Chief Minister Oommen Chandy told journalists after the Cabinet meeting that farmers would be allowed to kill wild boars destroying their crops subject to stringent conditions. Permission for this would have to be obtained from forest officials and the permits would carry clear stipulations. The carcasses of the boars will have to be burnt and not used as meat.

Source: “Kerala farmers can kill wild boars”, *The Hindu*, Thiruvananthapuram, June 16, 2011

HC bans vehicles through Periyar

The Kerala High Court banned movement of vehicles on a 10-km stretch to Pulmedu through the Periyar Tiger Reserve on 6th June, following the tragedy in which 102 Sabarimala pilgrims were killed in a stampede in January (Refer *TigerLink*, March 2011).

A division bench comprising justices Thothathil B Radhakrishnan and KS Surendra Mohan prohibited the entry of vehicles from the fourth mile to Pulmedu, which passes through the reserve. The court said the reserve was a protected area. “After declaration of an area as sanctuary, such area must get recognition that it is of immense ecological, natural and zoological significance. The prime purpose of the sanctuary is to protect wildlife and environment,” it said.

The bench said the movement of large number of vehicles from road creates adverse air and sound pollution and adversely impacts the flora and fauna.

“Disaster management (with reference to the stampede) has to be taken on a war-footing since the very gospel of disaster management is that prevention is better than cure,” the judges said on *suo moto* proceedings initiated following the Pulmedu stampede. Forests need to be protected, the bench said, adding, it finds no reason to permit vehicles through the route.

Source: “HC bans movement of vehicles through tiger reserve to Pulmedu”, *IBN Live/PTI*, June 6, 2011

Stray tiger captured in Kerala

A tiger was trapped and captured by the forest department on 15th March near Madikai in Kasargod district. It had killed a few domestic animals. The tiger, believed to be about seven years of age, was taken to Muthanga in Wyanaad.

Source: *The Pioneer/PTI*, Kasargod, March 16, 2011

MADHYA PRADESH

Drama in MP over losing Tiger State ‘crown’

The results of the India Tiger Estimation-2010 have showed that Karnataka, with a mean figure of 280 tigers has more than MP’s 257 tigers, has ‘dethroned’ Madhya Pradesh from holding the title of ‘Tiger State.’ Not only has there been a decline in tiger numbers, the census shows that tiger occupancy in the state has declined from 15,614 sq kms to 12,709 sq kms.

The local extinction of tigers in Panna, which came to light in 2009 and the decline in tiger numbers in Kanha have been major causes for the diminishing numbers.

State cries foul

The state forest department refused to accept the estimates. “The dwindling of tiger count in Kanha from 89 to 60 from last census to this one is difficult to comprehend,” said Chief Wildlife Warden HS Pabla.

Pabla also said that areas like Harda, Katni, Damoh, Burhanpur, Chhindwara, Betul, Nauradehi Sanctuary, Dindori, Barghat, Lamta and few others have been known as tiger habitats but these areas were not part of the tiger estimation done by WII-NTCA. “We are seeking a clarification as to why these areas were ignored,” he said.

Pabla also questioned the claim that tiger habitat has shrunk in the state saying that tiger presence, which had been noted in 434 beats in the 2006 census, had gone up to 494 beats in 2010. The CWW also turned down the ‘Tiger State’ controversy by saying that the tag was not an official one and meant little.

Echoing similar sentiments, Forest Minister Sartaj Singh said, “We don’t agree with the tiger count by the Centre and request a recounting of the areas which were not included in the recent estimation.” He also has pledged to reclaim the lost ‘glory’ of the state. Since WII could not take up a recount, the forest department proceeded to carry out its own fresh census in April and has come up with a figure higher than the WII’s by 15-17 tigers. Meanwhile, in a candid moment, Minister Singh said that even recounting is unlikely to fill the gap of 43 tigers in order give MP its ‘Tiger State’ tag back!

The issues

The forest department’s slackness, lack of accountability, increasing anthropogenic pressure and poaching have been blamed for the decline by activists. Retired CCF PM Laad remarked that intensive and ‘manual’ monitoring of tigers and foot patrolling were critical but

unlike before, were not being done diligently. “Shortage of staff, lack of accountability among forest staff, illegal mining, lack of landscape planning, lack of political will power, vested interests in translocations, non implementation of Supreme Court orders and misuse of FRA are causes of concern,” said activist Shehla Masood.

A miscount?

MP’s discomfiture over the tiger count was validated. The Phase I study carried by the state showed higher occupancy than indicated by the All India Census—implying that tiger numbers could be higher. WII admitted there could have been an ‘undercount’, and the state results will be built upon and included in the next estimates.

Source: Vivek Trivedi, *The Pioneer*, Bhopal, March 29, 2011, “Blame game begins over loss of ‘Tiger State’ tag”, March 31, 2011, “Kanha fresh count to be dispatched next week”, April 30, 2011

MP to allow hunting of nilgai, boar

Madhya Pradesh is considering allowing limited hunting of nilgai and wild boar. Forest Minister Sartaj Singh said that the decision regarding limited hunting has been pending for the past eight years. “The rules in this regard already existed, but there were some complications. We have made some amendments in the rules and soon it would be passed by the State Cabinet.”

After these amendments take place, farmers would be allowed limited hunting of nilgai and wild boar to prevent crop damage. Conservationists have reacted sharply to this proposed move. They have questioned the move by saying that poaching was already a huge menace in the state and such a “haphazard move” by the forest department could further aggravate the situation. Conservationist Shehla Masood said that killing animals was not a solution and ‘culling’ of nilgai and wild boar would diminish the prey base of the tigers.

Source: “MP to allow limited hunting of neelgais, boars”, Vivek Trivedi, *The Pioneer*, Bhopal, March 17, 2011

Bandhavgarh fences in tigers

An area of about 108 sq kms in the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve’s famed Tala and Kallwah ranges has been fenced in with iron meshed chain link fences, prompting some conservationists to label it an ‘open-air zoo.’ The rationale, according to the department, is to minimise human-tiger conflict by keeping people and cattle out.

Opinion is divided on the efficacy and the wisdom of the move.

Some wildlife experts stress that the fencing is playing havoc by disturbing the territorial dynamics of the reserve’s tiger population and preventing the free movement of tigers and their prey base. The restricted territories are leading to grown up cubs remaining with their mothers for longer than normal and causing increased infighting and, it is anticipated, even inbreeding in the long run. On 11th June, an 18-20 month old female cub was found dead in the Sukhi Patiya area due to infighting. Grown cubs staying for longer than necessary with their mothers also puts additional burden on the prey base within the fenced in area. These are unnatural and unwelcome intrusions in the natural eco-system. That apart, fences block wildlife corridors.

However, conservationists based in Bandhavgarh stress that it has helped reduce conflict—mainly preventing wild boars from raiding crops, and cattle from grazing inside the reserve. “The fences are on the edge of the reserve—and there are no forests and tiger habitats outside, just people—it’s a perfect conflict situation,” says a conservationist. Fencing the perimeter prevents cattle from entering the reserve and deer and wild boar from raiding crops. With 30,000 people and 50,000 heads of cattle living on the fringes around the reserve in 80 villages, Field Director CK Patil says there is simply no option. Bandhavgarh has no ‘buffer’ between the reserve and villages—the forest ends abruptly and spills into agricultural fields sharpening conflict. He adds that the fences do not act as a ‘barrier’ to tigers who frequently jump over, and back—the real issue is *where* do they go, and how can they be protected outside? Revenue villages abet the reserve borders, and adjoining forests are fast getting degraded with increasing encroachments particularly post 2008 when the Forest Rights Act came into force.

The fences that do cause a lot of harm and make several hectares of prime tiger territory unavailable for tigers, however, are the ones that have been raised to house the orphaned cubs like the one in the Gohri range. These enclosures right within the centre of the reserve are fencing—and restricting—fecund breeding habitat.

Conflict in Bandhavgarh

On May 23rd, two people were killed near Damna village of Tala range while collecting *tendu* leaves. The sub-adult cubs of a tigress inhabiting the Mirchaini area of the reserve were held responsible.

Later, the same tigers were blamed for killing watcher from Badnakha Patrolling Camp. He was away on leave to his village when it happened on the evening of July 7. His body was discovered the day after— incensed the villagers took out their fury on the forest staff, and assaulted the Sub-Divisional officer, who sustained head injuries and also beat up a Range Assistant and a forest guard.

Fearing hostility towards the tigers, “the reserve administration captured the two tigers, now branded ‘man-eaters’, and sent them to Van Vihar zoo in Bhopal.

Source: Moushumi Basu, *The Pioneer*, “Chain link fencing pushes Bandhavgarh tigers to edge”, New Delhi, 19, July 2011; Dhruv Singh on email

Forest staff honoured

In a recent felicitation ceremony, 28 forest department field staff were honoured. Forest Minister Sartaj Singh said on the occasion that proper facilities and a good working atmosphere must be provided to the forest staff and that outstanding performers should be felicitated from time to time. He said field staff are the forest department’s power and must be motivated. Singh added that efforts are on to provide welfare opportunities to employees, besides timely promotions.

Source: Girish Sharma, *The Pioneer*, March 12, 2011

Core area notified for Sanjay-Dubri

The State Government has notified the core/critical tiger habitat of the Sanjay Tiger Reserve, situated in Sidhi district on 25th February. With this move, the notification of core areas in all the six tiger reserves of the state has been completed. The tiger reserve has an area of 466.66 sq km and also includes 364.60 sq km of the Sanjay Dubri WLS, making it 812.58 sq km in all. Along with the Guru Ghasidas NP in adjoining Chhattisgarh, this provides for a comprehensive tiger ‘block’ of 1471.35 sq kms. In June, MEF Jairam Ramesh urged the Chhattisgarh government to take up steps to declare Guru Ghasidas NP a tiger reserve. (See “*New TR proposed connecting Bandhavgarh and Palamu*” in ‘Chhattisgarh’).

There are 47 villages in the Sanjay TR. An expert committee had recommended the voluntary relocation of seven villages to create an inviolate core area, while the rest are in the buffer.

Source: Vivek Trivedi, *The Pioneer*, Bhopal, February 26, 2011

Kanha tigress translocated to Panna

A tigress ‘T4’, was translocated from Kanha Tiger Reserve to Panna Tiger Reserve on 26th March, and was released in the reserve the next day. As a cub, the six-year-old tigress (along with her sibling, also a female) had been raised ‘semi-naturally’ in a large enclosure at Kanha after her mother was found dead. She has been radio-collared and released in the Madla area of Panna. With this relocation, the number of tigers in Panna has increased to four. There are two other tigresses and a tiger from earlier translocations.

The biggest apprehension was whether T4 would be able to hunt for herself given the fact that she was brought up in an enclosure though the occasional deer was driven into her enclosure in Kanha. As per the latest news, it is learnt that T4 is hunting successfully. What’s interesting is that some staff report that male tiger was also seen initially hunting with her.

T4’s sibling, is also on the pipeline for release into Panna, following T4’s success.

Panna Cubs

Currently, there are four tigers (three females and one male which were relocated to Panna, following the extinction of tigers from this reserve). T1, the first tigress to be relocated gave birth to four cubs, of which two have survived and are 15 months of age currently, while of T2’s three cubs are about ten months currently.

Source: “Tigress trans-located to Panna released in wild”, Vivek Trivedi, *The Pioneer*, Bhopal, March 28, 2011

Jairam’s no to projects in Panna

MEF Jairam Ramesh stood firm that the Lalitpur-Singrauli rail link and the Ken-Betwa river linking project would not be cleared as they would devastate the Panna Tiger Reserve. The minister was opposed to the project but members of parliament from his political party, particularly from Bundelkhand, and also from the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the youth wing of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJYM who handed him a memorandum asking him not to oppose the river linking project. They have also protested against the demarcation of buffer saying that it will dislocate the people. The Ken-Betwa inter-linking project is said to be a key element of the Central Government’s Bundelkhand package, which is being pursued by political parties in this area. The Planning Commission, which is

implementing the package, is reported to have got the commitment to this project from the both the state governments.

Source: *PA Update #91*, 'Panna's BJYM activists protest as Ramesh disapproves locals', www.ibnlive.in, April 17, 2011, Source: 'Ramesh differs with party on Ken-Betwa', www.hindustantimes.com, 21/06/11.

Comment: *The river linking project—a Rs 100 crore project has been questioned on its viability. While not going into the wisdom (or otherwise) of the move, there is little doubt that the river linking will mark the end of Panna—as it will submerge huge tracts of the reserve. The protests seem to be politically motivated. For one, buffer areas do not displace people, and a large number of villagers have already given their consent to buffer.*

MAHARASHTRA

NTCA to study Adani impact on Nagzira

The NTCA will study the adverse impacts of diversion of 163.84 ha of forest-land from the Nagzira WLS for Adani Power Maharashtra Ltd.'s (APML) 1980MW thermal power plant at Tiroda, Gondia. The proposal for diversion is currently under consideration by the MoEF. On 1st July the NTCA had written to three institutes including National Environment Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur; Pollution Control Research Institute (PCRI), Haridwar; and Environment Protection and Training Research Institute (EPTRI), Hyderabad in relation to this.

"NTCA proposes to study adverse impact of gaseous and particulate emissions and additional thermal load from the proposed power plant on the flora and fauna in 152 sq km Nagzira sanctuary," said sources. It is believed that the MoEF is inclined to divert the land to APML. Wildlife experts maintain that the MoEF's move would be a U-turn as MEF Jairam Ramesh, during his Nagpur visit in September 2010, had said that if the land were close to Nagzira, then permission to divert it would *not* be granted. Nagzira-Navegaon is a proposed tiger reserve, and a critical link in the Central Indian tiger landscape.

It is learnt that the proposal was not put before the National Board of Wild Life (NBWL) as mandated since it falls within 10 km of a PA. Earlier, two offences have been registered against the APML for violating the FCA, 1980.

In June 2010, a six-member committee headed by then PCCF (Wildlife) AK Joshi had visited the proposed site and studied the impact of diverting the land on

wildlife. The panel has already stated that the diversion would impact Nagzira, which is just 8.5 km from the plant's boundary.

Source: "NTCA to study Adani impact on Nagzira wildlife sanctuary", Vijay Pinjarkar, *TNN*, 11, July 2011

Fire incidents dip in the Melghat

Fire incidents in Melghat have declined substantially—by more than half to 6485.5 hectares from 2007 when the destruction from summer fires was 15,159 hectares. Annually, summer fires cause huge damage to India's forests. Most such fires are human induced. Taking note of the alarming rise in fire incidents, a committee was formed in 2005 to tackle the problem. Most recommendations were taken on both. Since the last two years, the TR management under Field Director AK Mishra had devised a strategy and deployed fire control squads, provision of equipment to fight the fire, and thorough surveillance.

Source: "Fire incidents dip in the Melghat tiger reserve", *TNN*, Amravati, June 20, 2011

Relocation of people underway

The process of relocating local people from notified core critical tiger habitats of tiger reserves is currently underway in the state, said Maharashtra forest minister Patangrao Kadam. Kadam said rehabilitating locals from Melghat Tiger Reserve is in the process and an amount of Rs 10 lakh per family is given for voluntary rehabilitation. The regional office of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) will soon be operational in Nagpur and it will ensure that the NTCA guidelines are implemented effectively and there is better cooperation between the tiger states, he said. MK Rao, CF (Wildlife), said that the process of demarcation of core and buffer zones of Sahyadri Tiger Reserve is going on and will be completed in six months. The rehabilitation of local people is in process in Satara.

Source: "Relocation of people from tiger reserves in process" *TNN*, Pune, June 20, 2011

Union threatens to shut down tiger reserves

The Maharashtra Forest Guards, Forest Employees and Forest Workers' Sanghatana threatened to close down the Pench, Tadoba-Andhari and Melghat tiger reserves if wages of *van majdoors* (forest workers) were not paid immediately. This was in the last week of April.

It was reported that over 1,500 forest workers in the three tiger reserves had not been paid wages since December. A similar problem has occurred in the past

as well. The 'sanghatana' or union noted that forest workers were the backbone of any protected area. Their neglect had become a chronic problem and forest officials had failed to address it. They threatened to prevent entry of tourists into the three tiger reserves if the dues were not settled within eight days.

According to wildlife and forest officials the problem had arisen because the tiger reserves did not receive the second installment under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS). The NTCA is reported to have released Rs 41.39 lakh for TATR, Rs 13 lakh for Pench and Rs 61.35 lakh for Melghat towards second installment only on 31st March, and this meant the money could not be spent, as it was the last day of the financial year. The officials said that they would have to keep the funds in abeyance unless the Centre revalidated the payment.

The apathy of the state government also reportedly plays its role. The financial year begins in April and the NTCA releases the first installment latest by September. But, the state government issues a government resolution (GR) to release this money only in January, delaying the funds further. This results in the delayed submission of the utilisation certificates for the first installment leading to the delayed release of the 2nd installment by the MoEF.

It is not clear how the standoff was resolved and when, if at all, the wages were paid to the forest workers.

Source: *PA Update #91*, 'Forest union threatens to shut tiger reserves', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, April 26, 2011

Naxals trying to make inroads in Tadoba: Cops

A senior Naxal cadre has allegedly corroborated the police's suspicion that insurgents are trying to constitute a *dalām* (military unit) for villages in and around the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). A state committee (CPI-Maoist) member and secretary of 'Chandrapur Area Committee', Bhimrao alias Bhanu alias Bhaskar Bhovte was arrested along with his wife Sunanda in Gondia district a day before Union Home Minister P Chidambaram's visit to Gadchiroli in December 2010. "Bhovte told us that a survey was done in TATR and surrounding villages in the recent past with the intention to form a *dalām*," a senior police officer said. A series of raids followed the couple's arrests at the dens of Naxalites in places such as Mul and Sindewahi are situated near the tiger reserve. Some hand-written material, most of them survey reports, were seized. One of the reports was about the survey in the tiger reserve.

The Nagzira WLS in Gondia district too had a *dalām* led by Shivaji Tumreddy till his surrendered in 1996.

Source: "Naxals trying to make inroads into tiger reserve area: cops", Vivek Deshpande, *The Indian Express*, April 20, 2011

Comment: *Naxals have taken over many TRs in the 'red corridor' like Palamu, Indravati and more recently Udanti-Sitanadi—making administration and protection of the reserves out of the hands of the management. The recent MEE report pointed out that the tiger reserves in the red corridor needed urgent attention and focus, and special steps to deal with the situation.*

ORISSA

Similipal: Jairam asks CM to intervene

Following an update from the Joint Director, NTCA, SP Yadav who visited the Similipal Tiger Reserve, MEF Jairam Ramesh wrote to Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in a letter dated 29th June asking him to "personally intervene" and take up urgent steps to strengthen the status of the tiger reserve.

He suggested that a small contingent of the State Armed Force be deployed in some villages on the fringes of the core area, especially around those villages that have the tradition of '*akhand shikar*'. The State Armed Force deployed in the park should be directed to participate in joint patrols with the local forest staff. The Minister stressed that the frontline staff must be provided with firearms and the necessary training in order to do their duty diligently and boost their morale. Among his other suggestions were the capacity building of frontline staff and filling up of vacancies. Ramesh asked for Patnaik's government to speed up the setting up of the armed Special Tiger Protection Force, adding that the process for providing central assistance is underway. The minister also asked the CM to look into the issue regarding the absence of unified command over the reserve.

In response, the State has, in the meantime, issued a notification (Dt. 02.07.2011, No. 11884/F&E) unifying the command in the Similipal Tiger Reserve by ranking the RCCF as the Field Director and the sole authority over all divisions in the STR and in the district.

The NTCA has provided for a wildlife biologist on a contractual basis to the reserve.

A TigerLink Report

'Akhand shikar' averted

The staff of the Similipal Tiger Reserve managed to avert a major mass-hunting ritual, locally referred to as '*akhand shikar*', when they prevented a large gang of

500 poachers from hunting in the fecund southern core area of the reserve. A gang of 500 poachers were intercepted by the staff of the Jenabil Range Office on the evening of 16th May. The poachers had entered the reserve through its southern fringe from the notorious Udala area. The staff managed to persuade the poachers to leave the reserve and arrested five of them, seizing their bows and arrows. On 17th May, ACF, National Park, Ashok Kumar and the local Tehsildar handed the accused poachers over to SDJM, Karanjia.

For the first time in several years, not a single poachers' camp has managed to come up in the reserve this year.

A TigerLink Report

State rejects tiger census figures

The nationwide tiger census report has shocked Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who until recently held the portfolio of the Forest & Environment minister. He argued that the census report did not figure the tiger population in Sunabeda (Proposed) Tiger Reserve. The census says that Orissa has only 36 tigers. The number of tigers in the state has not decreased, rather "it is stable", said Patnaik. CWW PN Padhi said the number is certainly more than the figure claimed by the WII.

The matter was raised in the Assembly by the state unit of National Congress Party on 2nd April when during Zero Hour Amar Prasad Satpathy asked the Orissa Government to clarify on the number of tigers in the state. He asked if the state government would undertake a fresh survey of the tiger population in the state.

Source: "State's tiger population more than 45, claims Govt", *The Pioneer*, Bhubaneswar, March 31, 2011, April 4, 2011

Comment: *The manner in which the tiger estimate was carried out in Orissa has received criticism. The two tiger reserves Satkosia and Similipal were covered but only partially, and the crucial Phase III exercise involving camera trapping wasn't carried out. Occupancy surveys where tigers are known to exist have not been done—these include areas like the Sunadaba (Proposed) Tiger Reserve, the Ghumsar North & South Divisions, Phulbani, Ushakoti-Badrama, Sundargarh, Debrigarh-Hirakud, Keonjhar, etc*

For the state to cry foul that Sunadaba has not been covered is a bit of an irony—considering that the proposal to declare it a tiger reserve—and thus strengthen its protection, etc that has been languishing for years.

Assembly panel bats for guards, Similipal

In a significant move, the Assembly Standing Committee on Forest and Environment has asked the state government to end the anomaly in the salary and allowance structure between the police constables and forest guards. Scrutinising the demand for grants relating to the Forest & Environment Department for the fiscal 2011-12, the House Panel has observed that salary and allowances disparity between the police constables and forest guards need to be minimised "as their jobs are equally difficult and hazardous".

Since the issue has been referred to, the Anomaly Committee headed by the Development Commissioner, the House Panel has said that it should finalise the matter at the earliest and bring both services at par. Expressing concerns over the fact that there are 1,320 vacancies in the posts of forest guards and 300 vacant posts of foresters, the Committee observed that forest management is being affected due to the largescale vacancies. The panel has urged the department to make adequate budgetary provisions either in the present Annual Budget or in the Supplementary Budget to recruit forest guards and foresters.

The Committee also observed that there was need for taking special measures for the protection and conservation of Similipal Tiger Reserve. Despite the fact Similipal is centrally funded, it was felt to be inadequate. The Panel opined that the state government should create a special scheme out of its own funds under the State Plan.

Source: "Assembly panel bats for pay parity between constables, forest guards", *The Pioneer*, Bhubaneswar, March 30, 2011

Similipal launches TCF

Following guidelines of the NTCA, the Similipal Tiger Reserve established the Similipal Tiger Conservation Foundation (STCF). The foundation shall be an autonomous body that will facilitate and support tiger conservation and protect the biodiversity of its habitat in Similipal. It will also take initiatives in eco-development with the active involvement of forest fringe dwellers in the process, said field director, HS Upadhyay.

The STCF has been registered under the Registration of Societies Act, 1860 and was approved by the additional registrar of societies on 22nd June. It shall have operational jurisdiction over STR, which encompasses a total area of 2,750 sq km, and its adjoining landscape with possible corridor value for dispersal of wild animals from the tiger reserve.

The foundation will use funds from income generated by levying entry fee on tourists besides contributions

from other sources in terms of specific projects from national as well as international agencies as permitted by law. It will also use grants received from internal agencies, grants-in-aid, donations or assistance of any kind from any individual or organisation, including foreign governments and other external agencies as permitted by law.

The Field Director of Simlipal has made an appeal to wildlife enthusiasts and concerned conservationists to donate to the foundation in order to enable it to engage in conservation activities at the earliest.

Source: “Simlipal launches foundation to boost tiger conservation”, Amarendra Bose, *TNN*, Baripada, June 27, 2011; inputs by *TigerLink*

RAJASTHAN

Tiger corridor makes way for illegal canal

In defiance of an order from the Central Empowered Committee earlier in the year banning all construction work at the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, a huge canal was being constructed to divert water from Kusali Darra to Mansarovar Dam. The layout of the canal—over 3 km long—is parallel to the road starting from old Sawai Madhopur township to Bodal. Construction was on at full swing with half of the length already being constructed, reported Ranthambhore Foundation Director PK Sen while on a site visit. It was being dug on the northern side of the road where large number of trees—mostly Dhok (*Anogeissus pendula*)—had also been cut. The trees have been completely removed from the alignment, which is about 25-30 meters in width along the entire length of the proposed canal. A number of excavating machines, dodgers and other heavy equipments were lying in the site and the excavated material dumped on both sides of the canal. The dumped materials choked the *nullahs*, which used to carry water in the main Kusali Darra. The proposed *nullah* will be approximately 10-12 meters in width and no animal will be able to cross it as it will be 8-10 meters deep. **The canal will destroy one of the most important tiger corridors between Ranthambhore National Park and Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary.**

Ironically the foundation stone was laid by Namo Narayan Meena the local MP, and the former Minister of Environment & Forests. It is understood that the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife rejected the proposal *twice* during 2005-06—but this was disregarded by the state.

In his conclusion Sen notes that “if the canal is completed in the present form the corridor between Ranthambhore National Park and Sawai Mansingh

Sanctuary will be completely dead and the proposed extension of tiger corridor and movement of tiger from the National Park to the Sanctuary and beyond will have to be forgotten. This will be totally against the policy of tiger conservation followed by Government of India and the State Governments.”

With conservationists pointing out the blatant illegality of the activity and the MoEF demanding an explanation from the state government, forest officials said the project has been temporarily stayed with intervention from Chief Secretary S Ahmed.

Source: PK Sen’s (Director, *Ranthambhore Foundation*) site visit report, Dharamendra Khandal, *TigerWatch*

Note: *Earlier in February, the CEC intervened banning construction activity at Bhanwar Deh, a critical and perennial waterhole in Berda. Bhanwar Deh lies within the core of the national park and has been destroyed by bulldozers, ironically, for the construction of an anicut. After the Wildlife Protection Society of India approached the CEC on 2nd March 2011 about the construction work, the CEC sent a directive to the state Chief Secretary asking the State Government to respond to the claims and ensure that no works be allowed in violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the orders of the Supreme Court.*

The State irrigation department has apparently approved construction of 20 anicuts and ponds inside the tiger reserve, costing within the range of Rs 35 to Rs 75 lakh. Nearly 100 anicuts and 20 telais (ponds) have been constructed in the reserve in the past two years.

Source: *PA Update #91*, ‘Stop constructions inside Ranthambhore, SC panel tells state’, www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com; ‘Construction will hit eco-system’ www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com

Three tigresses to be brought to Sariska

On a visit to the Sariska Tiger Reserve on 24th June, MEF Jairam Ramesh announced that three more tigresses would soon be brought to the reserve to brighten its reintroduced tiger population’s prospects. “The process of selecting tigresses for the translocation had already begun in Ranthambhore,” he said while expressing concern for the lack of breeding among the two tigers and three tigresses currently existing in the reserve.

While on the visit, the minister saw a tiger ‘T-6’ in the morning of 25th June. The excited minister termed his rendezvous as “fantastic!” Meanwhile, the scat of tigers from Sariska is being sent to the Centre for Cellular

Molecular Biology (CCMB) at Hyderabad on a weekly basis to ascertain any hormonal deficiency or genetic cause for the non-conceiving of the existing Sariska tigers.

Also, HS Panwar, former dean of the Wildlife Institute of India has recommended that at least one unrelated male tiger from outside Rajasthan must be introduced in Sariska to reinvigorate the genepool there.

Source: “3 more tigresses to be brought to Sariska: Ramesh”, *UNI*, Alwar, June 25, 2011; “Sariska tiger gets a new fan”, Sunny Sebastian, *The Hindu*, Jaipur, June 26, 2011; “More tigers to be relocated in Sariska”, Lokpal Sethi, *The Pioneer*, Jaipur, July 4, 2011

Note: Said the minister, “The tiger we saw is the same tiger that ‘terrorised’ people at Ranthambhore and later at Mathura. Now leading a peaceful life in Sariska!”

Orphaned cubs to go to Sariska

The Sariska tiger reserve, which has two tigers and three tigresses—all from Ranthambhore—since tigers in the reserve went extinct in 2004-5, will get two tiger cubs, according to forest officials. “The NTCA has given the go-ahead for the move,” a state forest official said. The two cubs belong to tigress T-5 who died after undergoing a ‘surgery’ at the Ranthambhore National Park in February this year (See *TigerLink*, March, 2011).

“We will wait for the desired weather conditions as tiger relocation should not be done in the rainy season,” said the officer. He added that the move is part of the strategy to relocate tigers to Sariska, in Alwar, due to the ‘growing numbers’ of the big cats in Ranthambhore.

The Ranthambhore administration has refused to part with the two cubs and send them to Sariska, according to a report in *The Hindu*, on July 31st.

Source: IANS, July 28, 2011

Comment: Before yet another relocation exercise, there needs to be a reassessment of Sariska, checking whether the conditions that were to be fulfilled prior to the relocation have been complied with, or not—as is the case. Especially since ST1, the first tiger to be translocated to the reserve was poisoned.

Also, the recent Management Effectiveness Evaluation has found that anthropogenic pressure is severe and grazing within the reserve is widespread. There are a large number of settlements in the core, and the roads that cut through combined with religious tourism are compounding the problem.

Are their ‘growing numbers’ or ‘too many tigers’ in Ranthambhore, as the state repeatedly says? The tiger reserve is 1,394 sq kms. But, the bulk of the

tigers are confined to the ~400 sq km National Park region. The rest of the reserve has very low tiger density—way below carrying capacity. So, why isn’t the focus on improving Keladevi and Sawai Mansingh sanctuaries that form the rest of the reserve, so tigers can colonise those parts?

Dharamendra Khandal of Tiger Watch writes: “Instead of shuffling tigers like a pack of cards, we should try to maintain natural corridors for tigers walking from Ranthambhore to Keladevi to Kuno.” Research by Tiger Watch’s Ovee Thorat has shown that an inviolate area the size of Ranthambhore NP (392 sq kms) can be secured in the Keladevi Wildlife Sanctuary, effectively doubling the area available for the reserve’s core tiger population. “These issues are far more important compared to the relocation of these two cubs and need to be addressed first”, added Khandal.

Satellite monitoring of Sariska tigers

If a plan prepared by the Rajasthan forest department for satellite monitoring of tigers finds acceptance, radio collars for the big cats could be a thing of the past. The department has prepared a project for satellite monitoring of tigers with the help of camera traps to be installed in reserves.

This will rule out the necessity of tying cumbersome radio collars around the necks of the tigers. The Rs. 4.62 crore project, initially meant for the Sariska Tiger Reserve, has been sent to the MoEF for sanction.

Wildlife experts have sometimes raised objections to the use of radio collars on the grounds that the devices are intrusive.

Source: “Radio collars may go off tigers’ necks”, Rashpal Singh, *Hindustan Times*, Jaipur, June 1, 2011; “Radio collars a mating impediment for tiger?”, Rachna Singh, *TNN*, Jaipur, May 30, 2011; IANS, Jaipur, July 14, 2011

Biosphere Reserve mooted around RTR

The 250 sq km Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary, to the south of the Ranthambhore National Park and part of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (RTR), has shown encouraging signs of tiger breeding after many years. Tigress T-8 was sighted with two cubs at Chiri Kho along Sawai Madhopur-Bundi Road. The tigress has recently taken up residence in the sanctuary, which, for the past two-three years, was not occupied by tigers. “This has come as very encouraging news”, RN Mehrotra, PCCF, informed. He added that forest villages were being shifted out of Sawai Man Singh Sanctuary.

“The birth of cubs in the new area is also indicative that the degraded forests hold good potential. The Ranthambhore tigers have reached the doorstep of Lakheri forests. In a year or two we will be regenerating Bundi forests as well,” a confident Mehrotra affirmed. “As for the Rajiv Gandhi Biosphere Reserve, it will encompass an area of 2,000-2,500 sq km from Karauli to Jhalawar,” he added.

Source: “Sighted: A new home for tigers”, Sunny Sebastian, *The Hindu*, Jaipur, April 26, 2011

Comment: *Its heartening that tigers have finally begun to breed in the Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary—but Rajasthan is engaging in doublespeak even as it moots for a biosphere reserve. It allowed for the construction of a canal that destroys the connectivity of the national park to the sanctuary.*

Ban on entry of private vehicles in Sariska

The Rajasthan Forest Department is actively pursuing a proposal to completely ban the entry of private vehicles into Sariska Tiger Reserve on the lines of Ranthambhore National Park. As a first step it has banned the entry of private vehicles for five days in a week. On Tuesdays and Saturdays visitors are allowed to take their vehicles inside to visit the Pandupol temple, situated in the middle of the reserve. To provide an alternate mode of entry to the visitors, the department has deployed 25 vehicles at the main entrance of the reserve.

Official sources said that the department had sent a proposal to the state government to get a few battery-operated buses so that the large number of pilgrims could be ferried to the temple on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Once these buses are made available, entry of private vehicles in the reserve would be completely banned.

Source: “Ban on entry of private vehicles in Sariska Tiger Reserve”, *The Pioneer*, Jaipur, April 28, 2011

Proposed cess for hoteliers around PAs

The Rajasthan government has begun consultations with operators of private hotels around the Ranthambhore National Park (NP) and the Sariska Tiger Reserve in order to finalise the quantum of cess to be imposed by the end of the year.

The Tiger Task Force headed by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh had suggested a flat 30 per cent cess on private hotels, which fall within five km of protected areas (PAs). But later, owing to opposition, it allowed state governments to decide the quantum of cess as per the local conditions. The guidelines issued by the MoEF to develop eco-tourism direct that the funds generated from the proposed cess would be used for upkeep of these PAs.

Source: Lokpal Sethi, ‘Hotels around tiger reserves to cough up cess’, *The Pioneer*, June 16, 2011; *Protected Area Update #92*

TAMIL NADU

Mudumalai villagers petition HC for relocation

The Mountadan Chetties, a community of agrarian forest dwellers living inside the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, have been demanding the state forest department to resettle them outside the reserve since several years—though it seems ineffectually—since they are still to be relocated.

Cut off from mainstream life, with little, if any basic facilities like healthcare, education, transport to the nearest market, etc and fed up with deer, wild boars and elephants raiding their crops, the community, predominant across the 30 existing villages inside the tiger reserve, had approached the Madras High Court in 2005 asking for it to order the state forest department to resettle them outside of the reserve. The court ruled in their favor in 2007 saying that the government is duty bound to resettle them.

The forest department has just sent a report on a resettlement plan under Project Tiger to the Centre. “The people are waiting to move out and we are working as fast as we can,” says Rajiv K Srivastava, Field Director, Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

Source: Shalini Umachandran, *TNN*, July 11, 2011

Tigers in Kovai, pics reveal

After a gap of several years, Coimbatore division forest officials have confirmed the presence of tigers in the region. Within a period of 15 days, an adult tiger was captured twice by a camera trap set by officials at Sirumugai near Mettupalayam. While volunteers who participated in the national tiger estimate had spotted seven tiger pugmarks at Karamadai, Sirumugai and Mettupalayam, official confirmation on the presence of the tiger was made only after it was captured on camera twice at the same spot in Karamadai.

“It is a significant development and will usher a change in our policy towards conservation of the big cat in this region,” said DFO V Thirunavukarasu. “Since pugmarks were identified in the same spot several times over two consecutive years, we decided to capture the tiger on camera to confirm that the animal inhabits the territory and is not transient,” he added. “The last time we confirmed the presence of a tiger here was when we found the carcass that was poisoned in 2008,” he said.

Source: “Tigers on prowl again in Kovai, pics reveal”, *Deccan Chronicle*, Coimbatore, May 3, 2011

WCCB border unit at Ramanathapuram

In an effort to curb smuggling of endangered species through the seas between India and Sri Lanka, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has proposed to set up a border unit in Ramanathapuram.

The border unit would specifically focus on intelligence gathering and crime detection related to smuggling of marine and other animal species protected under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. It will further strengthen the ongoing efforts for control of poaching and illegal trade. The unit will consist of experts from multiple disciplines.

Source: 'Wildlife Crime Control Bureau to set up border unit at Ramanathapuram', *The Hindu*, June 16, 2011; *Protected Area Update* #92

UTTARAKHAND

Night safari banned in Ramnagar FD

'Night safaris' in Ramnagar Forest Division have been a major tourist attraction, and every night—any time of the year—one could see anything between 50 to 100 jeeps careening inside this part of the Corbett landscape. Given that it's a free for all—with little control, there have been reports—unconfirmed, or rather hushed up—of 'game' hunting, and wildlife being killed in accidents.

Fortunately—and finally—night safaris has been banned in the Ramnagar forest division keeping in view the disturbance caused by spotlights and the noise of increasing vehicular movement to wildlife.

Though the road connecting Kosi barrage and Patkot will be open for the general public, tour operators won't be allowed to conduct night safaris. The concerned division has strictly decided to ban such commercial activity from 7 pm to 5 am in this highly-sensitive wildlife zone.

This is especially welcome given that the 2010 all India estimates put the density of tigers to be 14/100 sq km in the Ramnagar Forest Division—which is considerably higher than many tiger reserves, and is ground enough to have the division included as part of CTR.

A *TigerLink* Report

Another gate for Corbett tourists

The Uttarakhand government has decided to open a new entry gate for tourists to the Corbett Tiger Reserve at Kotdwar. An announcement in this regard was made by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prakash Pant during question hour on 28th March. This step is being taken to address a long-standing demand of the people of

Garhwal district who have been wanting a share of the economic benefits of tourism that has so far been enjoyed mostly by the people of Nainital district.

At a cost of Rs 1.40 crore the construction of a reception centre, repair of roads, modernisation of Lansdowne forest division, construction of a safety wall, beautification work and other facilities would be developed at Kotdwar as part of integrated tourism development plan for the Garhwal district. The gate is expected to be thrown open on 15th November when the park reopens after the monsoon.

Note: *This is expected to put yet more pressure on the park. It is learnt that infrastructure and allied facilities are being developed with the help of Asian Development Bank. It is reported that a multi-crore tourism project is coming up near Sindhikhal. Many resorts have already purchased land around the area, and conservationists fear a repeat of the Dhikuli-like situation where tourism infrastructure has blocked the Kosi river corridor. According to information from local forest sources there has been bulk purchases by rich and influential outsiders in Kala Khand, Jamund, Jharungu where good forests stand and are used by tigers. These serve as buffer for the reserve.*

Politics has played its part in this move. The current gateway to the park is Ramnagar, which falls in Nainital district (Pauri). Garhwal has long demanded that there should be an entry point from Garhwal since larger part of the Corbett falls in this region. Corbett is being rapidly islanded with roads, expanding towns, tourism infrastructures.

Source: "Kotdwar to get new entry gate", *The Pioneer*, Dehradun, March 29, 2011

Chilla-Motichur: Khandgaon on the move

Thirty-one families of the Khandgaon III village were recently handed over possession certificates of alternate land in Lalpani Compartment II (PF Rishikesh range) to facilitate their voluntary relocation from the Chilla-Motichur Corridor.

Addressing the villagers on the occasion, Rajaji National Park field director SS Rasaily expressed hope that the families shifted out of the national park will not have to undergo any problems in the process and that the department would be ready to help and facilitate in any manner possible. He informed that the authorities have submitted a proposal to the Union Government costing Rs 6 crore for facilitating electricity connection, water supply, roads and other facilities in the Lalpani area where families from Khandgaon are being rehabilitated. The people of Khandgaon experienced

considerable difficulties in the National Park as they bore the brunt of man-animal conflict. Regional MLA and parliamentary secretary Premchand Agrawal, State Youth Congress head Rajpal Kharola, local public representatives and families of Khandgaon were among those present on the occasion.

The Chilla-Motichur corridor forms the first critical link in the Terai landscape and is the only connect between western and eastern Rajaji. This, however, is all but eroded by the developmental onslaught that began in the late '60s, with the establishment of the Raiwala ammunition dump followed by rehabilitation of evacuees from Tehri dam in the Khandgaon settlements. Besides, a 13-km-long Chilla power channel cuts through the park, as does a railway line and a national highway, both heavily trafficked since this connects Delhi to the state capital Dehradun. There is an antibiotic factory, besides an array of ashrams encroaching in the National Park, thanks to the proximity of the holy cities of Hardwar and Rishikesh that all but jut into the park.

The removal of Khandgaon will be the first—and a very important—step toward restoring this vital connectivity. The eastern side of the park has a population of about eight tigers, including breeding females. Chilla in Eastern Rajaji has gradually been made free of human habitat, and combined with the connectivity to Corbett Tiger Reserve, has ensured a remarkable recovery of tigers. On the Western side however, there are only two tigresses. Together with Kalesar, this side has over 1,200 sq km of tiger and elephant habitat. Restoring connectivity will restore this habitat to tigers.

Source: *PA Update #91*; 'Villagers given land for relocation from wildlife corridor', www.wildlifetrustofindia.org, May 4, 2011

UTTAR PRADESH

Dudhwa gets official website

The official website of the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, www.dudhwatigerreserve.com, was launched on 10th June by the Minister of Forest, Uttar Pradesh, Shri Fateh Bahadur.

The visually attractive, highly informative and easy to navigate website provides visitors with a host of information on the reserve, its flora and fauna and guidance for visiting tourists.

Three elephants electrocuted in Dudhwa

Three wild elephants were electrocuted after they toppled a high-tension electricity line in Dudhwa National Park. According to officials, they were part of a herd of

15 to 20 elephants. The elephants uprooted a utility pole and three of them got trapped under the live cable while the others fled.

Source: 'Elephants killed by electrocution', www.news.scotsman.com, July 09, 2011, 'Elephants electrocuted in northern India', www.couriermail.com.au, July 10, 2011; Protected Area Update #92

WEST BENGAL

Captured tigresses released in Sundarbans

Throwing a tough challenge to the forest department, two tigresses ventured into villages in the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve within a span of 24 hours. The two big cats killed livestock and it was only after a 72 hour ordeal by the department and local communities that they could be captured and released back in the reserve on 27th June.

In the first case, a tigress, around six-year-old entered the Embari village in the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR) area on the night of 24th June. Even as the forest department was preparing to capture her, another tigress aged about three, entered the Sonaga village opposite Sudhanyakali forest area under Bidya Range of STR. About 18 months ago, a woman from the same village had been mauled here by a tiger.

According to Anjan Guha, Assistant Director, Sundarbans, who conducted the rescue operations, "Our team first cordoned off the animal from the villagers using nylon nets." Both the tigresses after being examined were released in Chamta-6 and Netidhopani within the core areas of the reserve. The local community had proactively supported the rescue operation, he said.

Of the two villages where the tiger had entered last week, Sonaga had nylon net fencing, separating it from the forest. Yet, the tigress managed to enter. According to PCCF Atanu Raha, "The nylon net is more of a psychological deterrent rather than a physical one". The presence of creeks makes it easier for the big cats to swim across, thereby crossing the nets and entering the villages bordering the mangrove forests.

Conservationist Joydip Kundu, who is also the General Secretary of Society for Heritage and Ecological Researches, felt, "Nets have significantly reduced the frequency of the tigers entering the villages. It is important to conduct studies on the behavioural pattern of the tigers—what prompts them to come out of the forest," says Kundu.

Source: "Captured tigress released in Sunderbans", Moushumi Basu, *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, 27, June 2011

Field Director defies CWW, captures tiger

The Sunderbans Tiger Reserve (STR) management has trapped and captured a tiger from deep inside the core without permission and in spite of warnings from top officials that it was illegal. STR's explanation is that the tiger had "turned aggressive" and "showed a tendency to stray". They captured the tiger in Mollakhali-Kumirmari on July 1. State CWW SB Mondal said: "STR was denied permission. They still went ahead in spite of being asked not to capture the tiger. I have sought a detailed report from the field director of Sundarban Tiger Reserve. Let me go through the report to see how he is justifying the act. Then we can ascertain how serious the matter is. We will inquire into it.

On July 4th, the forest department initiated an inquiry into the incident.

Senior officers of the forest department were unanimous in their opinion that capturing a tiger from deep within the core critical habitat for no discernible reason and releasing it to a far-off place was nothing short of a "grave offence", particularly during the mating season.

Former Director, Project Tiger and Ranthambhore Foundation, Director PK Sen, questioned the science behind evicting a tiger from its home and releasing it elsewhere. "Has there been any systematic study of ecology of the place where you are releasing the tiger? Have you had any study on the prey base of the place before releasing the tiger there? The answer is *no*. Sen added that the CWW is the statutory head of the Wildlife Wing and so, defying him is an offence under the Wildlife Protection Act.

"It is like arresting a man on suspicion that he could be a potential thief. If so, the forest department can capture all 30-35 tigers and prevent straying," said Mrinal Chatterjee of Indian Climbers and Nature Lovers.

Source: "Rights violated: Inquiry into mating season capture", *TNN*, Kolkata, July 5, 2011

Comment: *There is little doubt that the capture of 'straying' tigers—and their subsequent release of tigers has played a significant role in reducing conflict deaths—particularly the killing of tigers. Till a few years back, tigers venturing into villages were killed by frightened and enraged villagers. "The last gruesome incident of a straying tiger being killed was in 2001 when a tiger was hacked to pieces and thrown into the river at Pakhirala Island." During the last 10 years, not a single tiger entering the villages has been killed... in fact, more than 40 of them could be rescued (trapped/tranquillised) with the help of villagers", say officials. Capturing tigers,*

coupled with strengthening relations with the local people helped achieve a reprieve, to the point that rather than kill the tiger, villagers would inform the forest department.

But there seems to be case for 'overkill'. I will repeat a note published in an earlier issue of TigerLink –extracted from an article written in Bengal Post by Jay Mazoomdaar "between 1994 and 2002, tigers entered villages this side of the border (India) just 25 times, at an annual average of about three cases. But then, we panicked and started capturing any tiger spotted in and around habitations to dump them back where we thought they belonged or packed them to zoos. So the annual average of "tiger-straying" cases increased to seven in the next three years. The number of human casualties came down initially but as we continued to capture and shuffle the tigers around, the conflict only worsened. Removing an animal from its territory only allows the young of the species to fill in. During the capture, the animals confront menacing crowds and are often chased around. The traumatised animals are released in unfamiliar territory far away from the capture site. Now imagine stressed wild animals trying to home back, moving long distances through densely populated areas. Could it be possible that the frequently displaced tigers of Sundarbans are getting increasingly disturbed? We do not yet know."

Why capture tigers from deep within the core area remains a mystery, only the reserve management can answer.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS**India & Nepal discuss conservation**

A two-day day International Tiger Conference in Rupadiyah on March 31-April 1 attended by 13 Tiger Range Countries (TRCs), focused on the implementation of the Global Tiger Recovery Plan (GTRP). The workshop was a follow-up of the Tiger Summit attended by heads of states of TRCs in St Petersburg, Russia last year. According to the organisers, Global Tiger Initiative and Global Tiger Forum (GTF), the meeting of the GTF to be held on 30th March will choose new presidency among the TRCs. Nepal held this position for two years. Sources said that India has shown "keen interest" on taking the GTF presidency.

The need to strengthening conservation efforts between India and Nepal was reiterated at the two, especially as tiger population along the border has shown an upward trend.

In its country profile, Nepal presented capacity-building of conservation workers and the rise in poaching and illegal trade as the main agenda for discussions. Nepal also emphasised the lack of infrastructure, including proper roads in conservation areas, which it argued has been a major obstacle in tackling the poaching.

Bhutan, Thailand talk conservation

A delegation led by Sunan Arunopparat, Director General from the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand, met with the Karma Dukpa, Director of the Department of Forest and Park Services (DoFPS), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan, to study and discuss areas of collaboration in wildlife conservation and park management. The meeting was chaired by the Hon'ble Minister Lyonpo Dr Pema Gyamtsho.

Hon'ble Lyonpo welcomed the delegation and expressed his happiness for the successful cooperation between the two countries. Lyonpo expressed his keen interest to see the collaboration grow through exchange of experts and knowledge sharing. Sunan said such meetings between the two partners is a crucial step towards future collaboration in wildlife conservation and protected area management since both Bhutan and Thailand are committed to save the tiger. He expressed his wish to bring the two countries together to work closely on the conservation issues.

Bhutan has been adopting technologies like alarm fencing and has been receiving training support from Thailand. Further, in future, Bhutan hopes to learn from Thailand in controlling trade in wildlife, dealing with wildlife health issues, wildlife information management, smart patrolling, community based human wildlife conflict management, etc.

Sources: "Number of tigers along Indo-Nepal border rising", Bipin Chand Agarwal, *TNN*, March 31, 2011, Bahraich; Singye Wangmo, ICS, *DoFPS, Royal Government of Bhutan*, July 18, 2011, Thimpu

BANGLADESH

Wildlife crime control unit coming up

Bangladesh has announced the setting up of a 300 member anti-poaching police force—the Wildlife Crime Control Unit, in July.

The \$36 million World Bank funded project is in response to the alarming rise in wildlife poaching and smuggling in the country. Most of the unit will be stationed in the Sundarbans and will be equipped with modern weapons and 38 patrol boats. Part of the funds will be utilised to set up wildlife contraband detection

units at airports, ports and border check-posts.

Source: "Bangladesh creates anti-poaching police force", *AFP*, June 7, 2011, Dhaka

"Stop legalising deer farming": Petition

A petition has been launched by Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) calling for the Bangladesh government to stop commercial deer farming. The Ministry of Environment & Forest in Bangladesh has passed a policy to allow the commercial farming of spotted deer, which provides a legal market for deer products such as meat, skin and antlers. This market could encourage poaching of more deer that may be sold by poachers as 'legal'. Illegal poaching is an acute problem here. With the implementation of this new policy, prey base could deplete further, leading to more conflict.

There is little law enforcement due to lack of manpower and funds. In a survey by the WTB/ZSL it was found that more than 90 per cent of people surveyed are aware that deer poaching is illegal but this does not stop them because they have no fear of the law.

Source: *21st Century Tiger*, May 19, 2011

BHUTAN

Bhutan for agency on the lines of WCCB

A workshop to train 33 officials from the DoFPS, Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Bhutan Police, Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority, National Biodiversity Centre, College of Natural Resources and Department of Revenue and Customs in combating illegal trade in wildlife and ensure effective enforcement of relevant national and international regulations was held from 11th-14th July at Paro. Karma Dukpa, Director, DoFPS said that wildlife crime is not a serious threat currently but a country with rich biodiversity such as Bhutan has to ensure that its wildlife is well-protected from poaching and illegal wildlife trade which could be a key threat in the future, going by the booming black market.

The workshop resulted in plans to form a dedicated fully functional inter-agency group in Bhutan on the lines of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau of India. Individual agency specific training would also be organised for the staff of various agencies including Customs, BAFRA and Police. Recommendations from the training workshop, among other things, included the establishment of a Wildlife Crime Control Point (WCCP) with a representative from the Wildlife Conservation Division to be appointed as a focal person and the existing CITES scientific authority in Bhutan should also

be broadened to include a representative from the National Biodiversity Center.

Source: "Prevention of illegal wildlife trading concludes", Sangay Wangchuk, *Bhutan Today*, July 21, 2011, Thimpu

International workshop of TRCs

A workshop "Smart Green Infrastructure in Tiger Conservation Landscapes—Practitioner's Workshop" was held at Thimpu, Bhutan on 30th-31st May. It was organised jointly by the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), Ministry of Agriculture & Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan in collaboration with the Global Tiger Initiative (GTI). It was attended by about 80 experts from Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Thailand, France and the United States.

The workshop came up with the "Thimpu Recommendations" that cover a wide array of issues concerning tiger conservation including recommendations at the policy level that advise the development of Tiger Conservation Landscape (TCL) Master Plans encompassing core habitats, buffers and tiger corridors and the wider production landscape to ensure the inviolability of core habitats and compatible land use in the remaining landscape. TCL level recommendations include the adoption of the principle that core tiger range areas are inviolate and that engineering solutions for biodiversity must be incorporated in the rest of the landscape; the preparation of annual 'State of TCL' reports based on a transparent monitoring framework using the best available science to report on changes in tiger habitat; sharing of responsibilities for ensuring Smart Green Infrastructure (SGI) across public agencies, the private sector and civil society; mainstreaming of TCL management in land use planning and, finally, the regulation of uncontrolled expansion of urban areas to contain their ecological footprint. On the development of hydropower, the recommendations ask for a development strategy that takes into account sensitive environment areas including core tiger breeding zones and advises the definition and delineation of No-Go areas. Similarly, guidelines on road construction and sustainable tourism in TCLs have been recommended.

Source: Sonam Choden, *DoFPS, Royal Government of Bhutan*, July 21, 2011

CHINA

China mocks St Petersburg commitments

The Environment Investigation Agency has written to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao warning him that significant

failings within a key state department in China are making a mockery of the country's pledge to "vigorously combat poaching, trade and smuggling of tiger parts" at the Global Tiger Forum held at St Petersburg in 2010.

At a series of meetings held at New Delhi, following the St Petersburg summit, widely viewed as the first opportunity to monitor actual progress behind the promises, a senior member of China's State Forestry Administration (SFA) revealed staggering levels of complacency, raising doubts about the country's level of commitment. Among these revelations was the fact that China relies heavily on NGOs for information to monitor illegal trade in tiger parts instead of proactively generating intelligence by itself. The delegate responsible for law enforcement claimed to be unaware of any seizures, arrests or prosecutions from the formal inspection of tiger farms and markets held between August and December 2010, further implying poor grasp over intelligence on the trade. Most shockingly, China seems to have gone ahead with a 2007 scheme to register, label and sell skins of 'legal origin' despite earlier commitments not to open domestic trade in tiger parts.

In her letter to Wen Jiabao, Debbie Banks, EIA Head of Tiger Campaign, warns the Prime Minister that a lack of urgency and conflicting policies are gravely undermining China's efforts and urges him to hand responsibility for investigating tiger and other wildlife trade to a dedicated full-time unit of police investigators, and to work directly with the SFA to improve its response and engagement in enforcing wildlife crime and the illegal tiger trade in all regions of China.

She expresses particular concern that pushing ahead with the 2007 skin registration scheme implies that tiger and leopard skins from 'legal origins', including those from captive-bred tigers, can be registered, labelled and sold—effectively reopening the trade in tiger products at a time when the rest of the world is trying to end it.

Source: EIA, May 19, 2011

INDONESIA

Sumatran tiger killed in snare

Caught in a snare, an endangered Sumatran tiger (*Panthera tigris sumatrae*) died a slow, agonising death days after it was caught in a jaw trap. Forest officers eventually reached the ensnared tiger, but the tiger succumbed hours thereafter. As reported by Greenpeace—which photographed and filmed the rescue attempt—the tiger was trapped at the edge of an acacia plantation and remaining forest area being logged by Asia Pulp and Paper (APP) in Riau Province. The

destruction of the tigers' habitat—converting it from tropical forest to toilet paper—is forcing tigers to come into closer contact with people and creating such tragic conflict situations. Tigers may kill livestock, or very occasionally people, and local retribution is usually swift.

The tiger that was killed in the trap was one of the last 400 or so remaining Sumatran tigers. Greenpeace gathered evidence of clear cutting the forest 13 kilometers from the tiger's last stand. Deforestation has many knock-off effects, one of which is that it allows people to access forest areas that were largely off-limits before. Trapping, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict tend to occur at the edges of deforested areas. Over the last 70 years Indonesia has lost the Balinese and the Javan tiger. The Sumatran tiger is the last to survive, although probably only a few hundred remain," Tom Maddox, country coordinator for Indonesia with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), said.

APP responded quickly, saying that it had no part in the tiger's death, which is says was caught by a snare set by 'local villagers' probably meant for other animals. APP further contends in its statement that conflict between people and tigers is not due to their actions, adding that it spends 'millions' on conservation efforts for the tiger and is 'committed to this endangered species'. The company has invested in a tiger conservation initiative that calls for moving tigers from APP concessions to other rainforest areas. However since tigers are territorial simply dropping individuals from one area into another tiger's territory has raised questions among tiger experts. Scientists and conservationists note that APP still intends to destroy far more forest than it claims to help protect. Emphasis, they argue, must be on protecting the tigers' remaining habitats.

Sumatran tigers are listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List; the subspecies, restricted to the Indonesian island, is in decline due to large-scale habitat loss and poaching. "This sad and startling footage shows the toll that rainforest destruction has on wildlife," says Bustar Maitar, of Greenpeace South East Asia.

Writes Ashish Fernandes of Greenpeace India, "In Indonesia, palm oil cultivation and the pulp and paper industries are the biggest threat to the Sumatran tiger. A large percentage of this palm oil is destined for Indian markets, imported by companies such as Adani-Wilmar, Ruchi Soya, Cargill and others. From here it makes its way into biscuits, chocolates and cosmetics manufactured by household names such as ITC, Britannia, Godrej and others.

Source: http://news.mongabay.com/2011/0725-app_dead_tiger_video.html, <http://www.greenpeace.org/india/en/Blog/vanishing-tigers/blog/35873/>; "Tiger

dies fleeing forest logged for Aussie toilet roll", Henry Budd, *The Daily Telegraph*, July 25, 2011

For the video go to: http://news.mongabay.com/2011/0725-app_dead_tiger_video.html

Forests facing the axe shelter breeding tigers

Camera traps set up by WWF recorded an astounding 12 tigers in just two months in the central Sumatran landscape of Bukit Tigapuluh. Two of these were of tigresses with cubs.

The forest where the tigers were recorded is under imminent threat of being cleared by the pulp and paper industry, despite being designated a "Global Priority Tiger Conservation Landscape". It is one of six landscapes that the Government of Indonesia pledged to protect at last November's tiger summit in St Petersburg. The Bukit Tigapuluh, or "Thirty Hills", is located in Riau and Jambi provinces in Central Sumatra.

WWF's analysis found that the tigers are concentrated in locations with good forest cover, which includes natural forest areas inside a land concession belonging to a subsidiary of Barito Timber Pacific. As soon as pending permits are granted by the government, the company could clear the forest to supply wood to Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) of Sinar Mas Group. Prominent conservation groups including WWF have urged the two companies and the government of Indonesia to protect these forests.

Between 2004 and 2010, Bukit Tigapuluh lost 205,460 hectares of forest to the pulp and paper and palm oil industries.

Source: "Camera captures tiger cubs in forest under imminent threat of clearing", WWF, May 9, 2011, Pekanbaru; "Tiger video triggers WWF call to action", *The Daily Telegraph*, AAP, May 9, 2011

Roads through Kerinci Seblat opposed

The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC) has drafted a resolution urging the Indonesian government to cancel plans to build four 40-foot wide roads through the country's oldest national park, Kerinci Seblat National Park. According to the ATBC, the world's largest professional society devoted to studying and conserving tropical forests, the road-building would imperil the parks' numerous species—many of which are already threatened with extinction—including Sumatra's most significant population of tigers.

"Scientific studies have demonstrated that increased road access to isolated areas such as Kerinci Seblat National Park increases forest loss and degradation through illegal logging and small-holder encroachment

and subsequent human-wildlife conflicts,” explains the resolution, which notes that the road-building would actually be illegal under Indonesian law.

Located in west-central Sumatra, the park’s famed biodiversity—surveys have found over 85 mammals and 370 birds species in the park alone—has led to its recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, an ASEAN Heritage Site and an Important Bird Area. The 1.4 million hectare park is the largest in Sumatra.

The major proposed development project, involving construction of three ‘disaster-evacuation roads’ and one economic road, would penetrate into core zones of the National Park and dramatically increase human access to these isolated rainforest areas, said ATBC sources. The roads will undercut Indonesia’s commitment at the Global Tiger Recovery Program. The ATBC urges Indonesia to “immediately reject the proposed road network in the heart of Kerinci Seblat National Park”. In addition it says the government should work with local and international scientists to “to identify environmentally sound alternatives for road infrastructure that meet local development aspirations without irreparably damaging the integrity of Kerinci Seblat National Park.”

Source: “Scientists urge Indonesia to stop road construction in tiger-rich national park”, Jeremy Hance, *Mongabay*, June 26, 2011

NEPAL

Nepal’s first translocated tiger poached

The first ever tiger to be translocated in Nepal (Refer “*Nepal sees its first wild tiger translocation*”, *TigerLink*, Revived Vol. 8, March 2011) was found poached in the Bardia National Park on June 3rd.

The tiger had been rescued after it was found injured and straying into a tourist resort in the Chitwan National Park and had been translocated to Bardia where it was released in the wild with a GPS enabled radio collar. It was being regularly tracked by scientists and was last detected on 9th May. The adult male tiger, affectionately named Namo Buddha, was killed by poachers after it wandered close to human habitation and was poisoned.

Four suspects have been arrested.

Source: “Rare wild tiger killed in Nepal”, *AFP*, June 3, 2011, Kathmandu

Nepal tigers to be DNA profiled

To pinpoint the exact population of wild tigers and to combat poaching, Nepal will start “fingerprinting” its big cats from this post-monsoon season. The two-year

Nepal Tiger Genome Project, funded by the US Agency for International Development, will be conducted by Kathmandu-based Center for Molecular Dynamics Nepal (CMDN) in collaboration with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Virginia Tech University and the University of Idaho.

According to Dibesh Karmacharya, CMDN International Director as well as the project’s principal investigator, from September-October, teams will fan out to the four national parks in Parsa, Bardiya, Chitwan and Kailali districts, the habitats of the bulk of Nepal’s big cats, and other areas where there is a transient tiger population, to collect tiger scats. These will then be analysed at CMDN’s laboratory to create a DNA database of Nepal’s tiger population.

As per the 2010 census, there were 155 tigers in Nepal.

Source: “Nepal to ‘fingerprint’ tigers for conservation”, *TNN*, July 1, 2011, Kathmandu

RUSSIA

Lazovsky tigers increasing?

Monitoring in Lazovsky Zapovednik National Park by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) has highlighted a rise in tiger numbers for the first time in two years. It was announced in May 2011 that 12 tigers (four more than last year’s count) were recorded and that four litters have been born this spring. The protection and monitoring is a collaborative effort of the wildlife managers’ teams of Hunting Management Department, public environmental investigation teams, forest managers, police officers, NGOs like ZSL, 21st Century Tiger, Phoenix Fund and Dreamworld funding.

Source: *21st Century Tiger*, July 8, 2011

Chinese smuggler arrested with tiger bones

Customs officers from Russia’s Far Eastern Primorye Territory have arrested a Chinese national who attempted to smuggle the bones of an endangered Amur tiger to China, a customs spokeswoman said.

Officers discovered a package containing bones of the endangered animal in a car. The owner of the car told officers that he had been asked to bring the bones from Russia to produce a tincture to treat arthritis.

Source: “Russian customs officers arrest tiger bone smuggler”, *RIA Novosti*, June 30, 2011, Vladivostok

Logging threatens key tiger habitat

The discovery of plans to log key Amur tiger habitat in

a proposed UNESCO World Heritage Site has led to a public outcry demanding the cancellation of the logging lease in Primorsky Province, in the Russian Far East, one of the last remaining strongholds of the Amur tiger.

WWF Russia and the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Primorsky Province are leading the call against JSC Les Export, a wood harvesting and export company that specialises in parquet flooring.

The protests followed Les Export's application for a timber lease in the Bikin Pine Nut Harvesting Zone in the Bikin River Basin, part of the largest intact tract of old-growth Korean pine-broadleaf forests in the world (407,300 hectares) and an extremely important habitat for Amur tigers. JSC Les Export had already drawn public ire after it gained approval for two forest leases in May 2011, also in crucial tiger habitat.

The two approved leases are in the Pozharsky Pine Nut Harvesting Zone, and the Sredneussuriskiy Provincial Wildlife Refuge, which make up the only ecological corridor connecting the Russian population of Amur tigers with a Chinese population across the border in China's Wandashan Mountains.

"We regard this as betrayal," said Yury Darman, Director of WWF Russia's Amur branch. "JSC Les Export previously agreed that it would not use timber from pine nut harvesting zones or protected areas. Furthermore, it is a betrayal of the native residents of Bikin – the Udegei and Nanai – whose lives depend completely on traditional use of the riches of this area," said Darman. In November 2010, the Bikin River Basin was proposed to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site on the initiative of the Russian Government. On 5th June, Krasniy Yar residents petitioned the provincial and federal governments not to permit leasing of the territory of the middle and upper reaches of the Bikin River for timber harvesting.

Amur tigers are highly threatened by poaching, human-tiger conflict and exploitation of the area's vast forests.

Source: *WWF Russia*, June 10, 2011, Primorsky

THAILAND

Tigers rediscovered!

Deep in the jungle, armed forest rangers trek through the palms on a mission to confirm some rare good news: the discovery of a wild tiger population in an area of Thap Lan national park previously written off by wildlife experts. Working with foreign conservationists, forest rangers have been gathering evidence from camera traps over the past two years that suggests this single national park in Thailand has a good tiger population.

Thap Lan is an oasis of biodiversity amid expanding human development with elephants, clouded leopards, spotted linsang, boar, deer and a diversity of birdlife and herpetofauna.

Following the insistence of locals about the presence of tigers and the discovery of tiger signs, camera traps were set up for a month. The memory cards inside have yielded a treasure trove of images of bears, leopards, itinerant monks, as well as tigers and – worryingly – armed poachers.

More than half the park has still to be checked, but rangers have already confirmed eight tigers. This is not yet enough to be classified as a viable population, but park managers are optimistic that the number may be higher. "I'm very happy as this is beyond expectations," said Thap Lan's superintendent, Taywin Meesap. "There are areas deeper inside where we haven't placed camera traps yet. Given the results so far, there could be 20 to 50 tigers here."

The conservation group that provided much of the training and equipment for the operation said the results showed a gap in understanding and the need to invest more in research and protection. Tim Redford of Freeland, a Bangkok-based group called for further studies across countries where other small populations may have been missed.

But the new hope in Thap Lan is mixed with old fears. Thailand is thought to be home to between 250 and 300 wild tigers, but they are vulnerable. The biggest threat is loss of habitat. Although nominally protected, Thailand's national parks are being encroached upon by human development, particularly monoculture plantations, roads and second homes for Bangkok's rich. Many locals also subsidise their incomes by poaching and illegally logging aloe and tropical hardwood. Park managers and police are worried that poachers and illegal traders would target the tigers once news gets out about their numbers in the area. Rangers mount night patrols and public education campaigns to halt these activities. Rangers are poorly paid, and the work is risky. A Thap Lan ranger was killed in a gun battle with poachers three-years-ago. In Cambodia, forest protectors have been murdered in hand grenade attacks. The stakes are high. According to conservationists and police, poachers are paid 7,000 to 15,000 baht – £150 to £300 – per kg for a tiger carcass. Middlemen then sell the animals on for about 10 times that amount, mostly to customers in China and Vietnam, where the animal's bones and penis are used in tonics and aphrodisiacs. Yet penalties for wildlife offences remain absurdly low, with fines ranging from 500 to 40,000 baht.

Despite this ecological wealth, wildlife crime has been a low priority for law enforcement authorities. But

there are signs that attitudes may be changing. Thai customs officials have made several high-profile arrests in the past two years, including that of a woman who attempted to smuggle a live baby tiger cub through Bangkok airport in a case full of stuffed animal toys. More impressive was an undercover operation by the Thai police this year that exposed a large tiger-trading syndicate. Its ringleader, a woman known as “J”, remains at large, partly because her husband is a police officer, but investigators said they were closing in. “I believe she may have been selling 100 tigers per year for 10 years,” said Colonel Kittipong Khawsamang, deputy head of the wildlife crime division as he leafed through police photographs of tiger carcasses kept on ice. “We know she is a big trader and have been collecting evidence, but we don’t yet have enough for a prosecution.”

Khawsamang said recent raids have shown Thailand has become a hub of the tiger trade, due to its location between other range nations in south-east Asia and China, the main market. The business is also supplied by Thailand’s many tiger farms, some of which claim to operate as zoos while covertly breeding animals for sale. The most notorious is the Sri Racha zoo near Pattaya, which police have raided on several occasions, confiscating hundreds of animals.

Police and conservationists believe “zoos” encourage poaching both as a source of breeding stock and by sustaining the market for tiger products.

Source: “Thailand jungles mask surprise rise in tiger numbers”, Jonathan Watts, *The Guardian*, May 17, 2011

Poacher photographs self on tiger, arrested

Two men suspected of killing tigers in Thailand have been arrested and the key evidence turned out to be cell phone images of them with their ‘trophy’! Police and wildlife officials have arrested two suspected poachers believed to be responsible for killing a tigress and her two cubs in March 2011. A phone with the images was seized after a gun battle between Thai park rangers and suspected poachers in a protected area, the Wildlife Conservation Society said in a statement.

A photo of Nai Sae Tao, a Hmong hill-tribe man, taken with a dead tiger, is part of evidence authorities plan to use to implicate him in the alleged killing of the tigers. He was arrested on 27th June. The other suspect, Hoang Van Hien, 42, was arrested at a resort in the same district the following day. The two are believed to be among five poachers who entered a forest area bordering Huai Kha Kaeng and Thung Yai Naresuan

wildlife sanctuaries to poach the tigers. “When confronted with ‘trophy’ images of themselves posing over a dead tiger, the suspects claimed the big cat was poached in Myanmar in 2003,” WCS said. “According to WCS Thailand staff, however, the tiger (identified by its unique stripe patterns) was a well-known male tiger that researchers had tracked with camera traps in Thailand for at least three years between 2008-2011.”

“The rangers also found other evidence of poaching, including animal body parts and insecticides that are sometimes used to poison tigers,” WCS stated. The society said it believes the men are part of “an organised crime ring that WCS and other partners have been tracking in this region for the past year.

The poaching gang is thought to have killed up to 10 tigers in the region. The cell phone also contained images of elephant tusks, suggesting the men had illegally hunted elephants as well. The animal seen in the suspect’s photo was apparently poisoned, the same method used to kill the three tigers in March. The two suspects allegedly confessed they had sold the carcasses for 300,000 Baht, but refused to identify the buyer.

Source: “Suspects arrested for killing three tigers”, *Bangkok Post*, 30, July 2011, “Tiger poachers caught on camera — their own”, www.msn.com

WILDLIFE CRIME

Fake tiger skin racket flourishes

A racket in fake tiger and leopard skins seems to be flourishing across the country. Several seizures in the recent past have found tricksters selling dyed cattle hide and dog skins to customers by making them look like big cat skins. Not just skins, camel teeth, expertly carved to look like tiger teeth, have also been seized. Investigators say that ‘fake skins’ is big business, while obviously nowhere as bad as the real thing, keeps the demand for tiger and leopards skins alive. Following are examples of some such seizures:

- Two people, Om Pal and Raju, both residents of Amar Colony, Delhi, were arrested with fake tiger skins by police at Ghaziabad, on 4th March.
- Five smugglers were held with five fake tiger skins at Panipat, Haryana on 20th July
- On 24th May, police arrested two men at Channapatana on the Bangalore-Mysore highway and seized 176 fake tiger skins, 2000 camel teeth disguised to look like tiger teeth and a passport. The arrested men, belonging to Tiger Colony in Hunsur,

appeared poor and impoverished, but turned out to be expert crooks who had tricked many and had traveled several times to Bangkok recently.

- Fake tiger skin seized in Dehradun on July 14th.

Source: “2 smugglers held with tiger skins”, SP Singh, *The Pioneer*, 6, March 2011, Ghaziabad; “Tiger by the tail, and a fake at that”, MT Shivakumar, *The Hindu*, 27, May 2011, Bangalore

Third time unlucky!

Dilipo, a woman belonging to the Bawaria community was convicted for the third time in connection with smuggling tiger parts by the court of RK Shukla, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Lakhimpur, Kheri, Uttar Pradesh on 6th April.

She was sentenced to five years and three months’ rigorous imprisonment. The sentencing was made for a case in 2007 in which she was arrested following the seizure of tiger meat, tiger bones and other wildlife articles from the Kishanpur Range of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. She also confessed to selling a tiger skin.

The advocates of Wildlife Trust of India, RK Srivastava and SK Rai assisted the prosecution.

Dilipo was first convicted in connection with a 21-year-old case in Pillibhit (proposed Tiger Reserve) in connection with smuggling tiger skin and bones for which she got a five-year conviction in 2009. The second conviction was in connection with a case in Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, also pertaining to illegal trade in tiger parts, in 2005. She was sentenced nine months’ imprisonment.

Dilipo used to work with her brother Birbal alias Totaram, who was convicted for three years in a tiger poaching case in the Terai (East) Division of Uttarakhand in 2004-5. They used to operate from Haldwani up to Katarnighat on the Nepal border. According to intelligence sources, sometimes poachers also have ‘territories’ where they carry out their deadly trade... much like the predators they prey on.

Source: WCCB, WTI

Sansar Chand’s brother convicted

The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate II, Alwar, has convicted Narayan, brother of notorious illegal wildlife trader Sansar Chand, to five years’ imprisonment on 5th May. The case was registered against him in 2005 and prosecuted by the Rajasthan Forest Department after the Sariska debacle.

In this case, Narayan has allegedly admitted to purchasing leopard skins and tiger skins brought from Rajasthan and selling them to Nepali buyers. He has

reportedly revealed the modus operandi of Sansar Chand and his associates in crime.

Sansar Chand has allegedly been running the illegal trade for over three decades with the help of 36 members of his family. His father and four uncles, who are originally from Alwar in Rajasthan, were also allegedly engaged in smuggling wildlife products. Chand was first arrested in September 1974 at the age of 16 after the police recovered 600 animal skins and body parts from his possession.

He and his partners in crime, at least five of them family members—including his wife, son, daughter, brothers, have been apprehended in as many as 57 cases spread over Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and even Karnataka. Over the years, Sansar Chand amassed 45 properties, some of them covering an entire lane in Delhi’s Sadar Bazar. A conservative estimate puts their value at Rs 40 crore.

Source: *Wildlife Protection Society of India*, May 5, 2011; Sansar Chand is India’s deadliest poacher. Here is how he has escaped legal traps for 40 years, Raman Kirpal, *Tehelka*, Vol 7, Issue 31, Dated August 07, 2010

Sariska poacher convicted

In a landmark case on 17th June, the Court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-II, Alwar, Rajasthan, convicted notorious wildlife poacher Johru and his associates Tayyeb, Ramzan, Noora and Jiwan Das in a case related to tiger poaching in Sariska Tiger Reserve that happened in 2005. They were convicted and got a total imprisonment of 31 years and fined Rs 50,000.

According to BS Nathawat, ACF, Sariska Tiger Reserve, the poaching took place in Routhkola beat of Akbarpur range in Sariska.

One of the leading poachers from Sariska, Johru had 14 wildlife cases pending against him in Sariska alone. Six of these concerned tiger poaching. Johru was involved in poaching directly—he killed the animals, and also traded in the skins, though usually both these are handled by separate set of people. So far he has been convicted twice in leopard poaching cases along with his accomplices and has been sentenced to subsequent jail terms of five years each for the two cases.

Source: Ashok Kumar, *Wildlife Trust of India*

Policeman caught hunting in TR

On 17th April, forest guards stumbled upon a revolver in a brown holster under a carpet of dry leaves in the Achanakmar Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh. The same day, Deputy Superintendent of Police Irfan Khan

claimed the revolver saying he had lost it during an anti-Maoist operation. This explanation appears lame since Achanakmar is free of Maoist activity, Khan doesn't head any counter-insurgency force but is the DSP (Traffic), Bilaspur.

A forest official said that the police officer was out hunting two nights ago. This claim was backed by several villagers and forest staff. On 13th April, at about 9pm, villagers and Range Officer Bhagat of Chaparwa, heard three gunshots. Bhagat rushed in the direction of the sound with his men and found a car parked with a man beside it. The man drove away despite the forest staff asking him to stop. He relayed the message to on wireless asking his staff to stop the car at a barricade. When the car was apprehended, the DSP stepped out and abused the forest staff. His car was checked and nothing was found. The next day, three men were found frantically searching the dense undergrowth by a temple priest. When the priest raised an alarm, the men ran away. Two days later the forest staff found the revolver close to the spot.

Chief Conservator, IN Singh said that he had formed a committee to investigate the matter.

The matter was taken up by the NTCA and in a letter dated May 2, 2011, the Joint Director, NTCA, SP Yadav has asked the CWW of Chattisgarh to "send the factual status" to the NTCA at the earliest.

Source: "Lost gun exposes hunter-policeman", Supriya Sharma, *TNN*, April 27, 2011; Inputs by *TigerLink*

Rhino poached in Valmiki

A rhino, believed to have entered Valmiki Tiger Reserve (in Valmiki Nagar range) in Bihar from Chitwan National Park of Nepal was discovered dead on 10th May. It had two bullet injuries and its horn had been removed. An autopsy confirmed this after bullets were recovered.

Shockingly, the body could not be detected for about 15 days. The fact was brought to the notice of senior officials only after villagers saw the body.

The incident clearly indicates the laxity of those responsible in charge of patrolling the area. Had they been vigilant, the rhino's body would not have remained unnoticed for 15 days," VTR director JP Gupta, told *The Telegraph* adding that, "responsibility will be fixed, and those in charge made accountable."

A field official blamed the shortage of staff as the key reason for such grave lapses. "Against the sanctioned strength of 77 forest guards, the reserve has only 42 guards for an 840sqkm area," he said, adding that around 60 tiger watchers hired on a contractual basis were not that efficient.

A forester and a forest guard were suspended later. The rhino had migrated from Chitwan National Park in Nepal, which is contiguous to Valmiki and was first spotted mid-March. This incident has raised concern about the of three other rhinos, who have also migrated from Chitwan and are now 'residents' of Madanpur. Park officials stressed that they will step up security in Madanpur range.

Reacting sharply to the poaching, the NTCA called for a meeting of concerned officials and wrote to the state government on the urgent need to beef up security in the reserve. NTCA pressed for the staff to be empowered to carry weapons to carry out their duties effectively and for patrolling *chowkis* to be made functional across the reserve—at present there isn't even one—and also to strengthen vigilance on the border. It urged the state government to fill up staff vacancies urgently.

Meanwhile in July, the management of the park has changed.

Source: A *TigerLink* Report, with inputs from Sanjeev Kumar Verma, 'Rhino death sparks security poser', *The Telegraph*, May 12, 2011

WCCB cautions against Myanmar border

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has expressed serious concern over Manipur's Chandel district bordering Myanmar becoming the most preferred transit point for smuggling of animal parts and forest products from India to Southeast Asia. The issue came up for discussion during a coordination meeting of the Centre and the state enforcement agencies convened by the bureau in Guwahati on 6th June for controlling poaching and illegal trade in wildlife in the Northeast. Regional Deputy Director, WCCB (Eastern Region), Chaturbhuja Behera said there has been a rise in smuggling of wildlife items from different parts of the country to Southeast Asian countries through the porous India-Myanmar border with Chandel district in Manipur being the transit point.

"The organised rackets are mostly using the Dimapur-Imphal-Moreh route on National Highway 39 for smuggling wildlife items such as bones, skulls and skins of tigers and leopards, rhino horns, pangolin scales, elephant tusks, deer antlers, red sanders, etc to Myanmar from where they are sent to various destinations such as China, Thailand and Japan" Behera said. Referring Chandel district as the most preferred transit point, he said Assam Rifles jawans have made several seizures of animal parts and wildlife products in the district in the past couple of years. Most of these seizures were made at Moreh, Sita Track, Bogyang and Khudengtabi, which border Myanmar.

Behera said that the Assam Rifles, Customs authorities and the Forest Department of Manipur have requested the Bureau to conduct sensitisation programmes for their field-level officers to make them better equipped to keep a check on wildlife crime. He added that the WCCB has created a database of 400-odd people involved in poaching and wildlife crimes.

Senior forest and police officials from the Northeast along with officials of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, SSB, Assam Rifles, Customs, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Postal Department and Railways, were present at the meeting, which was chaired by the Additional Director of the Bureau, Rina Mitra.

Source: “Moreh worry for wildlife bureau”, *The Telegraph*, Guwahati, June 6, 2011

Corbett: The death chronicles

The Corbett Tiger Reserve has seen a disturbingly large number of tiger deaths in the past two years—with twelve in 2011—one of them tragically, a tigress with five cubs in its womb. Given the high density of tigers in Corbett, high mortality is to be expected, what is worrying is—how did the tigers die? Most of the deaths have been attributed to fights or natural causes. Yet, there is no denying that in some cases, the deaths are suspicious—and the tigers could be victims of poaching for trade, or conflict.

One must not forget too, the four tiger deaths in quick succession in December-January 2009-10 in Dhikala and Sarapduli—at least two of which are suspected to be cases of poisoning.

Besides the urgent need for strict vigilance and strengthened protection, Corbett must be consolidated with adjoining forests i.e., Ramnagar Forest Division, Terai (West) Forest Division and Lansdowne Forest Division (especially Kolluchaur). The NTCA has strongly recommended that Lansdowne and Ramnagar Forest Divisions should be included in Corbett. To provide safe sinks for dispersing young tigers and to mitigate conflict that is of increasingly grave concern in the region.

- **January 25:** A tigress was found dead in the Kalagarh Range. She had a porcupine quill piercing her chest and puncturing her lungs. Five still born cubs are recovered from her body.
- **January 27:** Forest staff shoot ‘man eating’ tiger in Ramnagar Forest Division (see *TigerLink* March 2011 for details)
- **February 6:** Tiger found dead in Terai (West) Division, said to be natural death
- **February 19:** Tiger found dead in Jhirna Range, Corbett Tiger Reserve

- **March 5:** Tiger found dead in Kaladhungi Range, Ramnagar Forest Division
 - **April 1:** A tigress, about seven years of age, found dead in Kalagarh range. Legs fractured. Cause of death is suspected to be from territorial fight. .
 - **April 22:** A young tigress, about five-year-old, found dead in Kaladhungi range. Cause of death attributed to fight.
 - **May 3:** Tiger found dead at Sarpduli by patrolling staff. Reason of death thought be infighting.
 - **May 30:** Decomposed carcass of six year old tigress found in a canal in Kaladhungi range of Ramnagar Forest Division, adjoining Corbett National Park. Cause of death said to be natural.
 - **May 31/June 1:** Two days after a tigress was found dead in Ramnagar Forest Division, another tiger succumbed to snare injuries in the same division in Kota range. The postmortem confirmed that injuries on the neck were due to a snare, and the struggle, as the tiger tried to free itself. The snare, say officials, was not necessarily set for the tiger, but could have been set to trap a deer. But in the end, did that really matter?
 - **June 7:** Tiger found dead in Corbett National Park. Killed in “infighting”. The cause of death however is suspicious. Sources say that it is possible that the tiger was killed elsewhere, possibly in the adjoining Amargarh division in Uttar Pradesh—either due killed/poisoned as a fallout of conflict, or even due to an accident.
 - **July 28:** A female cub was run over and killed by a vehicle on the Ramnagar–Jhirna road near Dhela
- Sources:** “Tigress dies in Corbett National Park”, *The Hindu*, April 2, 2011, Dehradun; “Tigress found dead in Corbett”, *PTI*, 25, April 2011, Dehradun; “Tiger found dead at Corbett”, *The Asian Age*, May 4, 2011, Dehradun; “Tigress found dead near Jim Corbett”, *The Indian Express*, May 30, 2011, Dehradun; “One more tiger dies in Ramnagar”, *The Pioneer*, June 1, 2011, Dehradun; “Corbett death underlines park expansion need”, *The Pioneer*, June 8, 2011, New Delhi; www.tigernet.nic.in

Poachers run free as Kollu remains ignored

On April 3, a cheetal was shot dead, skinned, and some of its flesh was removed in the *chaur* or grassland of Kolluchaur, which is contiguous to the Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary of Corbett Tiger Reserve. It is learnt that the accused came on two motorcycles, and though the staff present in the *gujjar dera* (settlement) heard the

TIGER DEATHS & SEIZURES STATISTICS

Official Tiger Mortality & Seizure Statistics between April 2011-August 2011

Sl. No.	Date	Place	State	Cause
1.	2, April 2011	Kalagarh Range, Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR)	Uttarakhand	
2.	7, April 2011	HD Kote Taluk, Mysore	Karnataka	
3.	8, April 2011	Devikulam, Munnar Forest Division	Kerala	
4.	13, April 2011	Kachpara, Kohora Range, Kaziranga NP	Assam	
5.	23, April 2011	Kaladhungi, Ramnagar Forest Division	Uttarakhand	
6.	3, May 2011	Sarpduli, CTR	Uttarakhand	
7.	7, May 2011	Kaziranga NP	Assam	Infighting
8.	29, May 2011	Kaladhungi Range, Ramnagar Forest Division	Uttarakhand	
9.	31, May 2011	Kaladhungi, Ramnagar Forest Division	Uttarakhand	
10.	6, June 2011	Dhara Compt. No. 7, Khatpani, Kalagarh, CTR	Uttarakhand	
11.	20, June 2011	Dattahalla beat, Metikuppe Range, Nagarhole TR	Karnataka	
12.	27, July 2011	Nagarhole NP	Karnataka	
13.	28, July 2011	Dhela, CTR	Uttarakhand	Road accident
14.	29, July 2011	Dudhwa Tiger Reserve	Uttar Pradesh	Road accident

(Source: www.tigernet.nic.in)

*No. 13 and 14 not updated on Tigernet at the time of going to press

Statistics of tiger mortality & seizures

State	Skin & Bone	Poached	Found Dead	Shot by FD/Police or Killed by Villagers	Killed in Road Accidents	Infighting	Fight with other Animals	Total
Assam		1	2					3
Karnataka		1	1			1		3
Kerala		1		1			1	3
Madhya Pradesh						3		3
Maharashtra	1 skin					1		2
Manipur	3 kg bones & 1skin, 15kg bones, 2 skulls							3
Orissa	skin piece, claws							1
Rajasthan			2					2
Tamil Nadu			1				1	2
Uttarakhand		1	6	1		2	1	11
West Bengal			1					1
Total Tiger Deaths	5	4	13	2		7	3	34
Poaching & Seizure	9							
Found Dead	13							
Shot by FD/Police or Killed by Villagers	2							
Killed in Road Accidents								
Infighting	7							
Fight with other Animals	3							
Total	34							

Source: Wildlife Preservation Society of India:

shots—and the cry of the animal—they couldn't do much. Only one or two guards were present, and were unarmed. The forester and guard on duty at the FRH below were informed of the incident, as were senior officials, in order to stop the accused at barricades, but the duo escaped.

An enquiry has been initiated, but nothing concrete has come of it.

It is learnt that the poachers were 'influential'. It is an open secret that Kolluchaur has been battered through the years by 'game hunting' by such 'influential' visitors, and though that has largely been controlled, it suffers from the most intrusive and worst kind of tourism—both of the VIP kind, and louts who create havoc with picnics and liquor. Kolluchaur is contiguous to Corbett and has recorded a high tiger density of about five-six tigers per 100 sq km besides having elephants, sloth bear, Himalayan black bear, leopard, goral, otters and occasionally, even the elusive serow.

The Gujjars in Kolluchaur have submitted in writing their demand to be shifted out of the forest, but these have been in vain since the region is not part of the tiger reserve, making relocation difficult.

This incident accentuates the need to strengthen protection in the reserve, orient the staff to wildlife—all of which can be best achieved by its inclusion into Corbett.

SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Current methods underestimate occupancy

In a recent paper "*Monitoring carnivore populations at the landscape scale: occupancy modelling of tigers from sign surveys*" published in the Journal of Applied Ecology, acclaimed large carnivore scientist Dr K Ullas Karanth, along with N Samba Kumar, Arjun M Gopalaswamy, Srinivas Vaidyanathan, James D Nichols and Darryl I. MacKenzie has cited a study that seeks to find means to address one of the key shortcomings in survey methods for assessing distribution and populations of threatened large carnivores like the tiger: Imperfect detection of animal signs in the field. This is especially true of surveys being carried out to assess tiger metapopulations over large landscapes and leads to the underestimation of true habitat occupancies and distribution.

As part of the study, the authors assessed habitat occupancy for a tiger metapopulation across a 38,000 sq km landscape in the Western Ghats, referred to as the Malenad-Mysore Tiger Landscape (MMTL) by employing a survey to explicitly address imperfect

detections. The MMTL landscape has potential tiger habitat of 21,167 sq kms. The landscape also supports a population of 10.5 million people and their livelihood needs and also suffers high grazing pressure by domestic animals and poaching of prey base.

The study also disagrees with recent reports by Jhala, Gopal & Qureshi (2008) that suggest that spatially replicated sign surveys can estimate tiger distribution reliably without explicitly modelling imperfect detections by showing that in such methods detection probability of tiger signs can be as low as 17 per cent, which, it says, if ignored, can lead to gross underestimation of tiger occupancy.

The authors suggest an occupancy modelling that offers a "robust alternative" to previous tiger sign survey methods such as adjusted encounter rates, track count based estimates and extrapolation from sign encounter rates. This is an application of an occupancy model that they had earlier developed with Jim Hines and other colleagues specifically to assess tiger distributions in 30,000 sq.km landscape in Karnataka. This approach uses spatial replication and deals explicitly with the problem of imperfect detections, which is often a problematic issue with distribution surveys. The authors stress that this occupancy modeling method has great potential for cost effective surveys of tigers and other similar wide-ranging species.

The paper also indicates that tigers have persisted better in MMTL compared with far more extensively forested, sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped landscapes in India. This persistence has been owed to a few effectively protected source tiger populations that have been breeding successfully and have been spilling out and spreading across the landscape. It notes that recent analyses have shown that 70 per cent of the global wild tiger population now survives in source populations occupying merely 6 per cent of existing habitat.

Source: A *TigerLink* report from "Monitoring carnivore populations at the landscape scale: occupancy modelling of tigers from sign surveys", Karanth, et al, 2011, Journal of Applied Ecology (doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2664.2011.02002.x)

Ill healthcare lets guard down in reserves

The routine occurrence of Malaria has been of serious concern in tiger reserves and PAs, especially in the Terai belt. Those seriously afflicted include Palamu, Valmiki, Dudhwa, Similipal, Satkosia. A new study now shows that Pakke in the north-east is also seriously impacted by the disease. The findings indicate that **limited access to healthcare for the field staff of**

India's PAs is not just problem for the staff, but a major threat to its endangered wildlife.

A team of wildlife scientists and doctors led by Nandini Velho, doctoral student at James Cook University and research associate at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), has been working at the Pakke Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh and has observed that the management of the reserve was severely affected by the number of malaria cases among its staff.

"Malaria is a huge problem in northeast India, with more than five out of every thousand people infected annually," said Dr Umesh Srinivasan, a wildlife biologist from NCBS who is part of the research team. "Contrast this with less than two per thousand in the rest of the country. Even worse, malaria in the northeast is resistant to most antimalarial drugs." The team, which also includes scientists from the Institute of Public Health in Bangalore, found that:

- **Malaria decreases overall health of forest staff.** In Pakke Tiger Reserve, e.g., over 70 per cent of forest staff suffered malaria over a four-year period.
- **Malaria imposes an economic burden on park management.** Three per cent of the annual budget in Pakke is spent in treatment of forest staff with malaria, even though the health system is supposed to provide free malaria treatment for everyone."
- **Malaria imposes an economic burden on forest staff.** The cost of treatment of malaria can go up to Rs. 6000 per episode of malaria, equivalent to about 1.5 times the monthly salary of contingency forest staff.
- **Malaria reduces on-ground protection.** 44160 man-hours of anti-poaching effort was lost annually in Pakke because of time spent in treatment and recovery by forest watchers. Malaria made many of the guards too sick to carry out their duties, and this is likely led to an increase in wildlife poaching in the park.

"A key concern is that there are hardly any government medical facilities in the area," said co-author Dr. Prashanth NS, a public health specialist.

Despite initiatives like the National Rural Health Mission that seek to improve healthcare access for people living in remote areas. Institutional apathy, rugged terrain and corruption prevent those guarding India's sanctuaries and national parks from having access to these basic requirements. These findings show that, although the mandates of the forest and health departments are different, running wildlife sanctuaries effectively will require both departments to integrate well.

During the study Velho, with the help of Kedar Bhide from Sumitomo Chemicals, a Mumbai company, distributed insecticide-treated mosquito nets to all forest watchers in anti-poaching camps in Pakke Reserve. As a result, the malaria infection rate has dropped ten-fold over the past year.

Source: "Human disease hinders anti-poaching efforts in Indian nature reserves", Nandini Velho, Umesh Srinivasan, Prasanth NS, William F Laurance, 2011, *Biological Conservation*, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2011.06.003>

OBITUARY

Tens of thousands of guards, watchers, trackers guard our forest and wildlife, working in extreme conditions, putting their life on line, for a paltry wage, and a uniform—if that. Many work for years, getting lower than the minimum wage. Most of our frontier staff are daily wagers who live out their lives in the forest, away from home and family, without the security of a permanent job, or a regular wages.

Yet, they protect our tigers and its forest from poachers, loggers, timber and katha smugglers, from fires and flood.

And sometimes, they die—killed in the line of fire.

Hacked to death by timber smugglers. Like the young man on patrolling duty in Rajaji National Park.

Or murdered in an encounter with poachers as was Majhi in Pakke Tiger Reserve in 2007.

Or killed, occasionally, by the animals they protect.

Tragedy is, they die unsung, unknown—though they sacrifice their lives, ensuring that our eco-systems and our wild heritage is protected for posterity.

They are our first line of defence, taking extraordinary risks to save our tigers

They are our Green Army—and deserve the highest honour.

Given below are just a few of the forest staff we lost in recent times, but this is a tribute to all personnel who have laid down their lives so that the tigers may live.

Three forest staff killed in Kaziranga

Three foresters have been killed in animal attacks in Kaziranga Tiger Reserve in the current year. The last incident occurred on April 7th near the Kartik forest camp under Kohora forest range. Bharat Das, a forest guard died on the spot when a rhino attacked him. On 6th February, a forest guard had been attacked and killed by a rhino at the Mohkhuti forest camp in the Agoratoli range. The deceased was identified as Nitul Dutta, a

homeguard who had been temporarily engaged as a forest guard for wildlife duty. The first of the three incidents occurred on 23rd January, when a forest guard was killed in an attack by a wild buffalo near the Amkathon forest camp under Bagori forest range.

Source: *Protected Area Update*, #91; 'Another forest guard killed in Kaziranga rhino attack', www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, April 8, 2011

Young guard killed in Melghat

Abhishek Wakode, a 28-year-old forest guard, was killed by a bear attack on August 12, 2010. He was one among four people killed. Melghat is known for sloth bears, but in the past three decades, there is not a single record of sloth bear entering any forest camp and killing humans. Abhishek, initially posted in MTR's Chaurakund range, was instrumental in exposing a tiger poaching case in which the kingpin was a Bahelia woman Kamla Pardhan. Abhishek was posted for some time on Jamoda Padoo protection camp where he was involved in protection of critically endangered forest owl. On the fateful day, Abhishek was attacked outside his quarter by a bear. He sustained severe injuries and died on the spot. Melghat lost one brave forest guard while serving for wildlife protection.

Source: 'Tribute to a true son of the forest,' TNN, Oct 3, 2010

Pakke's Hero

Each guard patrols roughly eight square kilometres of Pakke Tiger Reserve's undulating and rough terrain including waterways that poachers use to cross over from both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The credit for Pakke's stringent anti-poaching measures goes to veteran forest guards, such as Prem Deo Majhi, who died in an encounter with poachers on April 19, 2007. He is rightly respected as the true hero and star of the Pakke Tiger Reserve. His love for and dedication to Pakke has inspired a generation of forest staff.

Source: *Sanctuary Asia*

Forest officer murdered by mafia

In a tragic incident, a forest officer was beaten to death by the teakwood mafia in Adilabad (near proposed Kawal Tiger Reserve) on the night of 29th March. The officer, P Satyanarayana, had reached the area with three other villagers following a tip-off about teakwood being smuggled. The incident comes a month after another forest officer, Shivalal, was burnt to death by teakwood smugglers. Following this, another forest staff—Forest Beat Officer Srinivasulu, was murdered

reportedly by red sanders smugglers in Chittoor district on 13th July. He was beaten mercilessly to death with iron rods, it is reported.

Teak and red sanders (for that matter other forest produce such as *katha*, *tendu* leaves) smuggling is a multi-crore business with big mafias operating—and in certain cases with links even with the underworld.

Source: 'Sandalwood (sic) mafia kills forest officer in Andhra' Preeti Singh, *CNN-IBN*, Adilabad, March 31, 2011, *The Times of India*

Note: Forest staff are especially vulnerable to such onslaughts. There is an acute staff shortage, and personnel are woefully unequipped with outdated, if not dysfunctional arms, to deal with the might of wildlife, timber and other mafia, and also leftwing extremists. Importantly, the legal framework within which they work is weak. When a forest personnel fires in self-defence or in the line of duty, he is held personally responsible in case of any injury or death. He must fight a case in court at a personal level, which understandably is a deterrent. Forest staff must be adequately equipped with modern arms and with legal support on lines of the police department, given the considerable risk associated in their line of duty.

Watch: *She's Alive... Beautiful... Finite... Hurting... Worth Dying for* www.youtube.com

This is a non-commercial attempt to highlight the fact that world leaders, irresponsible corporates and mindless 'consumers' are combining to destroy life on earth. It is dedicated to all who died fighting for the planet and those whose lives are on the line today. The cut was put together by Vivek Chauhan, a young film maker, together with naturalists working with the Sanctuary Asia network

MEDIA

BOOKS

THE TIGER: A TRUE STORY OF VENGEANCE AND SURVIVAL • John Vaillant • Published by Knopf, 2010 • Hardcover, 352 pages • Price: US \$26.95

The Tiger, as its title claims, is a true and gripping story of a man-eater in Primorye that not only consumed its human prey, but hunted an individual poacher with motive and intent. The author's scope is hugely ambitious and he succeeds in putting the reader within the mind, and yes, feelings, of both man and beast. In doing so, Vaillant makes the tiger of this tale the central character of the story, and a fearsome but highly sympathetic one.

The author moves seamlessly between his murder-mystery plot, in which so much is at stake for all the protagonists, including the hard-bitten men tasked with

protecting the last of Russia's magnificent tigers, and long, equally fascinating digressions into the national and regional history that brought all of the forces into play between man and tiger in snowy, remote Primorye in the 1990s.

John Vaillant's book hits that unusual mark of being essential for lay readers in search of absorbing works of anthropology and natural history, as well as the most knowledgeable tiger scientist/conservationist. There are many books sympathetic to the tiger, but Vaillant goes further, making a fascinating attempt to probe the internal thought and emotive processes of this highly-intelligent, hard-living animal. I know of no other book on tigers that places an actual member of the species at the centre of the "story." In so doing, Vaillant may succeed in reaching the hearts of many people who have hitherto thought of the tiger, when they think of it at all, as little more than a two-dimensional sports or corporate icon.

In addition, the author points out that the tiger's habitat, the stunning forests of Primorye, is being logged to the last tree to supply cheap consumer goods to the world. He asks readers to consider before buying a solid oak toilet seat for a pittance. Its true price is much higher, in terms of tiger lives and magnificent forests. Highly recommended, this is one of the most moving books on the tiger in print. Read it, and go out and fight for this animal's survival.

Source: Jennifer Scarlott/*Sanctuary Asia*

THE SCIENCE OF SAVING TIGERS•Ullas Karanth•Orient Blackswan•Rs 550

The Science of Saving Tigers puts together 20 significant articles on a wide variety of topics ranging from tiger ecology to critiques of government policy that have appeared in various national and international journals, spanning Ullas Karanth's work over two decades. Dr Karanth first described how the camera-trapping methodology could be used in a paper published in 1995, which he later refines and describes in a paper "*Estimations of tiger densities in India*", which is co-authored with Dr James Nicholson. "*Tigers and Prey: Predicting carnivore densities from prey abundance*" is the result of eight years of work across 11 sites that established that prey density is the key determinant of tiger populations. Of particular interest are "*Mitigating human wildlife conflict in Southern Asia*" (co-authored with Dr MD Madhusudan) and "*An Ecology based Policy Framework for human tiger co-existence in India*" (co-authored with Dr Rajesh Gopal), given that tigers survive in densely populated landscapes and the complexities of conflict.

In the essays, "*Joining the Dots but losing the Cats?*" and "*Reconciling conservation with*

emancipatory politics" Dr Karanth analyses the key aspects of the Tiger Task Force report published in August 2005. "There is no 'Indian way' in tiger conservation as proposed by the report to save the tiger", argues the author, "only the tiger's own way"—thus scientifically—yet poignantly—making a strong case for inviolate zones..

"*Defragmenting nature*" written along with Praveen Bhargav critically examines the Scheduled Tribes and Forests Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill—as it was in 2005, prior to becoming an Act. The paper discusses the devastating ecological footprint of the then proposed Act—which we are witnessing today.

The Science of Saving Tigers is essential reading for serious students of conservation biology and will serve as a vital information resource for tiger conservationists in particular.

RANTHAMBHORE: TIGERS REALM•Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Anjali and Jaisal Singh•Sujan Art Pvt. Ltd. | Pages: 164 | Price: RS 4,800

Tiger's Realm has generated great excitement —no surprises that, with Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as one among its three authors and photographers. This is the first written—and pictorial—expression of India's 'first family's continued passion for nature and wildlife.

This book, written and produced by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Anjali and Jaisal Singh, brings to life not just the tigers of Ranthambhore, but, equally, the legacy Indians have inherited and their interpretations of what this legacy heralds. It is a poignant and very personal account of three individual journeys into the heart and mind of the tiger, and the other wildlife that makes up its landscape.

The pictures—spectacular—do not carry individual credits. Jaisal explains it was because they wanted the pictures to be appreciated for themselves, not for who took them.

Priyanka's family has had a tryst with nature and wildlife for decades, and it shows in the manner in which Priyanka pens her thoughts. A diarist who forces no views of her own but instead allows the reader to enter that intensely private world through which the long-standing affair with nature comes alive, "The jungle of Ranthambhore lives its wildness well. Ruins of forgotten majesty lie overrun by the brush. Once resplendent forts have become the abode of wild animals. The lakes are deceptively placid, hiding ferocious crocodiles within their silent waters and golden blades of grass effortlessly play the evening light into tiger shadows. I love this jungle because it is old, older than any of us will ever be. Its constance is calming."

The family album related to Ranthambhore is a delight to pursue—besides being of no small historical interest,

and it's clear—in Jaisal's words, "that Priyanka is busy instilling the legacy of the late PM Indira Gandhi into the minds of her children." Writes she, "I can't say I enjoy anything more than being confined to a jeep with them in the park. We're surrounded by the wilderness I love and there's absolutely no possibility of them (my children) escaping, their mother's mad affections."

It's clear from her memoir that she has inherited her love for tigers from her father Rajiv Gandhi and her late grandmother Indira Gandhi whose name is written in gold for initiating Project Tiger and also providing a robust legal and policy framework for conservation of tigers and wildlife.

Here is hoping that the authors' passion for the tiger continues to support the conservation of this critically endangered species.

A TigerLink Report; 'Poetry in Notion', Suhel Seth, *Outlook*, August 3, 2011, CNN-IBN

Film on Project Tiger

"Project Tiger—Ensuring Survival" is a cinematic tribute to one of the world's largest conservation initiatives—Project Tiger. Including footage filmed over several years across India, the film captures rare moments and impressive scenes giving an insight into the life of the tiger and the project India ambitiously launched in 1973 to save the majestic cat from impending extinction. Key issues like poaching, village relocation, tourism and human-wildlife conflict have been covered and the challenges of conservation highlighted.

The film has been produced for the NTCA and MoEF by Bedi Films.

NGOs

Panthera, STF join forces

Panthera and Save the Tiger Fund (STF) announced on July 7th that they have joined forces to further the global fight to save tigers in the wild. This key partnership between two of the most influential and successful tiger conservation groups will double the resources available for strategic tiger conservation efforts, with a focus on addressing key threats to wild tigers and scientifically measuring conservation success.

"Panthera's strategic focus on saving tigers combined with STF's years of experience in funding critical tiger sites is an important step in leveraging our resources. This partnership is a game changer and I am convinced it will positively impact how tigers and their habitats are protected", said Dr Alan Rabinowitz, CEO, Panthera.

"Our partnership with STF will build on Panthera's successful Tigers Forever program, which employs science-based measurement and monitoring of tiger and prey populations, along with rigorous implementation of enforcement activities," said Luke Hunter, President of Panthera.

To successfully leverage resources, Panthera and STF will focus their support on securing significant breeding populations within high priority tiger conservation landscapes of Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Russia, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Lao PDR, Bhutan and Sumatra. To ensure accountability and the effective use of resources, all projects will quantify and monitor the results of these interventions.

Source: Panthera, July 7, 2011

Training programme for Pakke staff

Following the recommendation of forest department staff, a two-day training programme on law enforcement was conducted at Bhalukpong in Assam by WWF-India on June 15-16. Fifty-one forest staffers of Pakke TR and adjoining forest divisions attended the training. PCCF(Wildlife) & CWW, Arunachal Pradesh, JL Singh inaugurated the programme. Saurabh Sharma, Advocate, Delhi High Court, specialising on the legal aspects of wildlife crime prevention/control and Dr Rakesh Kumar Singh, Senior Coordinator (Capacity Building), WWF-India were the resource persons. They deliberated on topics like provisions in Wildlife (Protection) Act, powers of the frontline staff, monitoring and protection, investigation procedures in wildlife crime, etc. A set of relevant books were also provided to the trainees.

Source: WWF-India

Eco-Guides trained in Similipal

In an initiative to revamp the way in which wildlife tourism is carried out in the Similipal Tiger Reserve—which reopened to tourism in November 2010 after over a year of closure due to Naxalite attacks—Wild Orissa, with support of the Similipal Tiger Reserve, organised a training programme to enable local youth to gain alternative income through a stake in wildlife tourism.

Several new regulations have been made for tourists after the reopening of the park. These are meant to minimise disturbance by the visitors and orient them towards gaining a responsible wildlife experience. The lack of trained guides in Similipal had always been an impediment to this earlier, as there was no rule making guides mandatory and the unaccompanied tourists easily flouted rules.

As part of the training programme, implemented under Wild Orissa's 'Similipal Conservation Programme', seventeen locals were trained in the first phase prior to the park's monsoon closure. They were given theory classes on the basics of ecotourism, community benefits from ecotourism, tourist behaviour, basics of wildlife guiding and on ecotourism rules and regulations. These were followed by field classes to teach them safari driving etiquette and wildlife tracking and watching skills. At the end of the training they were given a certificate along with uniforms and wildlife field guide books in Oriya.

Wild Orissa intends to train more local youth in following batches in order to create ample number of guides for the reserve management to make them compulsory for all 65 vehicles that are permitted into the park's tourism zone every day.

Source: Wild Orissa

Cleanliness drive in Corbett

A group of citizens in Ramnagar cleared over five quintals of polythene garbage from the park's periphery on 7th and 9th March. The cleanliness campaign was a joint initiative of local NGO, Society for Mahseer Conservancy and officials of the Corbett Tiger Reserve. The two-day programme was carried out from Ladua Chaur to Garjia under the Dhikuli village besides the Corbett Tiger Reserve and focused chiefly on cleaning the stretch along the National Highway.

"Despite being such an eco-sensitive region, there is no recycling plant around the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Quintals of garbage including polythene, plastic bottles and wrappers litter the world famous park. These polythene dumps ultimately get washed away into the Kosi, polluting the lifeline of Ramnagar and causing health hazards to wildlife," said Sumantha Ghosh, founder president of the Mahseer Conservancy.

Source: "Cleanliness drive frees Corbett park of five quintals polythene", Anupama Khanna, *The Pioneer*, May 11, 2011, Dehradun

Workshop on Sariska

On May 30, the Sariska Tiger Foundation organised a day-long workshop which discussed the problems and issues being faced by the reserve.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Rajasthan, RN Mehrotra, urged the foundation to come up with a detailed micro-level plan for linking the villagers that live along the periphery of the reserve to the forest reasoning that it would be impossible to protect the park without the support of the villagers living around it. He also urged CWW UM Sahai to come up with a similar plan for the buffer zone.

Vice President of the foundation, Sunayan Sharma, a former IFS officer, listed the issues being faced by Sariska. Stressing on the need to strengthen traditional methods of tracking the tiger, despite technological advances, Sharma said that the large number of vacancies in the department should be addressed first.

"The recent recruitment of forest guards by the department comes after a gap of 28 years. But still the vacancies are far too many. Also appalling is the fact that with so many villages near Sariska like Tehla, Thanaghazi, etc, there is no source for alternative fuel like LPG. Everyone still depends on firewood from the forest," Sharma said. He also pointed out on the need to rehabilitate people from the Bawaria community living in the vicinity. Sharma's point found a taker in VS Singh, Principal Secretary, Forests & Environment, who vouched to take up the matter urgently.

Source: "Involve villagers on periphery to protect Sariska tigers", *TNN*, Jaipur, May 31, 2011

CONFERENCES

Student Conference

The 2011 Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS) will be held at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore from September 14 to 16, 2011. Last year, more than 300 student participants attended SCCS-Bangalore, at which 100 students presented talks and posters. The deadline for early registration for the conference is August 31.

Contact for details: sccs@sccs-bng.org Web: <http://www.sccs-bng.org>;

Source: *Protected Area Update #92*

Indian Forestry Congress 2011

The Indian Forestry Congress (IFC) 2011 is to be held from November 22 to 25 in New Delhi. The central theme of the congress is 'Forests in a changing world' and it seeks to bring together various stakeholders of forestry, including the researchers, planners, implementers and beneficiaries. The main themes for the congress are Forests in Society, Forestry in an Expanding Economy, Expanding Frontiers of Forestry Sciences, Forest Biodiversity and Landscapes and Forests and Climate Change.

Contact: Sandeep Tripathi, IFC 2011, ICFRE, P.O. New Forest, Dehradun, Uttarakhand. Tel: 0135-2756497; Fax: 0135-2756497. Email: sandeeptrip@icfre.org. Web: <http://ifc2011.icfre.gov.in/>

Source: *Protected Area Update #92*

RANTHAMBHORE FOUNDATION, RBS PARTNER FOR CONSERVATION

Wildlife Awards instituted

The Ranthambhore Foundation shall be collaborating with the Royal Bank of Scotland Foundation (RBS) in instituting an award recognising “Earth Heroes” who have contributed exceptionally towards wildlife conservation. An awards function shall be organised during the last week of September to mark the first RBS-Ranthambhore Foundation “Earth Heroes” Awards.

Efforts to provide communities with alternative livelihoods

The two foundations have also signed an agreement to work for livelihood projects in the villages around Ranthambhore National Park in order to help reduce the villagers’ dependance on the Ranthambhore forests.

RF Activities, April-June 2011

Meanwhile, the Ranthambhore Foundation has been continuing its tireless efforts in and around the Ranthambhore National Park to reduce the dependence of the communities living on the fringes on the reserve, and to win their support for conservation. As always, several awareness activities, especially for school children, have been carried out by the Foundation in the last quarter (April-June 2011). The details of these are listed below:

RANTHAMBHORE FOUNDATION Environmental Education Project Project report- April 11 to June 2011

Nature Camps Details Date: 30/06/2011

S.N.	Date	School/ Nature Clubs	Boys	Girls	Teachers	Total
1	10/04/2011	Ghyandeep siskhan sansthan Sherpur	20	10	4	34
2	23/04/2011	Govt.sec.school Charoda	22	8	3	33
3	26/04/2011	Deepmala pub. Sc.Kundera	21	6	2	29
4	30/04/2011	Devid pub.sc.Chakeri	18	5	2	25
5	07/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Sukhwas	28			28
6	16/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Ranwal	24			24
7	31/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Padli	22			22
8	05/06/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Allapur	25			25
9	10/06/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Kutulpura	26			26
10	20/06/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Jamulkheda	23			23
11	27/06/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Endwa	23			23
		TOTAL	252	29	11	292

Mobile Library

S.No.	Date	Name of school/ Nature clube	Village	Participant		
				Boy	Girl	Total
1.	21/04/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Padli	Padli	22	9	31
2.	09/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Kutulpura	Kutulpura	28	12	40
3.	12/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Ranwal	Ranwal	22	6	28
4.	19/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Kheda	Kheda	24	0	24
5.	08/06/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Sukhwas	Sukhwas	21	7	28
6.	19/06/2010	Ranthambhore Nature club Khawa	Khawa	22	9	31
		TOTAL		139	43	182

Film shows:

S.No.	Date	School/ Nature Clubs	Boys	girls	Teachers	Total
1.	09//04/2011	Saini Adarsh School Ramsinghpura	75	22	4	101
2.	28/04/2011	Deep mala pub. school kundera	95	32	5	132
3.	10/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Padli	65	25	26 (villagers)	89
4.	24/05/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Ranwal	60	20	22 (villagers)	102
5.	07/06/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Allapur	50	20	30 (villagers)	100
6.	17/06/2011	Ranthambhore Nature club Jamulkhera	60	25	40 (villagers)	125
		TOTAL	405	144	127	676

USEFUL LINKS

MoEF: www.moef.nic.in
NTCA: www.projecttiger.nic.in
Wildlife Institute of India: www.wii.gov.in
Wildlife Crime Control Bureau: www.wccb.gov.in
Panthera: www.panthera.org
WWF-India: www.wwfindia.org
TRAFFIC India: www.trafficindia.org
Sanctuary Asia: www.sanctuaryasia.com
Environmental Information System(ENVIS): www.wwfenvvis.nic.in
Bombay Natural History Society: www.bnhs.org
Nature Conservation Foundation: www.ncf-india.org
Save the Tiger Fund: www.savethetigerfund.org
Satpuda Foundation: www.satpuda.org
Wildlife First: www.wildlifefirst.info
Wildlife Trust of India: www.wildlifetrustofindia.org
Wildlife Protection Society of India: www.wpsi-india.org
Wildlife Conservation Society-India: www.wcsindia.org
Indian Jungles: www.indianjungles.com
Wild Orissa: www.wildorissa.org
Wildlife society of Orissa: www.wildlifeorissa.org
ATREE: www.atree.org
The Corbett Foundation: www.corbettfoundation.org
IUCN: www.iucn.org
IUCN Cat Specialist Group: www.catsg.org
Tiger Watch: www.tigerwatch.net
Wild Aid: www.wildaid.org
Environmental Investigation Agency: www.eia-international.org
21st Century Tiger: www.21stcenturytiger.org
Mongabay: www.mongabay.com