



TIGERLINK

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

NEWS

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From the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

On the eve of publication of the sixth edition of *Tiger Link* I received one of the best news of my life. The tigress relocated to Panna from Bandhavgarh following the extinction of tigers from the reserve, has given birth to three cubs—presenting this fertile reserve with a new generation of tigers and a future. This justifies the firm belief of those who stood by the translocation exercise even in the face of severe criticism, and many detractors. The surprising (but may be not) bit is that the severest of critics of the relocation process are now taking credit—given that the first success of the exercise is evident. I would give the major share, (80 per cent) of credit to Madhya Pradesh Forest Department who executed the translocation successfully, ten per cent to NTCA and the Wildlife Wing of the Ministry of Environment and Forests who provided the funding and other administrative support, and the rest equally divided between Wildlife Institute of India, who extended technical advice and WWF who flew in the radio collars for monitoring the relocated tigers.

The other good news is that there is finally going to be a separate department for Forests and Wildlife, giving the much required focus that the task demands. This has been a long felt need and the credit for this must be given to Valmik Thapar who took up the task of presenting the case, with conviction, to the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at the National Board of Wildlife meeting. The Prime Minister's swift decision to give the go-ahead is much appreciated by the forest officials and conservationists. The Minister of State for Environment and Forest Jairam Ramesh's persuasion to follow it up on priority basis is also laudable.

However, the tenure of the National Board for Wildlife (or the Indian Board of Wildlife as it was known previously) has a dubious past with almost all the

decisions taken seldom implemented. I remember only one exception—the creation of the Tiger Task Force. In case of formation of a separate department for forests and wildlife, the sailing will not be smooth, either. Not only the Minister but even the Prime Minister will have to cross the hurdle of the IAS lobby.

When in service as head of Project Tiger I had stated that more than 30 per cent of the area of Tiger Reserves was not under the administrative control of the forest department, due to left-wing extremism, I almost lost my chair. Till today, however, the situation remains unaltered. The forest department is being blamed for the spread of naxalism, as forests harbour the naxals. But why blame the forest officials for the fact that tribals and forest dwellers have been deprived from sharing the fruits of development?

It's easy to point fingers at the forest department and say that they are throwing people out of the forests where they have been staying for generations. But why is there opposition to the rehabilitation of people from forests, where they live like wild animals, with no facilities, no scope of livelihood or their betterment. Why are the proponents of the poor tribals denying them a package of a million rupees per family, a life of dignity and the opportunity of being in the mainstream of development?

Who is responsible for the pathetic condition of the forest dwellers? What has happened to the thousands of crores of rupees that have been sanctioned for their development under rural and tribal development programmes in the last six decades of India's Independence. That's the real question for which we need to seek answers. I believe this is the biggest scam this country has ever recorded, but no one will try to open this Pandora's box as everybody has shared the booty at the cost of forest dwellers.

And price for this is being paid by the tiger, and its protectors.

P.K. Sen

Editorial

There are many ways to skin a cat.

There's the obvious one—the gun and the trap. A fairly common method, witnessed repeatedly, but the image that flashes in the mind is of Arunachal. The cat—the tiger—shot, tied to the stake, skinned, eaten, sold.

The other way is lacing the food with poison, like in Ranthambhore, where two young unsuspecting tigers did not survive their supper—goats from a village inside their 'sanctuary'.

The last is slow poison, pulling the rug under the tiger's flesh, or simply slashing and cutting it at will, so the 'forest rug' is rendered useless. It's an insidious method usually orchestrated in the corridors of power. The execution—the destruction of the tiger's home may be intentional spurred by the lure of money, or it may simply be ignorance, or indifference.

All across its range countries, tigers face these threats. As does India, home to, and responsible for, the maximum number of tigers. All threats are a worry: Poaching, conflict, habitat degradation and devastation, and all are interlinked, feeding off, and fueling each other. Habitat degradation will lead to more conflict, which will instigate poaching.

At the risk of being politically incorrect, and given all our failures, I would say we are better than most tiger range countries. The legal framework for conservation is strictly protectionist, even if execution poor. We have not allowed for tiger farming unlike a Thailand or China, or come out with inane policies which advocate keeping tigers as pets in backyards to save them like Indonesia (details inside). We fight like a tiger for our tigers in international fora, and have dug our heels and not allowed the World Bank with its destructive footprint on tiger habitat to seduce us to partner them in their 'save tiger' initiative.

Yet, we have allowed for a Sariska and a Panna to happen. We continue to sign away tiger habitats for highways, power projects, mines. The battle for forest clearances hit the headlines this season. It was not unlike war: Ministry of Roads vs Ministry of Environment & Forest, Ministry of Coal vs Ministry of Environment & forest, Power vs Environment & Forest... and so on. In an earlier interview Jairam told me "At times I feel I am fighting a lonely battle. Ecological security should be the overriding concern of everyone not just my ministry, but unfortunately, it's not. The odds are tremendous against anyone trying to do anything right and rational when it comes to the environment and forests."

The bitter debate was not for some obscure forest, but objections are being raised to a firm refusal to allow a highway expansion on a critical tiger corridor (Kanha-Pench), or a mine that ate into Tadoba, a crucial source population of tigers.

Why are we still fighting for every inch of the tiger's habitat?

In April this year, the Prime Minister of India wrote to Chief Ministers of three key tiger states, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Maharashtra urging them to protect tigers,

regulate commercial and tourism interests impinging on tiger habitat and to notify buffers. Yet on the other hand his government is on this relentless path of growth, which has little room for green or tiger concerns. There is simply no sync between the different arms of the government—while one vows to save the tiger, the other uses fair means or foul to open up vital wild habitats for mines, highways, hydro-projects etc.

At a press conference, the Minister for Environment and Forest Jairam Ramesh said that currently more than 95 per cent of projects get environment clearances and 85 per cent sail through forest clearance. Then, what is all the fuss about? I was intrigued to note that Gaurav Sharma writes in d-sector.org that in the first six months of the current minister's tenure (May 22-December 31) 13,642.99 hectares of forest were cleared—the maximum share going to roads ministry, which protests the loudest. In comparison, between January and June 2009 clearances amounted to about 7,500 hectares. I wonder what that tells us.

To his credit, even in the face of such massive opposition, Jairam maintained that his job was to reduce the rejection rate and be more stringent to protect critical wildlife and tiger habitats.

We hope. For the sake of the tiger...

Another raging debate of the moment: Is tourism killing tigers? As author of the story and report on impact of tourism in Corbett that triggered the debate, I would like to point out that a mad mushrooming of resorts is destroying vital tiger corridors not just in Corbett but also in Mudumalai, Kanha, Kaziranga, Bandhavgarh. Tourism infrastructure has taken up crucial meadows inside core areas ie Kanha, Corbett. Another issue: It has been scientifically established that tigers need inviolate habitats to survive. To facilitate this, there is a major effort to rehabilitate villagers living inside core critical tiger habitats. It isn't an easy task, made all the more difficult when locals perceive that they are being moved out, but the 'rich' aka tourists move in. As for tourism saving tigers, in an ideal world yes, it can play a tremendous role in garnering support for the tiger, but in its current form it is intrusive and counter-productive, and *must* be regulated. Tourism has to have a broader base, not madly centred on the tiger. Is converging of 30-40 noisy cars & their hysterical occupants on a tiger indicate respect for the animal? Where is the wilderness tourists have come to seek or have I missed the point here? Is paying Rs 10,000 & above for a 'guaranteed' tiger sighting a way to show your love for the tiger?

Yes, tourists do keep a vigilant third eye, but that has a limited, if important role. There must be a balance somewhere. The huge influx of tourists in Sariska could not save the tiger...and yes, surprise, surprise, tigers have survived--against the worst odds—in Simlipal's core where no tourist will venture, or non-tourism areas of Corbett.

It hurts me to say this, but sadly, for most (there are always exceptions—thank God) the tiger has become a cash cow. Are we milking it dry?

Think about it.

Prerna Singh Bindra

NATIONAL NEWS

Four Months: 23 tigers dead

In a deadly blow to accelerated tiger conservation efforts, 23 tigers have died in India by May 1. Last year, India lost 85 tigers, of which poaching and seizures were 32. The accelerated number of deaths this year has alarmed conservationists who fear that the Chinese Year of the Tiger would increase demand for tiger derivatives and put immense poaching pressure on India's wild tigers (See crime for details).

NTCA meet on January 6

One of the contentious issues that came up in the fifth meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, (NTCA) on January 6, 2010 was the involvement of the World Bank in tiger conservation. India has not associated with the Bank in their Global Tiger Initiative given its abysmal record of assisting development projects in critical tiger habitats, and its previous track record as far as association with tiger conservation is concerned. Though the Minister of State for Environment and Forests (Independent Charge) (MEF), Jairam Ramesh has shown a keen interest in taking World Bank funds for tiger conservation, **a consensus was taken that there would be no engagement with the World Bank in the project mode.**

The issue of translocation of tigers (as has been done following the extinction of tiger in Sariska and Panna) was also discussed. It was decided that the **tiger translocation protocol should be strictly defined.** A presentation was made on the scientific monitoring of tigers in Karnataka, and it was decided to institutionalise tiger monitoring protocol. Attention was also drawn to the 'virtual bazaar' for wildlife products with many websites selling wildlife products. It was suggested that the **Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006 be aligned with the cyber laws** of the country. Another important decision taken was to improve the status of two or three of the critically endangered tiger reserves.

The meeting was chaired by the MEF Jairam Ramesh.

Monitoring tigers

The tragedy of Sariska was not just that the tiger went extinct, but that the official census proclaimed 18 tigers even as numbers dwindled creating a false sense of

security. Panna (Madhya Pradesh) is even more of a shame. A farcical census exercise carried out by the state forest department in March 2005 showed 35 tigers, though the big cat population had crashed to fatally low numbers in the park. These above two cases proved in the worst possible manner that the pugmark-based census method used by officials to count tigers was prone to manipulation and lacked sound scientific base.

Fortunately, the Prime Minister appointed Tiger Task Force in 2005 'buried' the pugmark census and recommended that the country adopt the camera-trap based capture-recapture method. Capture-recapture sampling through the strategic deployment of automated cameras that photographically capture samples of tigers to estimate populations is a scientifically established method to estimate populations.

This method in conjunction with extrapolation of data to wider regions using calibrated sign surveys was used by Wildlife Institute of India in the last All India Status assessment of tigers, that generated—the now famous—1,411 tiger numbers (the median of 1165-1657). But how accurate are these figures? As India now embarks on the second All India survey—a good five years after the first one—**questions are being raised on the efficacy of this model, if practiced without the necessary scientific rigour. If camera trap sample surveys are not done at the necessary spatial scale and trapping intensity the results generated could be unreliable.**

Leading wildlife biologist Dr Ullas Karanth who developed the camera trap method and successfully used it in Karnataka for over two decades, stresses that to estimate any population the rule of thumb is to understand—and base the study—on the biology of the species, in this case, the tiger. Tigers are highly dynamic demographically—with a high birth rate and high death rate, the annual 'turnover' being to the tune of 20 per cent. **It is imperative therefore that the sampling be done annually within a short period.**

While growing number of tiger deaths reported from India are a cause for concern, these have to be viewed in the context of new recruitment. Tigers are prolific breeders, and given protection numbers will bounce back and balance out the mortality. In the last two years, for example, Bandipur and Nagarhole have lost 30 tigers, but intense, annual camera trap monitoring revealed that the recruitment has been sufficiently high so that overall density remained high. However, Karanth stresses that there is no room for complacency, "and this resilience

will vanish if poachers target breeding animals in these source populations." **Close monitoring-- 'like you would a patient in ICU'--of our key breeding populations is an absolute essential.**

This is only possible by rigorous scientific monitoring of tigers. Camera trapping done infrequently as in official surveys do not yield a reliable picture of what is going on. **Four factors crucial to the camera trapping methodology are—frequency, intensity, spatial scale and the demographic period in which the estimation is done. Tigers are territorial animals, occupying large territories so the area sampled must be 500 to 1,000 sq km.** Again, a few cameras set far apart will not give the real picture, and the **ideal intensity of effort required is 500 camera nights per 100 sq km.** The estimation exercise must not stretch over a long period of time, but should have a short period of 30-60 days in which the effect of population turnover is not a major factor.

In Karnataka, Centre for Wildlife Studies, with support from the Wildlife Conservation Society has closely monitored over 4,000 sq km of prime tiger habitat including Bandipur-Nagarhole, Bhadra and Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserves. The results indicated a healthy tiger density ranging from 11–15 adult tigers per 100 sq km in Nagarhole and Bandipur. Bhadra showed a density of 2–3 tigers per 100 sq km. The study also found that the prey density in Bhadra had increased after villages in the forest were relocated a few years ago. It is this sort of intensive, rigorous, real time monitoring of the few remaining tiger populations that is crucial for their survival.

Karanth presented his findings at the last meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority at Delhi on January 6, 2010.

Source: A *TigerLink* report

Tracking tiger mortality

NTCA in association with the wildlife trade monitoring network TRAFFIC has **launched a national tiger conservation website that will allow tiger reserve directors and chief wildlife wardens in the country to key-in crucial information about tiger deaths, poaching and seizures. The website (<http://tigernet.nic.in/>)** aims to bring in greater transparency and clarity in the process of tracking and evaluating tiger mortality in India. Chief Wildlife Wardens and Field Directors of tiger Reserves will be able to log on to the website to load and view significant data related to tiger mortality and crime. The website also collects data on seizure of tiger derivatives across the country.

It is anticipated that the new website will simplify the tiger mortality reporting system and allow a more accurate and transparent picture to be generated of poaching and other threats facing India's tigers. Automatic reminders will be sent to official staff to upload details, including the findings of post mortem examinations.

Less than 1,411 tigers: Jairam

MEF Jairam Ramesh fears that the current ongoing census may show lesser number of tigers than the previous number of 1411. Understandably, this statement created quite a furor.

Possibly the minister was referring to the fact that tiger numbers may have declined since the last census, which started in 2006, and the results declared in 2008. Statistics show that tiger mortalities have been high in 2008 and 2009, but whether these have been compensated by fresh recruitment in this period is uncertain.

In 2009, for example, we lost over 80 tigers. Ramesh described 2009 as 'the worst year' for tigers in India. He also stated that 17 of the 38 tiger reserves in the country are in very bad shape and if the situation persists, there would be more Sariska's and Panna's. According to him, only nine tiger reserves are in healthy condition while 12 are managed satisfactorily, but need more focus and attention.

However, at a recent press meet (April 14), the minister said he had good news to share and that there were positive reports from the ongoing census. **Ramesh said that the first phase of tiger census covering around 3.5 lakh sq km of forest area, including non-tiger reserve tracts at the beat level had thrown up encouraging trends.**

"In Kaziranga tiger reserve, according to preliminary estimates, the tiger density is estimated at 30 per hundred sq km," he added. Similarly, good presence of tigers has been reported from Buxa tiger reserve in North Bengal, Nagarjuna Sagar in Andhra and Indravati in Chhattisgarh which had earlier been written off, the minister said. "In Valmiki tiger reserve in Bihar too unexpectedly good results are being reported," he said, adding, special efforts were being taken to conduct a census in the Sundarbans in West Bengal.

However, the minister was quick to add that "encouraging" results did not indicate that the tiger counts this time will be higher than the last census. "No doubt the trend is positive, but I can't say that this means increase in tiger numbers. But amidst the tiger crisis,

the positive trend is certainly very encouraging: The census is expected to be wrapped up by November-end.

Source: Sarthak Gupta, *The Hindustan Times*; January 29, 2010; Gyan Varma New Delhi, February 18, 2010; *DNA, PTI*, April 14, 2010

Comment: *In Buxa, one tiger has been sighted after a long time. In Indravati no estimation was conducted in the last All India census, and this time too the Wildlife Institute of India do not intend to move beyond Phase I of the estimation. In Palamu, 7-16 tigers have been estimated in 40 per cent of the reserve by scat analysis by Centre for Cellular Molecular Biology (60 per cent of the area could not be covered because of naxalite presence.) Nagarjunasagar's habitat has improved considerably as recently reported by the committee constituted by NTCA. However, a viable tiger population is yet to be established.*

Regional offices for NTCA

Taking cognizance of the diminishing population of tigers in the country, the central government has initiated a plan to set up **three regional offices of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) by the end of this year**. It is envisaged that the regional offices will contribute towards better coordination with the states in their region, and to address the 'alarming' situation and the rampant killing of big cats, which is a cause for huge concern. The MoEF is also trying to strengthen the office of the NTCA as the task of the authority has increased manifold over the years.

One of the regional offices will be based at Nagpur. It is hoped that the Nagpur office step will help better coordination between Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh which forms the crucial Central Indian tiger landscape. The setting up of regional office here is significant as there are seven tiger reserves in the region: Melghat, Tadoba-Andhari, and Pench in Maharashtra, Pench, Kanha and Satpuda in Madhya Pradesh and Indravati in Chhattisgarh. Besides, there are at least 15 sanctuaries in the Satpuda region bearing tigers. This landscape supports over 500 tigers as per the Wildlife Institute of India's report of 2008. The office will be handled by an officer of the rank of conservator of forests.

Another office is proposed to be set up in Kolkata to cover the east and north-east tiger landscapes, while the Western Ghats landscape will be covered by a regional office in Bangalore.

Source: *The Times of India*, January 11, 2010

Corbett: Tigers, or discs?

A study commissioned by the Ministry of Tourism to understand the impact of tourism on Corbett **concluded that current tourism activities and infrastructure impinge on tiger and elephant corridors, and threaten to irretrievably block crucial links and isolate critical populations**. The rapid growth of tourism—both in terms of number of tourists and infrastructure is unsustainable.

Tourist resorts have all but blocked the very crucial Kosi river corridor that links Corbett to the Ramnagar Forest Division. This is a very significant and critical break in the Terai landscape. **New tourism hotspots are now crowding other corridors like Belpadao and Kotabagh**. It must be remembered that places not taken up by resorts are either already blocked by agriculture, towns, human habitation and industries or the terrain is just too steep for animals to use. Tourism, of course, is not the only activity blocking corridors—but it has compounded the problem immensely. It has also changed the land use pattern—from agricultural—fields and *kutchas* houses that animals could cross with relative ease—to resorts fortified in by concrete walls. Plus, the population of Ramnagar town is exploding and construction is moving both towards the forest and the Kosi river. Corbett is getting increasingly islanded as human activities and 'development' presses in. This has also led to increasing man animal conflict.

The other problem is the setting up of **angling resorts in the heart of CTR** (private land surrounded by tiger reserve), who have been given rights to two km of the Ramganga river for mahseer-angling for sport, as they claim that the mahseer is released after it is caught. However, some of these resorts are flouting laws. Also, their presence has encouraged other private players to open resorts here. Jamoon especially, once a rich tiger breeding area, is now highly disturbed with quad biking, zorbing etc.

The study also **questions tourism inside Corbett Tiger Reserve**, especially Dhikala, which now has over 120 beds, restaurants, landscaped gardens, a library, theatre, parking lot, etc. on what is a prime grassland. Other staying facilities at Bijrani, Gairal, Sarapduli, Khinanauli, Kanda, Lohachaur, Jhirna, etc have also seen increasing infrastructure in recent years. All these facilities are surrounded by electrically charged solar fences which unjustifiably restrict the free movement

of wildlife even inside the core area. About 150 vehicles with 600 people enter Corbett daily. Corbett sees an estimated two lakh visitors annually. This influx of tourists has led to conflict even within the park. In May 2005, a tigress, a mother of four young cubs, attacked and seriously injured a canteen worker.

Two-thirds of the resorts (there are 77, and 17 more coming up) offer activities not in sync with a wildlife destination—weddings, rain dances, disc parties, bike races, zorbing, etc. A third of the properties dump their waste outside, into the river or even across the road, into the park.

The tourism ministry is working on guidelines and regulations for resorts in such eco-fragile areas. Following these reports, MEF Jairam Ramesh has written to the Uttarakhand chief minister Ramesh Pokhriyal **to regulate tourism inside the reserve as per Project Tiger guidelines, declare the buffer areas as an eco-sensitive zone. He has said that "core areas are primarily meant for fostering a viable population of tigers and tourism should be low profile ventures involving host communities."** He also pressed that **the notification of the buffer** be expedited, to incorporate portions of Ramnagar, Lansdowne and West Terai division and declare the entire buffer area as eco-sensitive zone under the Environment Protection Act.

The Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh also wrote to the CM Ramesh Pokhriyal on April 16 urging him to "regulate tourism related commercial activities in the area besides declaring the surroundings of Corbett as ecologically sensitive under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Source: *'Report on impact of tourism on tigers and other wildlife in Corbett Tiger Reserve for Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India'* by Prerna Singh Bindra; January 12, 2010, For further details refer to :http://www.incredibleindia.org/newsite/pdf/corbett_tourism_report.pdf; Himesh Dhawan, TNN.

Comment: *The report met with great opposition from the tourism sector who campaigned against the ban of tourism in core critical habitats. The MoEF clarified that there was no ban on tourism in tiger reserves, but it would be strictly regulated in core habitats. It may also be remembered that tourism was not the mandate of Project Tiger and that attention to tourism cannot be at the cost of protection. Also, even with such a furor over the issue, in a state Board for Wildlife meeting held in early February, the CM*

of Uttarakhand told concerned forest officials that Corbett must yield an annual revenue of Rs 100 crore.

Last Year of the Tiger?

Last year, the World Bank, under its two-year old programme 'Global Tiger Initiative' organised a meet for officials from tiger range states to tackle the issue of tiger in Kathmandu, Nepal. A second meet under the same aegis was held for Asian (environment) ministers in Bangkok in January. A third meeting is scheduled in September at Vladivostok, Russia, for heads of states from tiger range countries. India will hold a separate "Global Tiger Summit" in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, to talk about how tigers can be saved.

The language has started to sound uncomfortably close to the rhetoric on climate change: in Thailand, a "target" of doubling tiger numbers in Asia by 2022 has been adopted. The World Bank is also attempting to provide loans for tiger conservation. India is crucial to this plan as half the world's tigers are here: twice, the Bank has discussed proposals with the Indian government, and twice it has been turned down.

Opinion is divided on the wisdom of India distancing itself from the GTI—but this debate has also served to sideline the real problem ailing our reserves. While many projects in general may scream bankruptcy, for tiger conservation, the real problem has been the utilisation of the money rather than the lack of it. Central assistance for tiger reserves goes through the state governments, which have emerged as a bottleneck for expenditure. Consider this: of the 13 states with tiger reserves in India, only five have asked for a second installment of funding, though the financial year will soon draw to a close. This follows a trend seen every year: tiger reserves are just not spending their money on time, and sometimes, not at all. Now, a new system has been put in place to make funds go directly to tiger reserves, under a tripartite memorandum of understanding. Under this funding strategy launched last year, an MoU has to be signed between the state, the centre and the field director of the tiger reserve for flow of funds. The funds for tiger conservation will now go to a dedicated tiger conservation fund (TCF) and not the state government. But while tiger states have signed on the dottedline, not a single state has authorised its TCF to receive money till date.

Source: Neha Sinha, *The Indian Express*, February 8, 2010,

Separate department for Forests & Wildlife

At the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) meeting held on March 18, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his capacity as Chairman announced the setting up of a dedicated Department of Wildlife under the charge of Minister of State for Environment and Forests (Independent Charge) Jairam Ramesh.

Informed sources confirmed that the decision was taken after Valmik Thapar, Member NWBL made a statement on the dire situation of wildlife in the country, as exemplified by the fate of the Sariska and Panna Reserves, which suffered local extinction of tigers at the hands of poachers.

The following is a brief on the NBWL meeting as detailed by MEF Jairam Ramesh at a press conference on March 21:

On separate department for forests and wildlife

We need specialisation to manage and conserve our forests and wildlife. The idea is not to have a top heavy bureaucracy with power concentrated in the centre. It is hoped that states will follow suit with similar specialisation. The idea of creating a separate department for forests and wildlife is that critical wildlife habitats can be effectively protected and monitored.

On pointing out that critical wildlife habitats have not been notified. Ramesh conceded that, "even though the settlement of rights under the Forest Rights Act has been expedited the notification of Critical Wildlife Habitats has lagged behind, indeed has not happened at all. We have only gone on one track. States are defying the Forest Conservation Act.

On buffer zones:

States are delaying in declaring buffer zones for tiger reserves: This is not laziness on their part. Delay in notification of buffers is not accidental, but a deliberate design, so that projects which will irrevocably damage biodiversity and habitats, can be cleared more easily, to allow for proliferation of harmful projects. If buffers are declared, clearance will be more stringent and difficult.

Take the example of Tadoba—there are no less than 40 to 50 power and mining projects around it. (Of which only one has been refused). Obviously the state is dragging its feet in declaring a buffer for the reserve. We need cooperation from the states if we are to save tigers.

Changing Pugmarks

"With a meeting of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) about to take place under the chairmanship of the PM on March 18, I knew that all of us required a tangible result from this meeting. And the only doable thing for the PM would be an approval for a new department of forest and wildlife, which could focus on issues that we had been fighting for so many decades.

The reality of wildlife landscapes in India has never been so grim. Ramesh had long discussions with the members of the NBWL before the PM's meeting and because he is a strategist he knew the immediate priorities that required resolution.

When we went into the meeting, none of us knew what the outcome would be. As a group of members coordinated by the minister, we achieved one of the long-standing demands of conservationists when the PM turned to Ramesh and said "Do it!". Thus a new department within the MoEF was born. This is a great opportunity for someone like Ramesh to structure and organise the mechanisms for a new department, which will lead to high focus and better governance of wildlife-related issues. The team in the ministry is also euphoric and conservationists must help so that this new department can trigger the necessary changes. State governments must create their own focused departments for better and efficient governance. In many of our states, forest ministers are also ministers of mining — this leads to a serious conflict of interests. This must end.

I believe this is a moment of hope and optimism and the younger generation of conservationists and wildlife scientists must engage with these developments with a new burst of energy. In my opinion, for the first time ever we have a minister who is ready to support and respect us. He has a vision for the future and that's why we have a new department that can further the interests of wildlife in this country. I am certain that one of the next steps will be to bring in young wildlife scientists to gauge the pulse of forests in India. This will be vital if we want to change the course. So far, it has been the rule of the spin doctors, this must end. It must become the era of the informed wildlife scientist and manager. It took us 25 years to get a department of forests and wildlife even when forestland makes up 21 per cent of the country's landmass. It's been an exhausting battle but let's not wait another 25 years to reform the processes of governance across the forests of this country."

Extract from Valmik Thapar's column in *The Hindustan Times*, March 23, 2010

Will declaration of buffer zones be with retrospective effect?

We don't know—but I will not shy away from declaring buffer from retrospective effect. If clearances is for projects proven to have a deleterious impact on the habitat and biodiversity, we are prepared to cancel the clearance. A classic example is the Athirapally project which had got clearance. We have issued a show cause notice to the Kerala Electricity Board, because of the opposition from local panchayats, the Kerala Biodiversity board, scientists, NGOs and the Kerala's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests—who has incidentally been with the Kerala Electricity board for ten years. There is enough evidence to show that it will do grave harm to the ecology and the biodiversity of the region.

On tiger deaths

The number of deaths last year was unnaturally high. There is also a bigger design to kill tigers, of not wanting tigers to survive. The real estate and mining mafia do not want tigers to survive in the forest. They want the forest to open up for mining and construction.

We drew the attention of the PM that many reserves were in a precarious state—and that we can expect other Sariska's in the future. We also appraised him of the problems in certain states—like Madhya Pradesh, and the unnatural mortality in Corbett. And he has promised to lend the weight of his office and take up the matter with the CMs of these states i.e MP, Uttarakhand.

Rehabilitation and relocation

Out of the 80,000 families to be relocated from tiger reserves, only 3,000 have been relocated so far. 77,000 need to be relocated, and will require a financial package of 8,000 crores. We have a current budget of 2,000 crores and the PM was appraised of this gap—and (on being questioned) No, we won't be taking money from the World Bank for this.

We are also looking at voluntary relocation of villages within Protected Areas, other than tiger reserves—this is equally important. The GOI will support any voluntary relocation from all protected areas, and will offer the same relocation package as it does to TRs.

Illegal mining

The issue of illegal mines also came up at the meeting. Illegal mining for iron ore and bauxite is rampant in various states like Orissa, Jharkhand, Karnataka. These have a grave impact on critical wildlife habitats, corridors—and also livelihoods of local people.

On incentivising states

No, there cannot be any penalty on states. I do not believe in penalties. We have to persuade, cajole, give financial incentives for them to preserve ecology and biodiversity to protect the tiger.

We have seen that there has been no recruitment for field staff for years and the existing staff is over 50. So can the centre think of providing a special financial package for new frontline staff, for say a five-year-period. This translates to 500 crores over a five-year-period. And yes, we are working towards how we can go about this.

Source: Prerna Singh Bindra; www.sanctuaryasia.com

No buffer for tiger reserves

The 'core-buffer' as a strategy i.e that the core areas of tiger reserves should be inviolate and the buffer areas only subject to 'conservation oriented land use' was one of the main strategies adopted by Project Tiger since its inception in 1973. Yet more than three decades later, **28 of the 39 tiger reserves still await notification of the buffer. Shockingly, none of the reserves in Madhya Pradesh, the 'tiger state of India', have buffer zones—including Kanha, Pench and Bandhavgarh. Nor has Karnataka bothered to notify buffer around Nagarhole or Bhadra, or Maharashtra cared to safeguard Melghat. This, inspite of the fact that notifying buffer zones is now a legal imperative under the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006.**

The importance of buffer to protect tigers cannot be stressed enough. The All India census of 2008, by Wildlife Institute of India recommended that source populations of core critical tiger habitats be connected by buffers and corridors, to ensure a future for tigers. Stresses Dr Rajesh Gopal, Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority, "Buffer zones around core tiger areas are crucial for the tiger, as they act as a filter between human habitation and tigers. Also, tigers are territorial animals commanding large home ranges, and buffers serve as transient homes for young tigers

and for the spillover population. Yet, most states have failed to notify buffers."

The Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh earlier took on the states when he accused them that delays in notification are not, "due to laziness on the part of the state governments, nor are they accidental. They are deliberate—to allow easier approval of projects with grave environmental consequences which threaten biodiversity in these areas."

A classic example is Tadoba in Maharashtra, where the state is using delaying tactics to notify the buffer and has put up proposals for no less than 40 coal and power projects bordering the reserve. In fact, it is alleged that the mining lobby has colluded with influential politicians to stall the notification of the buffer.

STOP PRESS: The Chief Minister of Maharashtra Ashok Chavan has finally cleared the notification files for Tadoba on April 30 on the advice of the Prime Minister and under consistent media pressure.

Funds released for village relocation

Given below is a table for funds released to states for village relocation from core/critical tiger habitats under 'Project Tiger' and 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats' from 2006 onwards.

(Rupees in lakhs) Figures rounded off

State	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Madhya Pradesh	230	2039	5819	-
Karnataka	58	980	-	-
Rajas-than	-	50	2343	10400
Uttarakhand	-	10	-	-
Orissa	-	-	350	-
Tamil Nadu	-	-	100	-
Assam	-	-	646	-
Chattis-garh	-	-	-	1000
Total	288	307	9,258	11,400

Source: 'Relocation of human settlements from wildlife sanctuaries' PIB Press Release, 20/01/10

Funds allocated to states

Given below are the details of the funds allocated by Project Tiger to tiger reserves along with their utilisation in the last three years

(Rs in lakhs)

Sl. No.	States	Release 2006-07	Utilised 2006-07	Release 2007-08	Utilised 2007-08	Release 2008-09	Utilised 2008-09	Release 2009-10
1.	Andhra Pradesh	46.675	35.000	73.9175	50.0005	56.9830	80.8100	94.9100
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	237.3725	212.690	110.2542	110.0347	246.1710	54.7800	48.8600
3.	Assam	87.431	65.000	95.6140	66.8830	1092.3790	210.0000	184.7700
4.	Bihar	69.9554	73.850	98.3205	47.9936	49.6730	0.0000	8.0000
5.	Chhattisgarh	10.00	12.820	35.2250	32.3547	169.8700	131.4300	1338.70
6.	Jharkhand	286.277	373.872	45.1600	18.3765	115.3770	112.9000	110.7350
7.	Karnataka	109.00	135.760	1159.7149	1126.8433	689.8390	640.9900	644.9720
8.	Kerala	155.967	103.872	153.2449	134.8449	267.0900	257.2900	281.1600
9.	Madhya Pradesh	897.942	701.729	2975.9411	2878.0761	6998.5420	5339.1600	1384.4460
10.	Maharashtra	238.56	242.650	295.7191	253.8468	411.1250	391.2200	362.8770
11.	Mizoram	115.16	77.974	82.9000	82.9000	241.4500	241.4500	128.0000
12.	Orissa	183.8717	139.185	43.2800	42.0400	625.9900	422.7300	170.0800
13.	Rajasthan	176.541	194.005	410.6800	325.9826	2708.9500	1092.2800	10694.1700
14.	Tamil Nadu	108.535	79.428	45.0000	44.2360	690.8060	431.2600	240.55
15.	Uttaranchal	192.78	201.660	202.0050	188.5550	462.8500	358.9600	241.7050
16.	U.P	183.265	101.770	134.8900	260.2435	417.5130	243.9700	298.5500
17.	West Bengal	190.5283	226.920	308.6741	117.4000	228.3940	231.5300	414.4370
	Total	3,289.8609	2,978.185	6,270.5403	5,780.6112	15,473.002	10,240.7600	16,646.9260

This table does not give a clear picture of the actual position unless the carry forward of the previous year ie 2005 is shown in a separate column. As can be seen from the table, rarely do states fully utilise the money allocated. For example, Rajasthan got 2,708.95 lakhs in 2008-2009, of which only Rs 1,092 lakhs was utilised. The story is similar across most states—only five of the 17 'tiger' states asked for a second installment of funding before this financial year.

Virtual surveys to monitor reserves

A virtual survey has been developed for the Ranthambhore landscape using Google Earth Pro. This user-friendly technology is an excellent ‘live’ communication tool, much like a simulated flight, allowing one to have a bird’s eye view of the area from as low as 700 mts. This ‘virtual view’ helps get an in-depth understanding of the topography—the habitat, vegetation, water sources etc.

It gives a clear, aerial picture of the landscape, and can be a useful tool for management of PAs. The potential is immense: It can help delineate between productive and not-so productive landscapes as it draws an overall view of the vegetation, streams, water holes valleys etc, while also giving a picture of ‘weak points’ i.e. areas vulnerable to poaching and conflict. The imagery will help strengthen and strategise protection as well as indicate usage by wildlife, communities and tourism. It can be used to assess afforestation schemes, and which areas must be taken up around protected habitats for agro-forestry. Areas where regeneration of forests is vital can be identified, and monitored. It clearly defines regenerated landscapes by showing how areas that were once villages are now rich meadows with a high density of ungulates and tigers. Also, such surveys can help prioritise villages that need to be relocated from within critical tiger habitats. It is also feasible to assess the functionality of corridors by taking the ‘flight’ path along the corridor. This one, for example, shows that the Ranthambhore-Darra corridors are still functional, while those to Sariska are irrevocably broken.

Understanding the immense potential of such virtual survey, The MoEF has planned to prepare such surveys across ten tiger landscapes in India—the Kanha-Pench landscape and Tadoba is currently being prepared. The Virtual Survey has been conceived by Valmik Thapar and developed by Dr Koustabh Sharma. The one limiting factor is that the satellite imagery provided may be dated, say about five-years-old. But this can be overcome if the demand for imagery over these landscapes increase, as it will prompt Google to update more frequently.

TIGER VS DEVELOPMENT

The dominating issue in the first quarter of 2010 (indeed over the years) has been the immense pressure for fast clearance of development projects—coal, thermal power plants, mines, dams and highway projects that impinge on, and will devastate, critical tiger and wildlife habitats. Here is a roundup on the ongoing onslaught on tiger habitat that made headlines this year:

NH 7 threatens tigers of central India

The National Highway-7 through the Kanha-Pench corridor continued to make news. Readers of *TigerLink* are well-acquainted with this issue. **The proposal to expand this highway into a four-lane one has been rejected by the National Board of Wildlife, the NTCA, and the Central Empowered Committee (CEC)** of the Supreme Court. Given the importance of this corridor the CEC and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) suggested an alternate route that passes through Chindwara, the constituency of Highways and Transport Minister Kamal Nath.

Yet, **the Amicus Curiae of SC, Harish Salve in a note to the Apex court asked for clearing of not just the proposed expansion but also the alternative alignment outside of the park.**

His note to the CEC, in the first half of January, **gave a seal of approval to this damaging road** by suggesting that the Apex court instruct the NHAI to deposit Rs 50 crore for ‘counterbalancing ameliorative measures’ since ‘there is inevitably going to be some disruption being caused to the Pench National Park’. It further states that to reduce the traffic pressure on the forest stretch of NH7, NHAI should be directed to develop the available alternative alignments as well. Put simply, Salve advises the court to start construction on all major roads in the area. He also suggests that the highway should have 13 underpasses for the animals—though experts have stressed that underpasses are of *no* use to megafauna like tiger, though they may be used by small animals like hare, jackal.

As is well-known, **NH-7 encircles Pench and will cut over nine km of critical tiger habitat. This corridor has been identified a very vital tiger corridor linking Kanha, Pench and Satpura Tiger Reserves.** This landscape—amongst the four most vital tiger habitats in the country—has two source populations and a total of about 140 tigers. Scientists have warned that if the corridor is broken the future of the tiger in this landscape is doomed.

Following media reports, the Amicus withdrew his note to the Supreme Court on January 22, admitting that he had made a mistake. However, the fate of the tiger of the Central India landscape still hangs in balance as the case is presently in the Supreme Court, and has snowballed into a contentious political issue as can be seen from the report below.

Source: Bahar Dutt, *CNN IBN*, ‘Road through Pench Park to endanger tigers,’ ‘Note sounding

tiger's death knell withdrawn', 20th, 21st and 22nd January; Jay Mazoomdaar 'Surrendering-the-last-frontier', January 23, *Open*

Note: In spite of the fact that the matter is pending in the Supreme Court, the National Highways Authority of India has gone ahead with NH 7 on the Maharashtra side cutting over 22,000 trees and causing damage to crucial tiger habitat.

MoEF blocking roads : Kamal Nath to PM

The Minister of Road Transport and Highways Kamal Nath accused MEF Jairam Ramesh of blocking key highway projects by stalling his Ministry's clearances. Nath asked the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to intervene and ensure that the Environment Ministry fast-track clearances. In his letter to the PM, Nath gave details of road projects awaiting approval from the MoEF, which has claimed that these projects are detrimental to wildlife and forest cover. Sources said Kamal Nath's letter mentioned three projects in Maharashtra and at least four in Assam among others. These include the stretch on NH 7. In his letter, Nath is said to have suggested that in cases where there was no need for land acquisition, clearances should be given within 30 days and that in other cases approvals should not take more than two months.

Source: Amitabh Sinha & Gunjan Pradhan Sinha, *The Indian Express*, 23rd March 2010

Comment: Incidentally, Kamal Nath was earlier the Minister of Environment and Forests.

Ministers complain, PM wants quick eco-clearance for projects

There was more trouble for the MEF over the issue of 'delayed' environmental clearances. *HT* reported that the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh asked the Planning Commission to come up with a process that will give faster environment clearances to infrastructure projects, after three ministers complained to him about delays. "The PM has asked us to work on fast-track environmental clearances to boost the infrastructure sector," said Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Planning Commission's deputy chairperson. "We will consult the environment ministry soon." Road Transport Minister Kamal Nath, Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde and Water Resources Minister Pawan Bansal have allegedly complained that the environment ministry is delaying

projects. The issue was raised at the Planning Commission meeting on March 23.

When Ramesh took over as MEF in mid-2009, he had voiced his determination that several projects would not get environment or forest clearance unless a comprehensive impact assessment is done. Previously more than 99 per cent projects sailed through—mainly on the strength of fraudulent EIAs.

Source: Chetan Chauhan, *The Hindustan Times*, March 25, 2010

Jairam denies PM move to fasttrack clearances

Following the above report, *The Indian Express* reported on March 26th (Swaraj Thapa: *Jairam cuts no ice with PM, GoM to clear projects*) that the PM constituted a Group of Ministers (GoM) — comprising Steel Minister Virbhadra Singh, Power Minister Sushil kumar Shinde, Planning Commission Vice-Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Coal Minister Sriprakash Jaiswal and Ramesh to ensure that all pending projects stalled by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) were put on the fast-track. However, Ramesh categorically denied that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had set up a ministerial panel to give environment clearances and said his ministry would continue to give approvals to infrastructure projects. As mentioned before, Ramesh's strict adherence to environmental norms has upset quite a few of his ministerial colleagues some of whom have complained of delay in infrastructural projects because of 'hurdles' posed by the Environment Ministry. Ramesh, however, said his ministry was not against development but was only trying to strike the right balance between development and ecology.

The MoEF ministry issued an order stating that from April 1, terms of reference for giving environment clearance would be valid for two years and in exceptional cases, for three years. Till now, there was no time limit fixed to complete this process.

On March 31, the MEF held a press conference, and **took a defiant stand saying that his ministry was not a rubber stamp to give clearances.**

The MEF has been at loggerheads with the Minister of Highways and Transport —incidentally his predecessor at one time—over the issue of highways not receiving clearances. Ramesh said that he had recommended that an in-principle project may be given by the cabinet but that there be no site expenditure till clearance was given by the MoEF.

He reiterated that **the Ministry's stand on NH 7 remained the same, and the expansion of the road through the Pench-Kanha landscape was unacceptable. Also, NH 37 through the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong corridor was a non-starter.** Speaking on the issue, the MEF said that roads through critical tiger and wildlife habitats and corridors were not going to be cleared. The ministry had recommended that roads through forests should be not more than two lane, and also some rules regarding speed and night traffic must apply. At the same time, his ministry had also **recently cleared defence-sensitive 35 road projects along the China border in Arunachal, Himachal, Uttarakhand.**

On the issue of illegal mining—many of which come in good forest areas and critical habitats—the MEF said he had spoken to the home ministry, in association with other relevant ministries, to prepare a map of the extent of encroachment of illegal mines in its entirety, across the country as their ramification were not just ecological but also involved issues of national security, etc.

A TigerLink Report

MoEF defines 'no-go' areas for coal

Spelling out the broad parameters for opening coal mines in future, MEF Jairam Ramesh on Friday said **about 35 per cent of the total coal fields in the country lay in heavily forested or ecologically fragile areas and should be completely barred from mining. He said the ministry had demarcated 'go' and 'no-go' areas based on a study using satellite pictures.** "About 35 per cent of the total area is in 'no-go' zone, where no coal mining could take place here because of good forest cover. Also, the 'go' areas did not mean automatic approval, only that prima-facie the MoEF will consider it for approval or rejection as the case maybe. He also stressed that his recommendation was to maximize production from the 'go' areas, and to optimally utilise the current mines. He said that there must be 'go'-'no-go' analysis prior to allocation of coal blocks—this would stop situations like Tadoba, where many new mines are coming up in addition to old ones.

A major portion of coal mining areas in 'no go' zones is in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh," he said. Ramesh said that the PM wanted the ministries of environment and coal to jointly decide whether coal blocks should be allocated in certain areas. "If the environment ministry was involved in the beginning, we would not have allowed the proposal for

mining near the Tadoba tiger reserve. The idea should not have come in the first place," the minister said.

However, another report on April 29, quoted that 'stung by the criticism MEF Jairam Ramesh has left it to the Prime Minister to decide on the mechanism for approving coal mines. Jairam has attributed the holding up of projects to an attempt by his Ministry "to balance conservation and development". Evolving an empirical formula to compute Weighted Forest Cover (WFC), the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), has suggested that areas which have a WFC higher than 10 per cent would be Category A, and an "application for forest clearance will not be entertained in such areas".

The remaining areas; areas in Category B, would be open for applications, which would be processed under the Forest (Conservation) Act with the rider that they should not form part of any national park, wildlife sanctuary or important wildlife corridor, and should not be an island of disturbance in an otherwise unfragmented landscape. The note — which has Jairam's approval—to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for "further necessary action", says that this criterion would release two-thirds of the proposed coal blocks in "relatively less problematic zones". An internal Ministry paper shows that this formula would free 649 mines in eight coalfields

Source: *Express New Service, DNA*, March 27, 2010; Amitav Ranjan, "Accused of delaying, Jairam asks PM to decide on mine approvals", *The Indian Express* April 29, 2010

Less funds for the tiger

The budget for **Project Tiger has shrunk to a mere 196 crores in 2010-2011 as compared to 204 crores in the last financial year.** To put things into perspective, compare this to the Commonwealth Games (incidentally, the mascot is Sheru, the tiger) budget for Rs 1,620 crore, or even within the environment ministry, the—failed—Ganga Action Plan which bagged Rs 500 crores in the current financial year. Did you say committed to save the tiger?

The total Project Tiger budget for this plan period is Rs 650 crores, even though the authorities had pressed for Rs 5,000 crores to facilitate protection and relocation of villages from critical tiger habitats. It may be pertinent to note that since its inception in 1973 funds allocated to Project Tiger total less than 750 crores. This will delay the crucial task of village relocation from within core tiger habitats. It has been well-established that tigers need inviolate space, undisturbed by humans, if they are to survive. The central government has announced an enhanced package of Rs ten lakh per family for rehabilitation. Most villages within tiger reserves have

indicated a desire to move out of the forests to be part of the mainstream of development. **No less than 702 villages await the move, to get into to the mainstream of development, but there is simply no budget for it.**

It is also alleged that allocating a lower budget is a deliberate move on the part of the government who is interested to partner with the World Bank on tiger conservation. The World Bank is keen for India be part of its Global Tiger Initiative, but this has been resisted due to the bank's abysmal record of investing in damaging development projects in critical tiger habitats. Though the Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh denied that they will accept World Bank money for relocation of villages, he concedes that he is not averse to accepting money from the World Bank coffers.

Source: Perna Singh Bindra, *The Sunday Guardian*, April 10

Destroy tiger kills?

It is learnt that the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has passed a directive that carcasses of tiger kills should be destroyed in case if it is cattle, to avoid poisoning by irate villages seeking revenge. This issue has become contentious, and the competence of the authority on such a technical matter is being questioned. The NTCA has asked for the directive to be withdrawn, and it is expected that the authority will come up shortly with a guideline on the same.

Gola corridor lost?

As detailed in the previous *TigerLink*, the Gola river corridor, a crucial tiger and elephant corridor that connected the Terai East with the West divisions is all but lost. Already under pressure from boulder mining, possible expansion of an existing highway etc, the corridor is now all but eroded by an Indian Oil Depot, an Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) encampment and a railway sleeper factory. If this link is broken the connect of the Terai from the **Yamuna river near Saharanpur, in the West, to Bagmati river near Chitwan National Park in Nepal, in the East, will be lost forever.** However, following media reports, a high level meeting was organised by the MoEF to look into the issue and site visits were made to assess the situation. Also, the MoEF is in talks with ITBP, and the response has been positive. The DG and special Secretary (Forests) Dr PJ Dilip Kumar met with, and also wrote to the DG, ITBP suggesting that a suitable,

alternate site be considered instead of the present camp which sits right on the corridor, so that it can be restored to wildlife.

However, a recent visit to the area shows that the situation has deteriorated very fast. While the ITBP headquarter has shown a positive attitude to shift the camp to enable the corridor to be restored to wildlife, at the camp in Gola permanent structures have been built, where as earlier there were only tents. Worse, a tall barbed wire fence and wall is being constructed blocking passage. Sources say that the state is not interested in moving matters to restore the corridor.

Unless, action is taken now, this crucial corridor will be lost.

Source: Perna Singh Bindra

Technology to track poachers

Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh launched M-STrIPES, a system that would **enable daily on-site monitoring and evaluation as well as record wildlife crimes, to "strengthen the anti-poaching drive and bring transparency in patrolling systems."** M-STrIPES, or **Monitoring System for Tigers' - Intensive Protection and Ecological Status**, has been developed as a collaborative initiative between the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Zoological Society of London and would be implemented as a pilot project within two months at six tiger reserves.

"The system has been developed as a tool for field directors, who would monitor progress on a daily basis—how many patrols have been carried out, which areas have been covered," Ramesh said.

"Each forest guard will be equipped with a GPS system, so there would be an idea on the actual area patrolled. That would help to bring more transparency in surveillance," explained YV Jhala, a scientist from WII who was involved in its development. The system can also be used for curbing illegal mining activity, he added. Asked whether the states had sufficient funds to carry out the conservation efforts, the minister said, "For the first time since Independence, there is no lack of funds with the forest departments in any state."

Ramesh also said that most states have started the process of recruitment of forest guards in a major way. "The single biggest problem that we have faced is that for 20 years there has been no recruitment at the forest guard level," he said. "The last recruitment in Assam had been in 1992. They have recruited 400 forest guards last week." States like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Karnataka have also begun recruiting,

he said. "We will now have a younger, more educated forest guard population who will be better equipped."

Ramesh stressed on the recruitment of local population in the Special Tiger Protection Force. "At least 30 per cent of the forest guards should be from the local population," he said.

Source: 'New software to track tigers,' *The Hindu*, April 16, 2010

Comment: *New technology is very welcome, but the basics must be taken care of first. And even though there are more funds than ever before the field staff is still starved for funds.*

Gujarat rejects 'tiger for lion' offer

MEF Jairam Ramesh had reportedly 'offered' that tigers may be introduced in the jungles of Dangs district in lieu of lions from the Gir National Park. However, the Gujarat government seems to have rejected it.

This offer of 'tigers in exchange of lions' came from the Centre following Gujarat's consistent refusal to part with its lions. Confirming that such an offer had indeed come from the Centre some time back, State Principal Secretary, Environment and Forests SK Nanda said that the Centre has been told that the Gujarat Government would study the proposal.

He added that there is no space for tigers now in Dangs which had last seen tigers a quarter-century back. Nanda said that currently Dangs has over 300 villages, hinting that shifting them would be a long drawn process, if possible at all.

Source: 18, February 2010, Ahmedabad, *PTI*

Comment: *South Gujarat has what is termed as 'empty forests', there is simply no, or at best, very little prey base due to hunting by the local population. While the wisdom of this offer is questionable, there is no denying that translocation of lions is a must, given the risk of outbreak of disease in its only population at Gir National Park and surrounding forests.*

Resort on Kanha-Pench corridor?

The business proposal for a Public Private Partnership Eco-tourism Project in the Kurai district (comprising three forest ranges—Rukhad, Ari and Kurai) was dismissed today in a meeting held on April 15 in the MoEF under the chairmanship of the Special Secretary & DG(Forests), Dr PJ Dilip Kumar given the ecological concerns. The project proponents, Great Plains Conservation & SFM Africa (represented by TOFT) proposed to have a 50 year lease, the use of which would

be exclusive, as would the carbon market. The project including eco-lodges (atleast one or two km inside the reserve forest) and a children's nature study camp, would offer a high value/low volume and low impact/high job creation model. The proponents promised that the project would be 'owned' by the communities, though it was a little unsure what this implied. They proposed to protect and restore the landscape, and said they had the confidence of the state forest department. The sale of Tiger Carbon Bonds™ will generate up to \$200m (present value) over a 50 year carbon project cycle, of which the majority will be used for community development, forest protection and wildlife management:

Details of the meeting:

- It was unanimously agreed that the **proposal was inconceivable since it sits bang on the very sensitive and crucial Pench-Kanha corridor**, which is also a wildlife rich area, and has recorded continued tiger presence. It was felt that this would also weaken the opposition to the expansion of NH 7, as the land desired to be leased adjoins the highway. It was also brought out that if the project proponent wants to restore corridors, then it would be advisable to pick up revenue land, and restore degraded forests. This was dismissed by the company.
- It was also argued that such a project should first be done on a smaller, micro scale with small investments, and with the involvement and participation of communities.
- Another concern was benefit to communities. It was feared that it may lead to discontent and antagonism among the local communities. And that there may be **a potential problem/conflict between "requirements of high end, low impact tourists" and current land use by local people**. Also, the promise of future, uncertain benefits like carbon credits were not sufficient. The **concern for this setting a harmful precedent** was also raised.
- Also, it would be advisable to look at the **legal aspect**, even beyond the Forest Conservation Act or Wildlife Protection Act, court rulings etc.. The business aspect also should be reconsidered for a project of this kind would invite PILs--given the impact on wildlife, local communities.
- It was pointed that **Africa and India could not be compared as forest sizes, conservation values and socio-economic dynamics** are vastly different. Also, very significantly, India does not have a policy

on such matter, so adhoc piecemeal clearances cannot be accorded

The chair was very categorical on the above concerns and endorsed that such a critical wildlife corridor could not be trifled with. He advised that the state consider proposing an eco-sensitive zone. And that the government eco-tourism board do a study, keeping this proposal aside, on what should be the approach should be to tourism outside PAs—away from 'tigercentric' tourism.

He cautioned forest officers to value their forests and understand it's worth, and advised that the best possible protection must be accorded to the corridor.

PM to states: save the tiger

The Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh gave a fillip to tiger conservation by writing to Chief Ministers of three key tiger-bearing states: Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra that **"the core critical habitats of tiger reserves have to be safeguarded immediately from several decimating factors like man-tiger conflict, poaching and resource dependency of local people while ensuring availability of forest areas in the fringes for spillover population of wild animals."**

He points out that the states hold important source populations and there was an urgent need to secure them through concerted efforts. The Prime Minister urged the CMs to expatiate **notifying the buffer areas of tiger reserves besides notifying such areas as ecologically sensitive zones under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.** He also advised them on the urgent need to **step up protection** in a professional manner by appointing the Special Tiger Protection Force. He urged that **core critical tiger habitats be made inviolate.** He advised Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal, CM Uttarakhand that the Corbett's core must be made inviolate by shifting out gujjars. The PM also recommended landscape level planning for Corbett and to mainstream tiger concerns with ecologically sustainable livelihood options. Tourism was another issue of concern, and he urged both Uttarakhand and MP to regulate tourism related commercial activities.

In the letter to Maharashtra, the PM focused particularly on Tadoba but asked the state government to quickly declare buffer zones. This appears to have had an immediate impact as Maharashtra notified Tadoba's buffer—which had

been delayed for long allegedly to cater to the mining lobby.

Madhya Pradesh too has come under the scanner for unhindered tourism in tiger reserves with the PM asking for greater regulation, and to expedite rehabilitation of people from within tiger reserves.

Green tribunal to deal with environment crime

The Lok Sabha on 30th April adopted the National Green Tribunal (NGT) Bill, 2009. It envisages the setting up of a national tribunal, a judicial body exclusively to deal with environmental laws and to provide citizens a right to environment. The main Bench of the tribunal will be set up in Bhopal, "the site of one of humanity's worst industrial tragedies", said MEF Jairam Ramesh.

The Tribunal would have four circuit Benches. It would deal with all environmental laws on air and water pollution, the Environment Protection Act, the Forest Conservation Act and the Biodiversity Act. With this effort, India would join Australia and New Zealand, which have such specialised environment tribunals.

Ramesh said a Bill to set up the National Environment Protection Authority would be introduced in the monsoon session of parliament to monitor the implementation of environment laws.

The Tribunal members would be chosen by a committee.

Source: J Balaji, *The Hindu*; May 1, 2010, www.sanctuaryasia.com

Global Tiger Forum

The advertisement for secretary general, administrative officer and support staff for Global Tiger Forum was circulated among the tiger range countries. The Core Working Group of Global Tiger Forum met on April 2010 and decided to extend the date of application by two months. Those wishing to apply may do so upto 15th May 2010. It is also felt that the GTF should play a more proactive role and be an umbrella organisation to assess tiger habitats, populations, threats across range countries to draw a realistic and comprehensive picture of the status of wild tigers, co-predators and prey species across its range. The secretariat should work towards the coordination and cooperation between various range countries to serve the cause of tiger protection better.

Committee to assess relocation

The National Tiger Conservation Authority in a note dated April 23 constituted committees for monitoring the progress of village relocation for Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The teams will assess actual progress on the field, the implementation and relocation in context of the legal framework and guidelines issued by the NTCA. They will also record any possible shortfall or complaints of the relocated people.

Appraisal of mining proposals

In view of the extreme pressure for clearances to myriad mining proposals and the grave consequences to wildlife habitats, the National Tiger Conservation Authority in an order dated May 3, 2010 has set up a committee for appraisal of mining proposals in buffers areas and tiger corridors particularly for Tadoba, Bandhavgarh, Kanha landscapes and Kanha-Pench and Satpuda-Pench corridors. The committee members are expected to visit the areas shortly and come up with a report on the same within a month.

Minister takes up cause for frontline staff

MEF Jairam Ramesh wrote to **Chief Ministers urging their personal intervention to ensure that the vacant posts of frontline staff is filled up immediately.** Shortage of staff, even in critical tiger habitats has been of continual concern, with recruitment being frozen from two to three decades in most states.

In some states like Jharkhand the situation is particularly bad with 2,937 vacancies in a sanctioned strength of 4,945, for West Bengal out of a sanctioned 4,492, 1,431 posts are vacant. Even important tiger states like Uttarakhand, Karnataka and Orissa a third of the posts are vacant. The Minister has also urged that **frontline forestry personnel be provided adequate promotional avenues and opportunities to upgrade their skills to enable them to meet the new challenges in management and enforcement at the grassroot level.** Ramesh noted that forest guards, foresters, rangers etc are doing stellar work in very adverse conditions and with very limited facilities and equipment. He stressed that their welfare must be given paramount importance, if we are to protect our flora and fauna, increase our forest cover, take on wildlife crime, and use forests to mitigate the impact of climate change.

NEWS FROM THE STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

- There is concern over the impact on Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve as a tunnel under construction in the Subbaiah Veligonda project collapsed resulting in the heavy discharge of water. This could deplete ground water in part of the reserve, and also drain water from any water body on the surface over that area.
- N Shiva Kumar reports in *The Hindu* (March 2) about rapid deforestation in Adilabad. Though officially the tree cover is about 45 per cent of its geographical area of over 16,000 sq km, the reality is different. By some estimates nearly a third of the seven lakh hectares of forests have been felled in the last two decades. Large scale timber smuggling goes on with impunity, even more so after the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. The Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary, a good tiger habitat in the region, is the worst affected. The forest department has expressed helplessness in tackling this decimation.
- Further reports from **Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary** from the Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society (HyTiCoS) confirm the devastation in this tiger habitat. During 2006 and 2007, HyTiCoS and the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology confirmed the presence of tigers in two different areas of the sanctuary. Continued efforts during 2008 and 2009 revealed presence of tigers and leopards (pugmarks, deer and livestock kills) both inside and adjacent to the sanctuary. **Disturbed severely during the last five years by various activities such as tree felling, cattle grazing, and poaching, now only a few large tracts of this dry-deciduous forest remain pristine with minimal human disturbance. Not surprisingly, evidence of tiger presence is dwindling. Investigations by the police also indicate that hunting especially of ungulates for meat was a routine occurrence in these parts.** While efforts are being made to provide compensation for cattle kills, involve local people in anti-poaching efforts and to repair and replenish water holes during this scorching summer much more requires to be done.

ASSAM

Straying tiger captured, released in Manas

A tiger mauled a young girl and injured three villagers after it strayed into a human settlement close to Geleki

reserve forest in Sibsagar district, Upper Assam on March 29. Frightened by the huge mob that gathered, the tiger sought refuge in a house. A rescue team from Kaziranga was rushed to the site and at least six tranquiliser shots had to be used to immobilise the adult male and successfully capture it.

The tiger was sent to the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Care at Bokakhat for recuperation before being radio-collared and released in the Manas Tiger Reserve, where it was felt the tiger would have a better chance at survival, as tiger density is very low, and there is sufficient prey base.

The operation was carried out with the help of experts from the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Source: *The Pioneer*, March 2010; Wildlife Trust of India

Highest tiger density in Kaziranga

Kaziranga has the world's highest density of tigers according to a report titled '**Monitoring of Tigers and Prey Animals of Kaziranga National Park**'. **The report says that the density of tigers at Kaziranga is 32.64 tigers per 100 sq.km., the highest in any known tiger habitat.** One of the key reasons for the high density is the abundance of prey which includes hog deer, sambar, the swamp deer and the wild buffalo. During his visit to the park, MEF Jairam Ramesh said that the reserve has brought fresh hopes for tiger conservation in the country.

The report was compiled on the basis of a study carried out by Aaranyak, a society for biodiversity conservation in northeast India, the Assam Forest Department and the Kaziranga authorities. Intensive field surveys were carried out between October 2008 and March 2009, with over 3,500 man hours invested in the study. Thirty-nine individual tigers, (including one cub) were camera-trapped indicating that tigers are thriving in the park.

The study team has recommended regular monitoring of tigers and prey to understand population dynamics and ecology in such a high-density tiger habitat. They also cautioned that considering the high density of tigers, human-tiger conflict on the fringe areas of the park may increase and recommended that the park management take necessary short-term and long-term steps to mitigate such conflict and that regular monitoring of tigers is a must. Frontline staff in the park could be trained in monitoring of camera traps and also in recording sighting data of tigers and other animals on a regular basis.

Source: "Monitoring of Tigers and Prey Animals of Kaziranga National Park"; Sushanta Talukdar, 'Kaziranga has the world's highest tiger density: report', *The Hindu*

Ramesh visits Kaziranga

MEF Jairam Ramesh interacted with the guards during his Kaziranga visit and requested Assam forest minister Rockybul Hussain to provide forest guards and foresters with more facilities. Ramesh was impressed by the large number of women in the frontline staff and said special care should be taken for the facilities for women in camps in the wildlife areas. He called for recruitment every year. One forest guard voiced his concern on the growing encroachment and criminals taking shelter and said there was a need to upgrade arms and equipment. Another spoke on the need for wildlife training and Ramesh asked the state forest minister to explore the possibility of training at the Wildlife Institute of India.

Forest guards in Assam — Kaziranga, Manas and Nameri — will also be provided PDA's (personal digital assistant) like their counterparts in Kanha. Ramesh offered additional financial assistance to Kaziranga if required, and added that the centre would provide the field staff with night vision devices. He suggested that the revenue from tourism etc should be recirculated for the benefit of local communities.

Source: Roopak Goswami & Sarat Sarama, 'Boost to tiger conservation', 'Ramesh visits Nagaon, Kaziranga' April 8, 2010, *The Telegraph*

BSF to help protect Kaziranga

The Assam government has joined hands with the Border Security Force (BSF) for providing manpower and intelligence assistance in protecting Kaziranga National Park in view of the increased pressure on poaching. The BSF unit based close to Kaziranga at Panbari has agreed to extend help in checking poaching and other wildlife crime. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Assam, is reported to have said that the BSF would provide manpower for patrolling both inside and outside the 860 sq km national park and its dog squad located at Panbari will also be used to help track down poachers. A unified combat team consisting of personnel from the BSF, police, forest and representatives of the district administration has also been formed to keep a check on poaching in the park.

Source: IANS, February 25, *The Indian Express*, February 26

SSB proposal to set up border outpost in Manas National Park

The Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) has sought permission from the Assam Forest Department to set up a border outpost inside the Manas National Park along the Indo-Bhutan border. Similar outposts have been set up in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve along the border with Nepal. The SSB said that though there are five outposts in Chirang district but they are nearly 20km from the border and were not helping in preventing subversive activities, including wildlife crime.

Forest officials have expressed their concern about the setting up of the outpost on account of the disturbance this would cause to the wildlife. It is feared that the road construction itself would be a disturbance and gives access to unsavoury elements ie timber smugglers, graziers, poachers etc. Also, it would lead to more road kills. The SSB is reported to have said that its structures will be temporary and all care would be taken to conserve wildlife.

Source: *The Telegraph*, 21, January 2010

Corrigendum

The last issue of *TigerLink* reported that the Assam government had not formed the Kaziranga Tiger Foundation to facilitate direct funding from NTCA. The Chief Wildlife Warden, S. Chandra telephonically informed on January 20th that the news was out dated, and that the foundation had been created for all the three tiger reserves before December 2009.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Tiger killed, eaten by villagers

A full grown tiger was hunted down by villagers of Numuk in Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district. It was tied to a stake, skinned, cut and the meat consumed by villagers. The skin was allegedly sold to a certain businessman from Assam for Rs 1.5 lakh, indicative of flourishing wildlife trade in the region. "They must have gone to hunt small prey when they came across this tiger and killed it. The village is about 30 km from Along. It was shot dead, and the skin was sold to some trader from Guwahati at Silapathar. Deer is also regularly poached, I believe that wildlife crime is rampant here," said Tapak Kato, an eyewitness from Namuk. In the last one year this is reportedly the third incident of

tiger poaching in the area but the first with photographic evidence.

Source: *NDTV*, *Mid Day*; January 25, 2010

In Arunachal a tiger skin is worth five kg rice

Investigations reveal that the need for a packet of salt and a small bag of rice can fuel the killing of a tiger in the forests in Arunachal Pradesh bordering China. Tiger meat is consumed and the skin and other parts are trafficked across the border, to China. "Hundreds of endangered animals are killed in the forest just to eke out a living," said Noory Noshi of Limeking village located 50 km from the international line of control. "Poverty-stricken tribals sell the animal skin to Chinese traders. In exchange, they may get about five kg of rice and a kilo of salt."

There is simply no patrolling on the border and the old trade route is now being used for trafficking of wildlife products. Noshi pointed out that this route is also the entry point for illegal immigrants who slip into Arunachal Pradesh.

There are no roads, communication facilities are lacking. In the absence of infrastructure, food is scarce. So a pack of salt and a pack of rice cost around Rs 200 a kilo each and a packet of noodles costs Rs 300," said Rajesh Tacho, a local MLA. It is learnt that the Chinese highway is barely three km from the line of control, making such illegal barter easy. Sources say that most of the animals killed are smuggled through Chinese villages Oganjo, Ume, Dian and Asapila. Most of the banned wildlife products are smuggled in haversacks or home-made cane bags. Porters are also used for the job.

Arunachal's Deputy Conservator of Forests, M K Palit, admitted that killing of wildlife was rampant in the state's forests. He attributed it mainly to the age-old tribal traditions and excessive issue of licensed weapons to villagers. Palit pointed to the emerging role of traffickers in smuggling animal products outside the country in recent months. "Earlier, it was killing for food, but now it is also to make quick money, says Palit. However, he hastened to add that "the situation is not very alarming and the government is doing its best.

Source: 'In Arunachal Pradesh a tiger skin is worth 5 kg rice', *Mid Day*, 22 Apr 2010

BIHAR

CM Visits Valmiki

On April 28, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar visited Valmiki Tiger Reserve, when in the region for a political campaign. The CM was delighted to see fresh tracks

of a tigress and her cub in Jatashankar in Ganauli range of the park. He was fascinated by the myriad flora and fauna of the reserve and expressed his concern that commercial exploitation in and around the park was negatively impacting Valmiki. It is possible he was referring to the sand mining which is rampant around the park. He expressed an interest in the new camera trap methodology to estimate tiger population, which was explained to him. Conservationists' expectations have been raised by the visit, and hope to garner the CM's support for the reserve.

Source: Samir Kumar Sinha, Wildlife Trust of India

Tourism promotion plans for Valmiki

Efforts are being made to promote tourism in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve. Authorities have prepared a Rs 30-lakh proposal for improving the condition of forest roads falling under Divisions I & II of the reserve. There are also plans to enhance the accommodation capacity of the reserve's rest houses which can presently accommodate only four persons at a time. A website on the reserve will also be launched. Part of the Rs 1.08 crore fund received from the Centre under the Annual Plan of Operation is to be used for the purpose.

Source: Sanjeev Kumar Verma, *Times News Network*; December 17, 2009

Mining ban shows positive results

The Supreme Court ban on mining of stones from the bed of the Pandai river has started to show positive results in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve. The forest is gradually regenerating along the river banks and this in turn is allowing easier movement of both prey and predator species. Tiger movement that was previously restricted to only the west of the river has now been reported from the eastern part as well. However, mining continues within one kilometer of certain parts of the reserve boundary. Though licenses for sand and stone mining have been issued for areas outside the reserve, illegal mining is occurring even within the boundaries. Nineteen tractors with sand and stones mined allegedly from within the reserve, were seized by the police in November, 2009

Source: Sanjeev Kumar Verma, 'Ban on mining a boon for tiger reserve' *Times News Network*; December 10, 2010

How many tigers?

There is alarming news from the ongoing tiger census from Valmiki, Bihar's only tiger reserve — only three adult tigers have been caught by camera traps so far. The census is set to wrap up in June.

While the reserve, spread over 880 sq km, including 340 sq km core area in West Champaran along the Nepal border, boasted 63 tigers in 1990, the number had fallen to 13 in the last tiger census in 2006. Valmiki declared a national park in 1991, has been categorised as a 'Level I' reserve on account of the large area, ample vegetation and abundant availability of species of tiger prey. "Phase-I data collection on indirect sign of carnivores, encounter rate and concentration of prey species is encouraging," said JP Gupta, field director of the reserve.

Gupta stressed the need for a dedicated and armed task force to take on poachers. The reserve has a 40 per cent shortage of staff from the sanctioned strength of 171. Of the 40 unarmed Special Auxiliary Police personnel, 22 left last year after not getting their salary for about an year. Rangers also do not have arms, and the staff is facing a severe fuel shortage. Besides rampant poaching from the Nepal side, the anthropogenic pressure on the park is immense. This was also seen in the recent tiger death case (see crime for details). Sashastra Seema Bal or the SSB has been deployed along the reserve's border with Nepal. They say that though seizure of animal skins, particularly of leopards, happens at regular intervals, poachers are rarely caught. "We also have inputs of poachers putting electric wires to target animals. We have intensified patrolling in the reserve area to protect wildlife," said officiating SSB commandment at Valmiki Nagar, Assistant Commandant Vaibhav Singh Parihar. In 2009-10, the reserve got central assistance of Rs 134.6 lakh as against Rs 93.9 lakh in 2008-09 and Rs 106.663 lakh in 2007-08.

Source: Santosh Singh, 'From 63 in '90, tiger population down to 3 in Bihar reserve, *The Indian Express*, April 22, 2010

Comment: *One would seriously doubt the authenticity of a report that announces that a reserve has three tigers when the census is has only been partially done, and is a good two months away from being complete. However, reports from the field indicate that number is higher, though. Also, data from the 1990 census cannot be compared to the current one because the methodology is different. As for the problems that plague the park, it is hoped that with the visit of the Chief Minister, they will be addressed immediately.*

CHHATTISGARH

Director of Indravati Tiger Reserve, Arun Pandey reports that they have been trying hard to collect evidence of tiger presence, a tough task as the reserve

is badly affected by left-wing extremism. He informs that there were ten actual tiger sightings, mainly by villagers, in Indravati in 2009. The maximum sighting is in Sendra range which is the area adjoining Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Eleven incidents of cattle killing by tigers have also been reported. Regular signs of tigers like pugmarks, scat etc have been recorded.

The first phase of the All India census was done from Feb 10-28, during which period tiger scat was found and pugmarks were also seen. This has been photographed and the scat sent for verification to the Wildlife Institute of India. There are also reports of a tigress with two cubs, though this is yet to be verified. Intense efforts are on to record this. Apart from this, during census two big herds of critically endangered wild buffalo have been sighted in Annapur beat and Jharaguda beat in the buffer by forest guards.

A TigerLink Report

GOA

No new mining in 'fragile' Goa: Ramesh

In a letter dated February 22, MEF Jairam Ramesh told the Goa chief minister Digambar Kamat that the ministry has "imposed a moratorium on consideration of mining proposals for environmental clearance till the mineral policy for the state of Goa is finalised." Ramesh has also called for a "comprehensive environmental impact assessment of all the mining activities that has taken place and for which permissions have been given over the last few years", adding that the study should also identify remedial measures for which he plans to ask Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering Research Institute to carry out a study.

Source: Shalini Singh 'No new mining in 'fragile' Goa, orders Jairam Ramesh, February 22, 2010, New Delhi

Tigers in beach paradise

There are recent reports of a tigress and her cub being spotted close to the Anjunem Dam, Chorla Ghat yet another pointer that Goa is not just a passage for transient tigers, but harbours a breeding population. In April 2009, shocking news came in that a tiger had been found dead in Keri-Sattari, near the forests of Mhadei. As detailed in the previous *TigerLink*, it was a photograph published in the *Times of India* and the local dailies, which brought the tragedy to light. The tiger, badly mangled by a trap around its lower torso had been killed possibly two months earlier. Investigations into the poaching case revealed that the cat was shot dead by tribals of the Majik community after being trapped in a wire

snare. The state forest department which is investigating the case, in its probe report has reconstructed the entire sequence of events that led to the killing. "Three women were amongst the half-a-dozen Majik community members, who witnessed the killing in February 2009. While the two main accused shot the tiger dead after trapping it in a snare, others witnessed the cold-blooded killing", the report said. "Fearing the aftermath, they burnt the tiger by dragging it for almost 250 metres in the same cashew plantation," the probe further stated.

Rajendra Kerkar, secretary of the Mhadei Bachao Abhiyan, together with Nirmal Kulkarni, an ecologist specialising in herpetofauna, has been consistently documenting tiger sightings since January 2009. Local cattle herders, the *dhangars* and village youth have further corroborated the tiger's presence with sightings and secondary evidence. Wildlife officials of the Goa Forest Department have also confirmed the presence of tigers from buffalo kills and pugmarks throughout the year confirming that they are resident and not transient visitors.

Yet the state has still not notified the Mhadei and Netravali wildlife sanctuaries, a matter that lies pending since June 1999, which apparently is due to the unseemly hold of the mining lobby over the state government.

Source: PTI, www.zeenews.com, February 12, 2010; *Sanctuary Asia*, April 2010

JHARKHAND

Census trouble in Palamu

A fresh census to assess the number of tigers in Betla, part of Palamu Tiger Reserve, was carried out from March 6 to 13. SK Sharma, Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife and Biodiversity, said that it would take a month before the numbers can be assessed. However, a news report on April 25 quotes an official saying that the census had to be stalled midway in Palamu due to presence of Maoists in forests. "We are unable to monitor tigers due to strong presence of the Maoists. Work has been stalled and we are seeking cooperation from local people for the tiger census," said Manoj Singh, director of Palamu Tiger Reserve.

The last all India census conducted by WII could not be carried out properly due to the presence of naxalites. However, in a separate exercise, scats were collected and sent to Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology which indicated the presence of seven to 16 tigers from less than 40 per cent of the reserve.

Situated in Daltonganj, the Palamau Tiger Reserve is spread over an area of 979 sq km. The core area of

232 sq km of the sanctuary was declared as Betla National Park in September 1989. Palamu was among the first nine tiger reserves. The first-ever tiger census in the country was undertaken in these forests way back in 1934.

Source: *The Pioneer*, March 11, *IANS*, April 26

Comment: *Even though the scat analysis by CCMB indicated 7-16 tigers, it doesn't find a place in the list of tiger reserves being estimated in 2010 by WII.*

KARNATAKA

Bhadra cub establishes territory in Dandeli

An ongoing tiger monitoring programme over the Mysore-Malenad landscape has shown how tigers can disperse over 200 km! The Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) India Program has been monitoring tigers through camera trapping in various parts of the Mysore-Malenad landscape in Karnataka for over a decade. This technology has now made an astonishing revelation about a less studied aspect of tiger biology—dispersion. A four-month-old cub was camera trapped in the Bhadra Tiger Reserve in April 2006. The cub, code named in the WCS database as 'BDT-130' was, surprisingly, recaptured on a camera trap set in the Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve in May 2008, as a full grown male tiger, 200 kms away! It has subsequently been captured in April 2009, proving that it has become an established resident in Dandeli.

Tigers are known to cover great distances in search of territory, provided there is "tiger permeable landscape" available. BDT-130 must have traversed through a lot of human dominated landscapes that separate Bhadra from Dandeli, indicating the animal's remarkable ability to migrate far from its natal range to establish territories elsewhere.

Source: *WCS-India*

Save Western Ghats Meet

The Save Western Ghats Meet 2010 was held from February 18 to 20 at the campus of the Keystone Foundation in Kotagiri. The purpose of the meet was to highlight the issues and challenges being faced by Western Ghats over the decades in the light of its importance as an ecologically sensitive and biodiversity hotspot area. Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh also spoke at the function. A large number of issues were discussed during the meeting. These included among others the efforts needed to protect the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, large dams, mines, thermal power plants—and their impact on ecology and livelihoods, issues of indigenous people, human-wildlife

conflict, GM and organic farming.

It was further decided that there will be a number of regional meetings in 2011 followed by a bigger meeting in Pune in 2010 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the first save Western Ghats meet.

Source: Samita Vasudevan, Email: samita@keystone-foundation.org

HC stays road, roots for tigers

Based on a public interest petition filed by conservation activists B.V.Anup, Waynad Prakrutik Samrakshan Trust and in another case filed by L.Srinivasbabu, the **High Court of Karnataka passed a judgment on March 9 asking the highways to be closed from 21.00 – 6.00 hrs. These two national highways (NH 212 and NH 67) slice the 990 sq km Bandipur Tiger Reserve fragmenting this important tiger habitat.** Hundreds of vehicles plying on this road have led to accidental deaths of several wildlife species including important prey species of tigers such as the spotted deer. On occasion even tiger, elephant, sloth bear and other large animals have been killed plus a number of smaller but rare animals like the rusty spotted cat and birds and reptiles. These highways connect Karnataka with Tamilnadu and Kerala. The neighbouring states had contended that the closure of highways would affect trade. However, there are two alternate roads which are only slightly longer and can be used. Academicians have long argued that the cost of conservation is only borne by local communities in the way of human-wildlife conflict and restriction of access to resources. Here, the marginal cost of closure of highways will be borne mostly by city-dwellers who are the main users of these highways at night time.

The court also asked Bandipur field director along with Sanjay Gubbi, Member State Board for Wildlife and Assistant Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program along with other senior forest to make a presentation about the ecological importance of the area and the need to ban the movement of traffic at night time.

According to studies carried out by Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program, Bandipur has one of the one of the highest densities of tigers (~13 tigers/ 100 sq km) and their prey anywhere in the world. With Nagarhole Tiger Reserve to its north, Mudhumalai Tiger Reserve and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary to its south, Bandipur forms one of the important landscapes for tigers' long-term survival.

With increased vehicular density in India that is growing at a rate of 10 percent annually, highways are

becoming a serious threat to tigers and other wildlife. It is time for an integrated road and conservation planning to be taken up, and decommissioning of existing routes that pass through critical wildlife habitats has to be initiated. Wherever alternative routes are available the existing alignment should be realigned to pass outside the protected areas. Even the National Wildlife Action Plan drafted under the chairmanship of the country's Prime Minister has mandated realignment of highways from protected areas.

Source: Sanjay Gubbi, Wildlife Conservation Society, India Program

Mining threatens Kudremukh. Again

Based on a petition filed by Wildlife First, the Supreme Court on 30th October, 2002 passed a landmark judgment ordering the closure of mining by Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited in Kudremukh National Park. The court directed that all mining activities shall cease on 31st December, 2005. Several attempts to seek a review of the Judgment failed. The Review Application was dismissed on 29th November, 2005 and even the Curative petition was dismissed on 15th December, 2005.

Shockingly, this has not stopped the Steel Ministry and the mining company from trying to restart mining in the biodiversity hot spot. The Minister of State for Steel A. Sai Prathap in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha said that the government **continues to spend Rs 60 crore every year to maintain the plant and equipment at the site**. Sources in the environment ministry confirmed that the steel ministry had approached them to discuss the possibility of reopening the mine. The court had ordered that the mines should be shut, the equipment dismantled, the forest land restored as a national park and the slopes stabilised using the compensation of Rs 19 crore the public sector undertaking had initially deposited.

The Comptroller and Auditor General had in their 2003 report noted that KIOCL had illegally mined 56.28 hectares of forest land outside the temporary working permission area right on edge of Bhadra river which passes through the National Park. The CAG estimated a loss of Rs 139.15 crore as costs of the environmental damage.

In the Judgment the Supreme Court had also directed the Government to take possession of the mines and implement the mine closure plan with **"no or minimal disturbance to the unbroken area"**, but the mining lobby are unrelenting and unwilling to move out of the National Park. Strangely, the state government is allowing the mining company to retain possession of the lapsed mining lease area within the limits of the National

Park and thus not ensuring compliance of the Apex court directions.

This despite the court's scathing comments against the public sector undertaking, saying, "It has been found that KIOCL has used the concerned period (between its first and final order for closure) to carry on commercial operations without taking necessary steps for winding down operations." The court even accused the company of using dilatory tactics to prevent its closure.

Kudremukh is the second largest protected area in the tropical wet evergreen-type of forest of the Western Ghats. Spread over 600 square kilometres, it is home to three major carnivores — tiger, leopard and the wild dog besides other endangered species such as lion-tailed macaques, great pied hornbill, king cobra, to name just a few. Three important rivers Tunga, Bhadra and Nethravathi are said to originate in the mountains of Kudremukh.

When contacted on the issue, Union environment minister Jairam Ramesh said, "The park has already reached its carrying capacity (for non-forestry projects) and we will not allow any unsustainable activity in the tiger-bearing national park." But the Union steel ministry has not given up hope as yet and neither has KIOCL. Sources say that the company is scouting for an environmental group, which it could fund, to study if mining can be started in the park yet again, this time claiming it would use new and cleaner techniques.

Source: Nitin Sethi, 'Kudremukh Controversy', *Times News Service*, April 20; Praveen Bhargav, Wildlife First

Govt scraps Nagarhole road plans

The Government of Karnataka has dropped its project to upgrade a 10 km-stretch between Dammanakatte and Udburu of State Highway 17 D (Mysore - Mananthavadi road inside the National Park) following directions of the Project Monitoring Committee (PMC) constituted by the Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court.

"We have dropped the project as per the recommendations of the PMC. That 10-km stretch inside Nagarhole national park will be left as it is," Project Director Krishna Reddy said. The development of an alternate route would be taken up under a different project. Principal Secretary to the department of Forest and Environment, Meera Saxena, who heads the PMC said that they recommended against the upgrading of the road considering the impact on tiger, elephant and other endangered species of the national park.

Source: PM Raghunandan, *Deccan Herald News Service*; April 19

Bhimgad declared a sanctuary

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has given in-principle approval for the declaration of the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in Belgaum district in Karnataka. The forest serves as an important tiger and elephant corridor, besides being home to the critically endangered Wroughton free-tailed bats. The Baripadi caves in Bhimgad are believed to be the only colony of these bats in India.

Source: Vinay Madhav, *Times News Service*, February 6, 2010

KERALA

Joint initiatives with Tamil Nadu for Periyar

Joint patrolling, sharing of intelligence and creation of more eco-development committees on the Tamil Nadu border are the new measures that have been taken up for protection of tigers in the Periyar Tiger Reserve. This was decided at an inter-state coordination meeting for preparation of the Tiger Conservation Plan for the Periyar Tiger Reserve. Attended by forest officers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it was also decided to set up new permanent camps in Tamil Nadu. The officers decided to take up survey of the inter-state boundary and its consolidation and maintenance annually. The Periyar staff will also be allowed to move through the forest division within Vellimalai and Manalar in Tamil Nadu. Restrictions on issuing licences for rifles and guns to people living along the forests were also discussed.

Officials said that inter-state coordination for conservation planning was inevitable as Periyar shares a 100 km-long common border in the east and north side with the state of Tamil Nadu.

Source: *The Hindu*; January 13, 2010

MADHYA PRADESH

Relocated tiger strays, recaptured

A male tiger translocated from Panna Tiger Reserve to Panna 'absconded' for nearly a month before being recaptured from Tendukheda forest in Damoh district of Madhya Pradesh. Tendukheda is a hilly forested area, just about 60 kms from Jabalpur city.

The exercise took the combined efforts of 70 people—officials from Panna, scientists from Wildlife Institute of India, veterinary doctors from Jabalpur etc before the relocated tiger was captured and taken back to Panna. The tiger was relocated from Panna after

two tigresses from Kanha and Bandhavgarh were brought in to re-establish the species in Panna where tigers had gone locally extinct. The 'stray' tiger moved vast distances, more than 200 km from Panna and various forest patches in different districts, including Chattarpur, Kishengarh, Damoh entering Buxah range to forests in Sagar district, 200 km away from Panna tiger reserve.

It was felt that the tiger could be trying to move to its original home in Panna Tiger Reserve 300 km away, from where it was brought nearly a month ago. P R Sinha, director Wildlife Institute of India said that such homing instinct was common in territorial animals like tiger as was displayed by a translocated male tiger in Sariska in the initial days, but fortunately it soon formed its territory in the core area.

Source: www.pressreleasepoint.com/; December 26, 2009, MP Forest Department

STOP PRESS

Panna tigress spotted with cubs

'T1', one of the two tigresses shifted to the Panna Tiger Reserve more than a year ago, was spotted with a litter of three cubs on May 7, 2009. "We saw her when she was shifting the litter from one place to another," said park director RS Murthy. The authorities got an indication about the cubs' birth in the third week of April but could not verify it because the tigress was in an inaccessible portion of the park.

One tigress each from Kanha and Bandhavgarh had been shifted to the park in March last year while a male tiger from Panna was moved there in November, following the annihilation of the big cats from the park.

Source: Milind Ghatwai, *The Sunday Express*, May 8, 2010

Panna tiger extinction to be probed by CBI

Unhappy with the report submitted by a state committee tasked to find out why tigers went missing from Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister Sartaj Singh wants a CBI inquiry into the disappearance of tigers (details in Wildlife Crime). Singh said that the forest department would send a proposal to the state government for making a formal request to the CBI to probe the case.

Source: Milind Ghatwai, *The Indian Express*, March 7, 2010

Panna closed briefly after intrusion by dacoits

The Panna Tiger Reserve was closed for tourists briefly on 3rd March following intrusion by armed dacoits. Forest officials had conducted search operations along with police personnel inside the reserve after a few armed dacoits were spotted inside the park the day before.

Source: *The Pioneer*, March 4, 2010

Tiger kills girl in village bordering park

A tiger from Bandhavgarh National Park tiger killed an 18-year-old girl, hailing from Kuchhwahi village, bordering the park, early on the morning of 30th March. The girl had gone to collect *mahua*, a forest produce when she stumbled on the tiger who was at a kill. After receiving information about the incident the park officials immediately reached the spot and cordoned off the area.

The tiger was later driven towards the forest with the help of elephants. Rs 1 lakh as ex-gratia was released for the victim's family.

Source: 'Bandhavgarh tiger strays into village, kills teenager in Umari, March 31, 2010, *The Pioneer*

Pench flying into trouble

There is more trouble for tigers of Pench, with an airport coming up near Suktara village in Seoni district, just over ten km from the Karmajhari gate of Pench Tiger Reserve. Work is currently on at full swing on the two km long, Rs 4.56 crore air strip close to National Highway 7.

Earlier, the air strip was proposed near Kanha Tiger Reserve in Mandla district. However, apprehending opposition, it was decided to construct it near Pench. Executive Engineer Sanjay Kumar Maske said the air strip was being constructed on private land and that it was meant to serve VIPs and tourists. It will accommodate small and medium sized aircrafts and its construction is expected to be completed within 2010.

Shockingly, no Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report was prepared before commencing work. Maske says that as the land was not part of buffer or core zone, an EIA was not needed. Pench officials admit that they are aware of the air strip coming up but have expressed their helplessness since it is outside the reserve.

Conservationist Kishor Rithe has slammed the authorities for ignoring wildlife interests for the project. He cited the example of Nagpur's Sonagaon airport where passengers had miraculous escape several times with planes hitting deer or wild boar. "If it can happen in the city with scrub forests around, an air strip near

Karmajhari would certainly threaten both people, and wildlife," he warns, adding that the air strip would also contribute to noise pollution around the reserve. He says that it would have a detrimental impact on raptors, especially critically endangered vultures, which breed in Pench.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, 'Is Pench flying into trouble', *The Times of India*; March 31, 2010, *The Satpuda Foundation*

MAHARASHTRA

Maharashtra gets its fourth tiger reserve

The Maharashtra government finally issued the notification of Sahyadri Tiger Reserve in western Maharashtra in the beginning of 2010. It is now the fourth tiger reserve in the state after Melghat, Tadoba-Andhari and Pench TRs.

The National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) nod came at a meeting held on May 21, 2008, along with the creation of three other tiger reserves in the country — Sunabeda in Orissa, Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh and Ratapani in Madhya Pradesh. Also, the authority decided to treat Nagarhole National Park in Karnataka as a tiger reserve.

Source: Ashwin Aghor, 'Maharashtra gets its fourth tiger reserve, January 6, *DNA*

Fatal conflict around Tadoba

In the period between mid-December to March, tigers have targeted nine people around Tadoba-Andhari reserve, killing seven. The first incident occurred on 19 December near Keorapet village, when a 45-year-old woman was killed. The next attack was reported on 26 December, however the victim escaped, followed by another two days later. In the first week of February three women were killed. The animal behind the attacks is reportedly a young male.

The forests around Tadoba-Andhari have become Ground Zero for man-tiger conflict. Tigers have killed more than 50 people around the reserve since 2006. Data available since 1992 shows only eight human deaths due to tiger attacks in five years till 1996. Early signs of escalation in conflict were reported in 2002. By 2006, human casualties became routine; in November 2007, a suspected man-eater was killed after public outrage. After a brief lull, however, the attacks continued, peaking again this year.

Why is this region so prone to conflict?

There are many reasons. Tadoba, in itself, is one of our better managed reserves with over 40 tigers within its 625 sq km. Like most reserves in India, **Tadoba is an**

oasis surrounded by human habitation and development projects pressing into the forest. It is in the Chandrapur district, a coal block, and ranked the fourth most polluted city in the country. No less than 15 mines currently operate on the southern fringes, and more on the anvil. Admittedly, there was a recent—and hard-won victory when the centre refused to permit Adani to mine in Tadoba's buffer but a catastrophe lurks around the corner. No less than 50 coal and power projects have been sanctioned by the state in Vidharbha, and even if a fraction were to come up, it will devastate this Tigerland since the coal would be sourced from Chandrapur. Mines apart, **the other tragedy is the upcoming Human irrigation project that will drown a corridor that serves as a crucial link to the Central Indian landscape through Brahmpuri and Nagzira.** Such fragmentation has accelerated conflict. The forest around the park is a poor one with negligible natural prey and plenty of cattle, which form a chunk of the tiger's menu. The other problem is the huge anthropogenic pressure on the forests around the reserve. **Nearly 10,000 families live in 60 villages around Tadoba, most depend on bamboo extraction for their livelihood.** Villagers enter the forests in thousands and spend long hours cutting down bamboo to thin strips which are then carried out of the forests openly.

In the past year, **five Tadoba tigresses have disappeared—feared poached. Their cubs either starved to death or were rescued to captivity.** More tigers could have been lost, but not recorded. It is possible too, that orphaned young cubs took to 'easy' prey. Poaching, orphaned cubs, habitat loss, too many people inside forests, sustained conflict and no scientific mitigation strategy complete the recipe for disaster at Tadoba.

Source: Prerna Singh Bindra, *The Sunday Guardian*, Jay Mazoomdaar, 'Tadoba's Bloody Trails', *Open*, March 27

STOP PRESS: Maharashtra has finally notified Tadoba's buffer. The Chief Minister Ashok Chavan cleared the notification files on April 30, probably under pressure from consistent media reports, and a sustained campaign for the buffer. The immediate push was a letter written by the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to the CM to create a buffer around tiger reserves, and to additionally declare areas around the reserves as eco-sensitive zones as required by law.

NTCA seeks conflict data

The sudden increase in killing of humans by tigers around Tadoba- Andhari Tiger Reserve has prompted the National Tiger Conservation Authority to seek data for the past five years related to the human tiger conflict of this region from the Maharashtra Forest Department. "We need the data for proper mapping of facts like extent of human dependency on forests, and why is there such frequent conflict with fatal consequences and what needs to be done to end this permanently," NTCA Member-Secretary Rajesh Gopal said. "What is happening there is very, very alarming. This can't go on like this indefinitely," he added. Gopal said that two experts from the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, were being sent to Tadoba to study the situation. Meanwhile, the long-pending issue of TATR's vacancies has been resolved, according to Principal Secretary (Forest) B.P. Pandey. "The postings for the four vacant posts of RFOs have been cleared," Pandey said.

Source: *The Indian Express*, 7, April 2010

Territorial fight claims tiger

A full-grown tiger was found dead on the bank of Uman river in the Chimur forest range of Chandrapur district in eastern Maharashtra on April 7. Reports said that a forest beat guard had found the carcass of the tiger, aged about 13 years on a river bank in a forest area, located 15 km away from the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. Local forest officials suspect that the tiger might have succumbed to injuries suffered by it in a 'territorial fight' it had with other tigers in the area.

Source: *The Pioneer*, April 8, 2010

Tigers of a lesser God

The 2006-8 All India Tiger census showed that most of our tiger population is concentrated within protected areas, but not all of these are tiger reserves. Problem is, that while tiger reserves are getting some semblance of protection and are also supported both financially and technically by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, those outside of reserve areas are extremely vulnerable to poaching and conflict issues. **Most sanctuaries have suffered from years of apathy, are starved of funds, staff, infrastructure.** Let us look at some such forests which have reported tigers:

The Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society (HyTiCoS) reports that there are indication of **tiger presence in the Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary** in the Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh. With an area of 820 sq kms, this protected area has been designated as an IUCN Type III Tiger Conservation Unit, and is good

potential tiger habitat. **Unrestricted encroachment and rampant human disturbance** in the area have, especially in the past five years, led to an escalation of illegal settlements and cattle kraals in the sanctuary...and fewer tigers.

Another classic case is **Chaprala, one of the most neglected sanctuaries of Maharashtra, where the presence of two tigers has been continually noted since January 2010**. However, their future is questionable since there has been immense pressure that this sanctuary be denotified so that an illegally built temple can remain on encroached forest land.

Orang National Park in Assam is home to seven tigers, the numbers having decimated over the years due to poaching, and conflict deaths. **Nagzira in Maharashtra** is another good tiger habitat with a breeding population.

In a recently concluded camera trapping exercise, **Kolluchaur recorded a density of about five tiger per sq km**. Kolluchaur is contiguous to Corbett Tiger Reserve but is merely a reserve forest and urgently needs to be accorded the status of a protected area, given that it supports a population of breeding tigers.

There are many such areas where tiger presence has been noted, be it the Moyar Valley in Tamil Nadu where an ongoing survey shows the presence of breeding tigresses, or in the forests of Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh where there are continual reports of tiger presence.

Such areas serve as good buffers for sink populations and can serve as vital corridors. They are essential for landscape level tiger conservation in order to maintain the connectivity between tiger habitats and maintain genetic diversity.

A policy both at the centre at state level is called for, and how NTCA can help support tigers not only in protected areas but also reserved forest must be considered. Protection must be accorded to such small, but potentially viable tiger populations.

One way is to identify and declare such 'sink population areas' as tiger reserves so they may support viable population in themselves, and serve as consolidated units with adjoining reserves. Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh, with about 20 tigers, is one such example. Currently a reserve forest, it has been proposed as a tiger reserve since long, but the state has still not notified it. There has been a sustained campaign to include Kolluchaur in CTR or bring it under wildlife management—however, here too the state has shown little interest.

A TigerLink Report

Gram sabha opposes mining in Konkan

The gram sabha of Asniya village, at the foothills of the Sahyadris in the Sindhurg-Konkan region of Maharashtra, has passed a resolution opposing mining by the Sindhurg Mining Corporation (Dempo Mining). The corporation has obtained a lease for open cast iron ore mining in the region. The forests in this region are rich in biodiversity and the source of almost 50 perennial streams. That apart, these forests are extensions of **an important tiger corridor**, and are home to other endangered wildlife like leopards, gaur and elephant. In fact, of late this area has been plagued by man-elephant conflict. The corporation intends to mine in 440 hectares of land in Asniya and excavate around three million tones of ore annually for 18 years, ultimately mining 54 million tones of iron ore. At this rate the hills would turn into craters in time, and the effect on the region's biodiversity will be catastrophic.

Source: Dr Jayendra Parulekar, *Mining Thermal Chalejao Forum*, Sindhurg

ORISSA

Forest staff killed on duty

Sangram Kesari Swain (55), a forester in the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary and a proposed Tiger Reserve was shot dead by suspected Maoists in an attack on 28th April. His body was found, chained to a check post near the Bharuamunda check gate with a bullet injury on the head. The naxalites also set fire to some seized wood and furniture in the forest office at Katinpani in the sanctuary and left behind posters with Maoist slogans, issued by the "Mainpur Division Committee of the CPI (M)". Nuapada SP Bibek Rath admitted that it was impossible to combat the menace with inadequate forces.

This is the second major attack in Sunabeda in the past one year. Sunabeda has been given 'in principle' approval by the NTCA as a tiger reserve since 2008, though the state is yet to notify it. If we are to preserve this habitat contiguous to the Udanti-Sitanadi tiger reserve in Chattisgarh, security forces must be deployed urgently, like in Similipal, to boost the morale of the staff and create secure conditions for them to work in.

Another forester, Somnath Behera was hacked to death by timber mafia in the Jasodapur-Kandapada forest on the night of January 19. Five other forest staff mainly daily wagers were injured in the brutal attack. According to reports, a gang of nearly 40 timber smugglers attacked Behera when they were caught by the staff cutting trees.

Agitated over the gruesome murder of a forester in Sunabeda WLS, the forest employees of Orissa, under the banner of Orissa Forest Employee's Association,

have expressed their concern that the staff is feeling insecure with the constant threat of well-armed Maoists and timber mafia. As we go to press news comes in that the **forest field staff threaten to boycott the All India tiger census which was to begun on May 8**. JB Patnaik, general secretary of Orissa Non-gazetted Forest Service Association said their demands include introduction of **group patrolling in forests** in place of the age-old system in which only one or two forest officials are given charge of a particular area. They are also asking the government to equip them with firearms and weapons and have sought **parity with police in terms of compensation and incentives for working in Maoist-affected districts**.

At least five forest staff have lost their lives to such attacks by Maoists and timber mafia in the past three years in Orissa.

Source: OTV Bureau, January 20, 2010, *Express News Service*, April 29, 2010, *IANS*, May 6

Campa funds destroying vital habitat

Biswajit Mohanty, member, National board of Wildlife and secretary, Wildlife Society of Orissa has expressed grave concerns that **"many forest divisions are indulging in the harmful practice of clearing forest undergrowth by setting forest areas on fire in order to make way for plantations**. Similarly, creepers (*atendi*, *siali* etc.) and other bushes which are vital for wildlife needs are also being cut down by the department in order to clear the area for plantation." He writes that about 30 to 40 per cent of the CAMPA budget has been allotted to this task. Mohanty says that on a recent tour to western Orissa, he witnessed this devastation in Rairakhol and Athmalik. Undergrowth is also being set on fire so that the area could be ready for plantations. Due to lack of control, at many places, the fires had spread to areas where no plantations were intended!

During the previous year (2009-10) Orissa had received Rs 131 crores (first installment of the total allocation of 231 crores) towards Compensatory Afforestation and Management and Planning Authority (CAMPAs) funds from the Centre. For this, Orissa has provided Rs. 5.88 crores in 2009-10 for activities in wildlife areas (PAs). The CAMPA annual plan of the state says, "habitat improvement works such as fire and grazing control, water conservation measures, plantation, weed eradication, meadow development will be carried out at a cost of Rs.5.88 crores to cover the critical wildlife areas."

It is ironical that CAMPA funds meant to protect forests and to regenerate them are being used to set forests on fire. Unless a robust and transparent

monitoring mechanism is set up, it will be difficult to ensure that adequate checks and balances are in place to prevent wrong planning, misuse and corruption in spending CAMPA funds

Source: Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa
Comment: *The CAMPA funds –Rs 11,000 crores-- were released after much delay in July 2009. Every year, the centre would disburse 10 per cent of the accumulated principle amount to the state. Orissa was one of states which got the maximum amount. The guidelines from the centre had specified that funds will not be used for compensatory afforestation as it was envisaged earlier but for wildlife protection, restoration and regeneration of degraded forests and for meeting the financial needs of protected areas.*

But as expected, most states have not bothered about the guidelines, and while PAs continue to be starved of funds, money is being poured into hackneyed afforestation proposals, and even destruction of habitat. Some states have allocated large sums to building offices etc.

Tigers strand elephant herd in Kuldiha

There was high drama in the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary in the Balasore district when, early on the morning of 8th February, at around 3 am, a pair of tigers started stalking elephant calves that were part of a herd numbering over 40. Pritam Bhattacharya, part of a three member research team from Calcutta University which was camping in the sanctuary, intimated the forest staff on hearing frantic screams from the agitated herd. A twelve member anti-poaching rushed to the spot to find that it was a mating pair of tigers that was agitating the elephants!

Kuldiha, which for a long time had been thought to have lost all its tigers is now showing increasing signs of presence of the big cats. Last year, the presence of tigers was brought to light in a most tragic manner, with a tiger found poisoned in the sanctuary. Kuldiha is adjacent to the Similipal Tiger Reserve and is connected to it through the Nato Hills, a crucial corridor. Conservationists have long advocated including Kuldiha as part of the Similipal to ensure holistic conservation of the species in this vast landscape by consolidating it.

Source: *The New Indian Express*, February 9, 2010, with inputs from Aditya C Panda, Wild Orissa

Village shifts out of Similipal

Sixty-two families shifted out from Jenabil in Similipal's core area to the 'model village' created for them at Ambdiha, outside the reserve. Keeping with the NTCA's

guidelines, every male member over the age of 18 was considered a single family unit and was compensated with Rs. 10 lakhs. The forest department helped the families with various facilities, like getting children from the village admitted in school. It is hoped that the three remaining villages and two Khadia hamlets in the core area, and perhaps even the villages in buffer, will want to move out of this remote wilderness and get a new lease of life by following the Jenabil example. The huge valley which Jenabil had encroached upon is now expected to turn into a prime meadow that will provide a boost to its prey base and thus become prime habitat for tigers.

This has been a significant achievement for Similipal, which had been under attack by extremists last year, and has been made possible due to able leadership, dedicated frontline staff, and strong support from the centre.

Source: NDTV, May 1, 2010; *The New Indian Express* March 14, 2010 Aditya Chandra Panda, Wild Orissa

Comment: *Similipal's relocation has finally seen the light of the day, the money for which had been given (according to the old package) no less than three decades back! It is hoped that the other three villages in Similipal core area will be shifted soon.*

Tusker poaching resurfaces in Satkosia

The poaching of a tusker in the Narsinghpur forest under Aathgarh Division adjoining the Satkosia Tiger Reserve's eastern boundary and the seizure of tusks from Rairakhol, also in the vicinity of the reserve, in February has raised concerns. Narsinghpur range has been a notorious stronghold of organised poaching and timber mafia. On 23rd April the carcass of a male elephant was found in the Hathidhara Reserved Forest near Aathmallik. This is the third reported case of elephant poaching near Satkosia in 2010. Similarly, on the western boundary of the reserve, Athmallik serves as a base for organised wildlife crime syndicates.

Wild Orissa a Bhubneswar-based NGO has been campaigning for inclusion of the Narsinghpur range and the Hathidhara Reserved Forest of the Athmallik division as part of the tiger reserve, but to little avail. This will facilitate wildlife oriented administration of the forest and help in containing poaching.

These rich reserved forests form a contiguous habitat with Satkosia and frequently report tiger presence. There is a pressing case to merge these ranges with the reserve

and increase its area. Also, it is essential to take up relocation of villages from prime wildlife areas like Tulka, Labangi, Chotkei, Majhipada, Raigoda, etc. in order to reclaim the valleys of the reserve for wildlife. Raigoda, incidentally, has since long sent in petitions to voluntarily relocate, but action is yet to be taken on this front. There are 65 villages in the 963 sq km Satkosia Tiger Reserve, four of which lie in its core and many more are situated on the boundary of the core, putting tremendous pressure on its low density tiger population that is struggling to revive.

Source: Aditya C Panda, *Wild Orissa*

Satkosia: For tigers or tourists?

A sprawling tourist complex has been set up by the Forest Department inside the core area of Saktosia. This 'resort' operates during the dry months of the year when the river is not in flood (October to May). About 20 large tents have been put up on the bed of the river Mahanadi at Tikarpada and use lights which light up the area at night. Groups of noisy tourists can be found partying all night disturbing wildlife. The sand banks are basking and nesting sites for crocodiles and turtles which are found in good numbers here. These animals now cannot use the sand banks due to the disturbance. Tigers are also known to come to the river for water. Disposal of kitchen wastes and other garbage in the nearby river pollutes a pristine and ecologically sensitive area.

Source: Biswajit Mohanty, Wildlife Society of Orissa

Comment: *The proposal for the tiger reserve was first mooted in 1999 and given the final approval by the Government of India in 2005. It was only in 2009 a decade after the process started, that Satkosia was finally notified. Was Satkosia declared as tiger reserve only to develop tourism in the core areas? The state has failed to extend even basic protection, poaching pressure is high, there has been no move to relocate villages.*

Also, it has been witnessed, as in the case of Corbett and Kanha tourism structures may start small but grow into sprawling complexes.

State for harvesting bamboo in Satkosia

The Orissa government's proposal to harvest bamboo from inside Satkosia Tiger Reserve was submitted before the standing committee of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) in its April 12 meeting. The proposal, however, had been rejected by the State Board of Wildlife. The standing committee stated that it cannot take up the

matter unless the state board gives its consent. It also stressed that **no commercial exploitation or sale would be permitted from a tiger reserve and that the state must ensure that no wildlife habitat is disturbed.**

Comment: *Such extraction would be against the Supreme Court's order of 14 Feb 2000, which clearly says "that not a blade of grass can be taken out from a national park or a sanctuary."*

RAJASTHAN

DNA tests for tigers before shifting

Following a report on the genetic incompatibility of tigers that were shifted to Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan last year, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has ordered DNA tests on tigers of Ranthambhore and Sariska, to ascertain breeding compatibility before shifting any more tigers.

The report 'Rajasthan Govt. sent tiger siblings to repopulate Sariska', *The Hindustan times*, June 29, 2009 exposed how tigers were picked up arbitrarily for translocation without genetic or spatial analysis. Following the report, the translocation process in Rajasthan was put on hold. Between June 2008 and February 2009, two sisters and their half-brother were sent to Sariska. These tigers have so far failed to breed. The decision on mandatory DNA testing of Ranthambhore tigers was taken at an NTCA meeting in January. The NTCA has already issued an order, designating Bangalore's National Centre for Biological Science to conduct the tests to identify individual tigers with breeding compatibility.

Source: Jay Mazoomdaar, 'After Sariska fiasco, DNA tests for tigers before shifting', *The Hindustan Times*, February 2, 2010

Two tigers earmarked for translocation in Ranthambhore

Two tigers, T-37 and T-47, who were moving in the fringes of the national park, were approved for translocation from Ranthambhore to Sariska. It was thought prudent to shift them as they would be highly vulnerable due to heavy biotic pressure and a sitting target for poaching or poisoning in the human-dominated landscape. However, it is reported that they have strayed over 100 km from the park. In fact in a report carried in *The Indian Express*, March 12, the Chief Wildlife Warden, Rajasthan, R N Mehrotra is quoted as saying that T 37 has been spotted near Kota, while T 47 is believed to near Bharatpur National Park, the latter unconfirmed.

Another subsequent report describes the desperate search to locate T 37, who is now reported to be in the Sarola forest near Kota, some 120 km from Ranthambhore.

In October last year, the Ministry of Environment and Forests decided to **halt the big shift to Sariska after media reports said that tigers belonging to the same genetic pool were being mated—damaging, it was alleged, the future generation of cats.** NTCA gave the Rajasthan forest department the go-ahead to shift two tigers but with a rider. Only the two tigers that had strayed away from the park—T37 and T47, both in January — were to be shifted.

According to latest reports, the search for the elusive tigress is still on. The State Environment and Forest Minister Ramlal Jat announced that they would use a helicopter to locate the tiger!

Source: Apurva, "Where are You, T 37?" *The Sunday Express*, April 11, 2010

Tigers poisoned in Ranthambhore

Two sub-adult male tigers were found dead poisoned by villagers in Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve on March 7. The cubs, approximately 17-months-old, were killed by men from the Gujjar community from a nearby village of Tadla Khet, which falls in the Keladevi sanctuary. Reason? The tigers had been repeatedly attacking goats around their village. The immediate provocation was two goats that they had killed in afternoon of 4th March. Owners drove away the tigers and injected one of the carcasses with poison. They tigers came back on March 6 and ate the poisoned goats. Their carcasses were found the next day.

The cubs, and their mother were first camera trapped about 14 months ago in Chiroli area of Kundera Range of Ranthambhore NP

Officials in the park claim that they had been pushed out because of competition for space. There were too many tigers, they said, and when the surplus move out, they walk into a 'death trap'. But Kela Devi is part of Ranthambhore tiger reserve, so where does the question of 'moving out' arise? **The Ranthambhore tiger reserve spans 1,300 sq km and has about 40 tigers—which is hardly anywhere near the saturation mark. So how do forest officials claim saturation tiger density in Ranthambhore? Point is, tiger population is concentrated in the 300 sq km prey-rich national park, only a small part of the 1,300 sq km reserve. So the big cats are in fact moving from one part of the reserve to another, not 'out' of Ranthambhore. The remaining part of the reserve constitutes Sawai Man Singh sanctuary and Kela Devi sanctuary which has little natural prey,**

negligible protection and nearly 300 villages Each family is reported to have over 100 goats, so the grazing pressure on the reserve is immense. The latest killings were reported from Taldakhet, a village in Keladevi sanctuary, hardly a kilometre from the national park boundary, well inside the tiger reserve.

About 300 sq km of the national park area may not accommodate more than 30-40 tigers but the remaining 1,000 sq km of the reserve has the potential of absorbing thrice as many. **The priority for the forest department is to take control of the entire reserve, stop grazing, reclaim encroachments and resettle villages—and for this cooperation for the district administration, police department and political will is a prerequisite.** Now, it seems that the authorities have washed their hands of more than 75 per cent of the tiger reserve. Active management demands the forest department to secure the sanctuary areas of the reserve. It is important to also reclaim the corridors Kuno in Madhya Pradesh to Ramgarh Bisdhari sanctuary near Bundi for natural dispersal of big cats.

Source: Jay Mazoomdaar, 'In the forests of the night,' *TNN*, March 22; Bahar Dutt, 'Tiger graveyards of Ranthambhore,' *IBN Live*, March 23, Aditya Singh, Ranthambhore

Heavy construction in Ranthambhore

There is news of rabid construction in the heart of Ranthambhore causing immense disturbance to wildlife. Anicuts, check dams and other concrete structures are being constructed in the core area. It is learnt that earthmovers, excavators and dumpers are continuously working even within Kachida valley, which is an excellent tiger habitat with breeding tigresses. Though the purpose is basically to augment water supply whether they are going to serve the purpose in the long term is highly uncertain.

Such intense disturbance has had fatal consequences. In early March a tigress killed a horse and its owner in Kachida Valley. It is learnt that the horse owner was transporting material for the masons and labourers working in a check dams.

News of similar construction is reported from other parks such as Kanha, Pench.

Such activity is in violation with NTCA guidelines which prohibits construction in core critical tiger habitat.

TAMIL NADU

Nature guide for Kalakad Mundanthurai

The Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has produced a first of its kind

bi-lingual, multi-taxa nature guide to the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR). The guide, authored by T. Ganesh, R. Ganesan, Soubadra Devy and Jahnvi Pai provides basic information about the common and unique plants and animals of the region.

It has been designed in a way so as to appeal to children and lay people who have little or no knowledge of biology. The 330 page guide consists of information of about 300 species belonging to six taxa of plants, butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Information on common names, habits, key identifying characters and occurrence have been given in English and also in Tamil.

Source: *Protected Area Update No. 84*

HC: Remove illegal resorts

The Tamil Nadu High Court passed an order on December 3, 2009, which said, in reference to elephant corridors near Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve "that the government will ensure that there is no illegal construction on area shown as elephant corridor. Further, the government should not allow any new construction in the area without prior intimation to the court, and immediate action should be taken against illegal, unauthorised holiday resorts." The court has also directed that no person should be allowed to put a fresh solar/electrical fencing within the area, and action should be taken for the removal of existing unauthorised electrical/solar fencing.

This judgment is of particular relevance since these elephant corridors are also crucial tiger corridors. A similar situation exists around most prominent tiger reserves i.e Corbett, Kaziranga, Pench, Kanha, Ranthambhore, where corridors have been blocked by proliferation of resorts and other construction.

UTTARAKHAND

Corbett: Four tiger deaths in a month

Four tiger deaths in quick succession in the heart of Corbett Tiger Reserve have triggered panic. Numbering about 160, Corbett has among the most densely packed tiger populations of India. The first tiger, an eight year old male, was found dead close to Mota Sal in Dhikala on 13th December. The second death was of an eleven-year-old tigress, found dead in the Ramganga river close to the Sarapdulli Forest Rest House on 16th December. The third victim was a young male, found on 5th January in Phuli Chaur close to the Dhikala tourism complex. The last victim that month was a six-year-old tiger, found close to Gaujra chowki at the edge of Dhikala range.

While the case of the Sarapdulli tigress and the young Phuli Chaur male appear convincingly to be natural- old

age in the first case and in fighting in the latter- the other two cases seem to point at unnatural reasons.

It appears unlikely that the first death, of the eight year old male, happened due to territorial fighting, since the male was in its prime and such established males rarely get into fights, except with inexperienced youngsters and old weaklings-unlikely to suffer defeat in either case. Insiders say that the organs of the tiger showed "blister like eruptions" and the animal had defecated before dying while also suffering "respiratory and cardio-vascular problems". All these indicate poisoning.

The tiger found dead at Gaujra too had retched before dying and its post mortem indicated enough signs in its visceral organs to prove that it was poisoned. Suspected reasons for poisoning range from commercial poaching to revenge killings by "aggrieved insiders" targeting the forest department.

There is an urgent necessity to remove stray and abandoned cattle from the reserve and relocate gujjar families that have encroached inside. There also remains the need to address the increasing human-wildlife conflict, rampant over-tourism and the needs of local stakeholders in communities living around the reserve's boundaries.

Source: Jay Mazoomdaar 'Who's Killing the Corbett Tigers?', *Open*, February 13, 2010

Make Kolluchaur part of Corbett

Kolluchaur (under Lansdowne Division) contiguous to the Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary in Corbett supports a rich population of both tigers and elephants. A camera-trapping exercise conducted recently in the space of about two months revealed nine different tigers, including breeding tigresses. It indicated a density of 5-6 tigers per 100 sq km. Kolluchaur is a crucial corridor linking Corbett and Rajaji.

This rich tiger habitat is however being severely degraded due to the presence of gujjar families and their cattle. Kolluchaur has about 24 gujjar families living within its 70 sq km. The devastation they wrought is evident. The *chaur*—or the grassland, fertile ground for deer wears a bare, bald look. Hundreds of huge trees have been lopped, the canopy cut off to feed the buffaloes. The constant movement of people and cattle across the park has considerably disturbed and degraded the habitat. The routine removal of timber by the Forest Department causes disturbance to wildlife. Kolluchaur suffers from further anthropogenic pressures as nearby villages depend on the forest to meet their fuel wood and fodder requirements.

The gujjars are keen to move out of the forest. Their children have no opportunities for even basic education, there are no health facilities and no means of income. Roshondin a gujjar from Kollu *dera* says that says that

their incomes are falling as "we have destroyed the forest—lopped the trees, flattened the meadows. Now, there is no nourishing fodder. Therefore milk yield, and income, has gone down." Since it is not part of a Protected Area, there is no funding to support relocation of this community.

Kolluchaur, as part of Lansdowne Forest Division, serves as a crucial tiger and elephant corridor linking Corbett and Rajaji National Park. It has been long advocated to bring it under the management of Corbett but this has been gathering dust with the Uttarakhand government. It has also been proposed to bring the entire Terai belt—a key tiger landscape—in Uttarakhand ie from the banks of the Yamuna river to the Sharda river under unified management.

Why is it that when we are counting our last tigers, are we willing to let go a viable population of our national animal?

Source: Perna Singh Bindra, *The Sunday Guardian*

More tourism in Corbett

In a day long meeting held under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand, it **was proposed to develop Sonanadi Wildlife Sanctuary, adjoining Corbett for tourists**, in view of the negative impact of growth of tourism lodges and related infrastructure and also to accommodate the increasing number of tourists. Sonnandi forms an important part of the landscape and covers an area of 300 sq km. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests RBS Rawat said the meeting focused on reducing the negative impact of tourism activities on the environment and wildlife of CTR. It was also proposed in the meeting that the area between the "gates of Corbett National Park and Ramnagar be declared eco-sensitive zone under the Environment Protection Act, after which the Revenue and Forest Departments would take joint action to prevent indiscriminate growth of tourist lodges and tourism activities in this area."

Source: Paritosh Kimothi, *The Pioneer*; March 20, 2010

Note: At a meeting held under the chairmanship of the secretary of tourism, Sujit Bannerjee doubt was expressed that opening of yet another gate will ease pressure, or simply increase the pressure on one more crucial corridor. Even before the implementation of the decision, news is that big resorts are proposed in this corridor, and will create yet another problem, unless the state carefully follows a model of sustainable tourism that benefits the local communities.

Western Rajaji's lonely tigress

As has been reported earlier, the western part of Rajaji National Park has only one tigress for over

a year, raising major concerns as this represents the North-western most limits of the tiger, and along with Kalesar sanctuary in Haryana represents over 1,000 sq km of potential tiger habitat. This part of the park had recorded eight tigers between 2000 and 2003. **In the eastern side, there are believed to be about eight tigers. It maybe noted that between 2005 and 2007, 32 different tigers have been camera-trapped in the park—this sudden drop in numbers clearly indicating poaching.** Protection in the park is poor, and only 256 of the total sanctioned staff of 391 is there. Many chowkis are unmanned, since they lack even basic facilities like provision of water.

Some other urgent issues in Rajaji

- Chilla range of the park saw a marked improvement with the tiger making a remarkable comeback once the resident gujjars were rehabilitated in Gaidikhata. The gujjars have been well-settled with prime land close to a national highway, and were given fertile land for agriculture. Even so, while they enjoy the benefits outside, they leave their buffaloes inside the park for grazing (free fodder), causing immense anthropogenic pressure.
- Lack of proper enforcement, the staff not geared towards protection.
- Fragmentation—lack of connectivity between both sectors of the park.
- Three fast growing cities pressing into the park—Dehradun, Haridwar, Rishikesh. Industrial complex borders park. Encroachments by ashrams etc. Canal, railway line, road cutting through park
- Man-elephant conflict
- Poaching, Haridwar is a major hub of illegal trade
- Habitat degradation—increase in spread of weeds, unpalatable grasses, falling water tables

On a positive note, it was learnt that over 200 natural waterholes have been dug to help the wild animals through the scorching summers when water is scarce.

Corbett asks NTCA to compensate farmers

Corbett authorities have sent a proposal to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) regarding payment of compensation to farmers of Uttar Pradesh whose fields border Corbett Tiger Reserve and suffer frequent financial damages due to wild animals entering their farmland—either destroying their crops or livestock kills by tigers and leopards. These farmers suffer as they fail to get compensation from either state—UP refuses to pay as they are ‘Uttarakhand animals’ and the latter cannot pay for damage in another state. This festers resentment and may lead to retaliatory killing. In order to contain the farmers’ resentment- which has dire consequences Corbett Tiger Reserve sent the

proposal to NTCA for releasing funds to CTR to compensate the farmers.

Source, *Amrisha Baagri, The Pioneer, April 6*

UTTAR PRADESH

Mine detectors to locate tiger traps

Metal detectors used by the Indian Army to detect mines would now be used in the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve to detect snares used by poachers in catching tigers. Traffic India has armed the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve with four sophisticated deep search metal detectors (DSMD) to catch the poachers.

"The DSMDs are generally used by Indian Army to detect explosive mines. Their capability would help in detecting iron snares and traps used to ensnare tigers," coordinator of TRAFFIC-India Rahul Dutta said.

The poachers generally use iron traps, colloquially known as *kudka* or *khatka*, to catch the big cats. These are placed at known tiger trails and are camouflaged with dry leaves and green foliage. Once a tiger accidentally treads on it, the snares trap the animal's leg in leaving it in excruciating pain. The poachers then kill the animal and take its body parts for sale. "These snares are difficult to locate as they are cleverly camouflaged. But the sophisticated DSMD can detect iron traps even if buried two feet deep into the ground or water. This attribute makes it effective in locating these traps," Dutta said.

TRAFFIC India has provided four DSMD to Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and would be provided to Kishunpur and Katarniaghat wildlife sanctuaries. The DSMD is already being used in Bandhavgarh and Kanha in MP, Corbett and Rajaji in Uttaranchal, Simlipal in Orissa and Sariska in Rajasthan.

The DSMD are battery operated and can be charged even with car or tractor batteries. This costs Rs 80,000 which includes training cost.

Source: Biswajeet Banerjee ‘Army mine detectors to rescue tigers from poachers’, December 31, 2009, *The Pioneer*

Second tiger reserve for UP

The Amargarh forest range in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district is all set to become a tiger reserve — the state's second after Dudhwa National Park. The NTCA and the MoEF have already given their approval to the project. Clearance is awaited from UP's legal department.

This is good news for conservation, as it is a crucial tiger habitat that borders Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand. The 80 sq km Amargarh reserve is a vital part of the Corbett landscape and will serve as an extension and buffer for the tiger reserve. Though this

area is considered very sensitive to poaching pressures, the status of a tiger reserve will ensure more funds, better management and protection. Additionally, it has the advantage of no human settlements within the habitat.

Source: *Hindustan Times*, April 25, 2010

Comment: *It is also hoped that the state will notify Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, which has been gathering dust for years.*

Dudhwa faces financial crunch

While the news to declare a new tiger reserve is very welcome, it will also serve the cause well if the UP government were to solve some serious issues concerning Dudhwa. Shockingly, **UP has yet to notify the reserve's core critical habitat**, and so of course notifying the buffer is not even in the picture. Dudhwa also suffers from an **acute financial crunch** with the state delaying release of funds. The salaries of daily wages suffer from long delays and funds required for patrolling etc is simply not there. Another issue that needs serious attention is the railway line that cuts through the core.

WEST BENGAL

Rs 200 crores for Sundarbans

MEF Jairam Ramesh announced a Rs. 200 crore grant for Sundarbans as part of the World Bank's Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project during his visit to Sundarbans on 12th January.

This money will be utilised over five years, starting June 30, 2010 for protection, monitoring tigers, conservation of mangroves, planting etc. Ramesh plans to integrate the efforts of the forest department, irrigation department, the Botanical Survey of India, the Zoological survey of India, the Department of Sundarbans Affairs and agencies like the Border Security Force and Coast Guard. An action plan will be drawn up soon. Ramesh also plans to set up a Sundarbans Ecosystem Task Force to look into climate and environmental issues of the 'critically vulnerable coastal area'. "I want one person in my ministry who will be responsible for all activities in the Sundarbans. At present, there are six to seven agencies working in the Sundarbans. Unfortunately, there is no integration of initiatives. The effect of stand-alone initiatives are not felt," Ramesh said.

The minister also announced Rs two crore for rainwater harvesting in villages around the core area. There are nearly two lakh people living in the buffer zone.

"We will have to reduce their dependency on the forest. Ideally, the people living in the Sundarbans should be relocated. This is not possible as there is insufficient

land in West Bengal," he said. MEF Jairam Ramesh also **announced plans to set up an Indo-Bangla Sundarbans Eco-system Forum**, the first meeting of which was convened in March. "Nearly 60 per cent of Sundarbans falls in Bangladesh. They are keen to work with India for protection and conservation. Till now, there has been little interest from our side. I want to reverse this. I have already taken up the matter with the Ministry of External Affairs," the minister added. The forum will deal with issues such as tiger census, wildlife protection and migration, Ramesh added.

Ramesh was clearly not happy with the way tiger census is carried out in the Sundarbans and has urged the Wildlife Institute of India to give more accurate figures for the Sundarbans.

Ramesh was present when a four-year-old tigress, captured near a village on January 9, was released into the forests of Haldi Beat. Forest officials also released 65 deer raised at Dobanki to enhance the forest's prey base, in Ramesh's presence.

Source: *Krishnendu Bandyopadhyay, TNN*, January 13, 2010,

Villagers 'take over' forest tract

More than 500 forest villagers "took control" of a 2,985-hectare forest tract on the outskirts of Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary on 6th January by invoking their 'rights' under the 'Forest Rights Act'.

The villagers brought with them boards and nailed them to tree trunks, announcing that no one would be allowed to conduct any activity in the Kodal Bon Basti area of the Wildlife III forest division without the permission of a gram sabha they had formed. They invoked Section 3(i) and Section 5 of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. In Bengal the act is yet to be implemented.

The villagers celebrated the "takeover" of the forest land by bursting crackers, smearing each other with *gulaal* and cracking open coconuts. The residents of North and South Mendabari, Kurmai, Andu, Mantharam, Banin and Salkumarhat, assembled on the grounds of the Kodal Basti community hall and trekked to the forest on foot. "From now on, we will regulate the entry of forest staff and tourists inside the forest. We will not allow guides from outside to escort tourists inside. Our local youth will act as guides as they know the forests better than anyone else," said Bandhan Minj, the president of the gram sabha.

Source: *The Telegraph*, January 7, 2010

Comment: *There was a similar situation near Ranchi in Jharkhand when a forest area of over 200 sq km*

was handed over to the tribals by the government, including the control of the beautiful Dasam waterfalls. Today, the beautiful old rest house and the facilities developed by the forest department to cater to the need of the visitors is in shambles, and the forest completely destroyed.

Radio collars for Sundarban tigers

For an authentic scientific study of their behaviour, tigers in the Sundarbans, the world's only mangrove ecosystem with big cats, will be fitted with radio collars, forest officials said. "A tigress which had strayed into Gosaba area in South 24 Parganas district was fitted with a radio collar. We have to radio collar a few more tigers which will provide information about their behaviour in Sundarbans," Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve (SBR) director Pradeep Vyas said, adding "an authentic scientific study is needed and radio collars will provide us good information about the behaviour of Sundarban tigers."

Source: 28, February 2010, Kolkata, *PTI*

A tiger in Buxa, finally

Buxa is a tiger reserve, but ever since its inception in 1983 there had been no authentic record of a tiger. The census report however counted 27 tigers in its 2004 census. Disregarding this, the MoEF had sounded an alert and suggested several measures for increasing the prey base for tigers in the reserve. Funds were also allotted by the NTCA. The tiger was recorded on film on 24th March confirming the presence of tigers in Buxa. However, a fair estimate would be ascertained only after the 2010 census, which is currently undergoing. Beat Officer Manindra Chandra Sarkar had encountered a tiger at Chuniajhora Beat while collecting scat samples and managed to take photographs of the animal.

Source: *The Statesman*, March 31, 2010,

Human-tiger conflict in Sundarbans

Tiger straying into villages in the Sundarbans region continues unabated. As was stressed in the last *TigerLink*, one main cause for tigers straying is lack of prey base. It has been noted that captured-and-released tigers are making their way back to human habitation repeatedly.

Following are some instances of straying that have taken place in the region since the end of 2009.

- A tigress, that had been raiding settlements in the Tridib Nagar Island near the Herobhanga forest for many weeks, was captured using a trap and released

into the Dhulibasani forest on 20th December '09. A male had been captured and released in the same area only three months earlier.

- A tiger strayed into Madhya Gurguria village on 3rd January. A crowd had gathered and had cornered the tiger which was hiding behind a bush. Forty-year-old Jayananda Ghatak went too close to the tiger and was severely mauled. The unruly crowd made it extremely difficult for the forest department to proceed with rescue operations to capture the tiger.
- Of 16th February, a father-son duo from Jharkhali village in the Sundarbans went fishing early in the morning into the Kendokhali area. They were in their country made boat in the river when a tiger sprang on the father, Jiten Majumdar. The bravery of his unarmed son, Dhamu, saved Jiten's life. The boy instinctively picked up a handful of mud and hurled it into the tiger's eyes. The cat was shocked into releasing its grip on Jiten, who was rowed back to safety.
- On 19th March a tiger that had strayed into Sudhangshunagar village in the Sundarbans was tranquilised and captured from a keora tree it had sought refuge on. It was an old and injured tiger and had killed livestock in the region. It was taken to Sajnekhali by the forest staff after being captured.
- Following cyclonic weather on 26th April, a young tigress entered the Adibashipara village in Bagna range of the Sundarbans. She was tranquilised, captured, medically checked and released on 28th April into the Khatuajhuri forest of the same range.

Radio collar trouble in Sundarbans?

A report from the Field Director, Sundarban Tiger Reserve, says that a radio collar was recovered from the forest floor near Dhonakhali on 21st April. It was fitted on a tiger about two months back- on 22nd February- while it was being captured and relocated from a village Sonaga near Gosaba it had strayed into. Meanwhile, the collars fitted on to two other tigers had stopped sending signals since about ten days prior to this incident. One of these tigers, a male, had even been sighted with the collar around its neck on 18th April.

The Director's report now claims that the quality of these collars, costing about Rs. 3.5 lakhs each, is being tested and their effectiveness in the harsh Sundarbans environment is being evaluated.

Source: Joydip and Suchandra Kundu, *www.wildwatchers.blogspot.com*, 22, April 2010

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India rejects EU proposal on China tiger farms

At the 15th meeting of Conference of Parties in Doha in March 2010, India rejected a proposal by the European Union to modify an existing decision for China to phase out Chinese tiger farms. Given below is the text of India's statement:

India is quite concerned about the status of wild tigers. Despite ongoing conservation efforts to conserve this flagship species with an in-situ approach, the status of tiger continues to remain endangered. The recent all India tiger estimation using the refined methodology has enabled us to assess the status of tiger, its habitat and prey base in the GIS domain in all our 17 tiger States. The lower limit of tiger population in India is 1,165 and the upper limit is 1,657 with a mid-value of 1,411. At present, the 2nd round of country level estimation has commenced.

The status of tiger in tiger range countries is equally alarming and we believe that outside market driven poaching is the biggest threat to survival of tigers. A number of significant seizures have been done by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and states in our country.

A viable tiger population requires a well-protected, inviolate space of at least 800-1000 sq.km. We have taken a number of important initiatives to strengthen our ongoing tiger conservation efforts. The National Legislation has been amended to provide a separate chapter on tigers, the multi-disciplinary WCCB has been constituted, the Project Tiger Scheme has been revised to bring in new features with an enhanced relocation package for villagers residing in core areas (from Rs. 1 lakh per family to Rs. 10 lakhs per family). The process is on to create the Special Tiger Protection Force in sensitive reserves. The allocation for Project Tiger has been considerably increased in our current Plan period from the earlier Rs. 300 crores to Rs. 650 crores. Special Crack Teams have been sent to problematic areas; radio telemetry is being used in a big way involving the Wildlife Institute of India to track/study the spatial use of tigers, active management has been resorted to repopulate areas where tigers have become locally extinct. Above all, we now have a tripartite MOU in place with all our tiger States to address the ecological and administrative concerns with reciprocal commitments.

The local people are involved in a big way in saving the tigers. The Government of India provides financial assistance to tiger states for this deployment which provides livelihood options to such people. On any single day, almost 300 local people are engaged in a reserve in local patrolling / networking.

Tiger conservation being a collective responsibility, we are working closely with expertise outside the system as well. Various NGOs i.e WWF, TRAFFIC-India, Wildlife Protection Society of India, Wildlife Trust of India and several other organisations are involved in helping us to achieve our goal. An online tiger mortality database (tigernet.nic.in) has been created in collaboration with TRAFFIC-India.

Our strategy is to address the source-sink dynamics of tiger. The fate of wild tigers outside the natal areas is tentative. The man-tiger interface is highly sensitive and we have lost quite a few tigers due to revenge killings. The demand for body parts outside our country is now dampening and retarding our efforts to save this species in a man-dominated landscape.

The challenges facing us are enormous. We need reciprocal actions from Parties, especially our neighbouring tiger range countries.

The 14th COP was important for tigers. The Notification issued by the CITES Secretariat to the Parties in October, 2008 on tiger breeding operations is highly commendable. We compliment the Parties, NGOs and other delegates for giving shape to this Notification.

However, three years later, we still stand where we were. The progress regarding restricting captive populations to a level supportive to conserve wild tigers leaves a lot to be desired. This is a cause for great concern. Despite our best intentions, the response is not forthcoming. Survival of wild tigers in India would largely depend upon extinguishing demand for its skin and other body parts across the world and how its wild habitat along with its prey base in all our range countries are managed. It will require initiatives on the part of the range countries for its conservation and cooperation in enforcing domestic laws and international obligations.

The present proposal of EU is laudable in its intent. We appreciate this effort. However, this contains several provisions on which compliance is difficult. Also, there is no concurrent commitment from the Parties in terms of financial support which may be required to countries for complying with the suggested

provisions. The proposal also goes beyond the mandate of the CITES in articulating on internal trade within countries.

We commend China for continuing its domestic banned on tiger trade. This is very critical to reduce the demand the tiger bone medicines. We appreciate the efforts done by China's State Forestry Administration in strengthening wild tiger conservation. We appeal to China to build up on these good initiatives and on their statement to the COP vide Inf. Document No. 16, which articulates about not having any plan to use captive bred tiger bones as clinical medicine at this moment.

We have a protocol with China on tiger. We earnestly hope that we will work with China to foster our agenda bilaterally to save the tiger. We also have a bilateral mechanism with Nepal, and very shortly we would be meeting in India to work out a tiger conservation roadmap. We are in the process of developing similar bilateral arrangements with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar as well.

We suggest that all tiger range countries and the proponents may together discuss this proposal, which is not acceptable in its present form. Meanwhile, we will closely work with the tiger range countries to give shape to a Regional Tiger Action Plan for protecting and conserving the tiger and its habitat.

Till a final view on the EU proposal is taken we strongly recommend continuance with the decision taken at the last CoP as specified before.

Dr Rajesh Gopal, Member Secretary NTCA

Tigers top issue at White House

Malia Obama most frequent question about her Dad's job as President of the United States is: What's he *doing* to help tigers? Tigers, according to Michelle Obama, are top issue at the White house. Asked about her family's favorite animal, the first lady said they talk about tigers at least once a week, because Malia, 11, is concerned about what President Barack Obama is doing to save the endangered animals.

"He tells Malia he's working on it and there are a lot of people who are thinking about it," she said.

Comment: Mr President?

BANGLADESH

Sunderbans will drown in 60 yrs: WWF

The World Wildlife Fund has warned that days are numbered for much of the sensitive Sunderbans ecosystem and in 60 years vast tracts of it, will be

inundated by the rising sea. A study, focused on the Bangladesh Sunderbans, says the sea is rising swifter than anticipated by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007 and would rise 11.2 inches (above 2000 levels) by 2070. **This would result in shrinkage of the Bangladesh Sunderbans by 96 per cent within half-a-century. If so the tigers of Sunderbans are doomed.** The study, 'Sea Level Rise and Tigers: Predicted Impacts to Bangladesh's Sunderbans Mangroves', has been published in the journal, Climatic Change. Though the Indian part of the Sunderbans will not be so badly affected, conservationists wonder how many tigers would be able to survive here with nearly 60 per cent of the habitat gone. "Though tigers are a highly adaptable species, occupying territory from the snowy forests of Russia to the tropics of Indonesia, to the Sunderbans mangroves, the projected sea level rise in the Sunderbans may outpace the animal's ability to adapt," a WWF source said.

Source: Jayanta Gupta, 'Sunderbans will drown in 60 yrs: WWF', TNN, February 23, 2010

Bangladesh launches Tiger Action Plan

Bangladesh has launched a programme to train field staff in the Sunderbans to prevent man-animal conflict. Three tigers and 30 people were killed in Bangladesh in 2009 while the figure since the year 2000 has been 193 people and 23 tigers. A recent tiger casualty was reported in the southern district of Satkhira, where villagers captured and beat a five-year-old tigress to death.

Officials have said that strict enforcement of anti-poaching laws and better conservation efforts had helped the tiger population but they were unable to give a specific number.

A Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan is also being launched under which forest rangers and guards will learn to use tranquiliser guns to immobilise and capture tigers that stray into human habitations.

Source: Anis Ahmed, Reuters, 25, January 2010

Poachers face life in prison

Poachers in Bangladesh could **soon face life in prison under legal reforms aimed at protecting wildlife**, including the critically endangered tiger. Under the country's existing law, which dates back to 1974, the maximum penalty for a wildlife poacher or smuggler is a 2,000 *taka* (30 dollar) fine and a two-year prison sentence.

The laws are 'outdated and too lenient' to preserve the country's threatened wildlife, the government's top conservation official told AFP. "We are now amending

the law to fight poachers who have become increasingly sophisticated and are now often armed. They must be stopped," Tapan Kumar Dey said. Dey said the government has already formulated the new Bangladesh Wildlife Preservation Act, under which a poacher could be sentenced to a maximum life term and fined up to 300,000 taka. Bangladesh's cabinet is expected to approve the law later this month and then send it to parliament for final approval, he added.

The new law also boosts protection of ancient forests.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) more than 13 species have become extinct in Bangladesh over the past 40 years, and over 100 species are now considered endangered or critically endangered. The country's human population has tripled during the same period, while forest cover has shrunk to just 10 percent of land mass, resulting in increasing man-animal conflict.

Experts believe only 200 big cats now live in the forest, down from 440 in 2004.

Source: AFP, May 10, 2010

Comment: It is commendable that Bangladesh is coming out with a more stringent punishment for wildlife crime by amending its law, an exercise India is also engaged in at the moment. However, it would be prudent to check how effective is the implementation of law. What use is more stringent punishment if the conviction rate is poor—less than one percent in India, and about the same in Bangladesh.

BHUTAN

Pay farmers to save tigers

At a conference held at Conservation Chautari in Bhutan Tiger Sangay, faculty at the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Environment and Conservation and former coordinator of the Bhutan's Tiger Conservation Programme said that Bhutan has 70-80 breeding tigers. Sangay also presented the paper, 'Tigers, People and Climate Change in the Bhutan and said that there has been no change in forest cover (29,420 km²) where tigers occur in several areas.

To save tigers, Bhutan has a Tiger Action Plan and a Tiger Conservation Fund. Three thematic areas have been chosen—Tiger as flagship species, Tiger Habitat Management and Human-tiger Conflict. Bhutan's PAs and biological corridors (total area of 19,662 km²) have at least 8,000 households resource dependent on these. The Tiger Conservation Fund compensates farmers whose cattle are killed by tigers. Between 2004–2005,

Bhutan compensated farmers with 2.9 million Ngultrums (nearly US\$ 63,000). He estimates that the money was well-spent and rough estimates suggest that the compensation scheme have supported 12 adult tigers to survive every year.

Source: www.resourcehimalaya.org

Urgent need to restore prey

The Jigme Dorji-Manas-Namdapha landscape is an extensive forested landscape that may currently hold about 100 tigers, but with prey restoration could support nearly 500 tigers. In the mountainous tracts tigers occur at a very low density (1/185 km²) owing to the low density of large prey such as takin, sambar, and wild pig. In the lower altitudes, which are much more productive for tigers, extensive poaching of prey as well as predators by the locals has made the situation extremely precarious for the big cat.

Source: 'Status and Conservation of Tigers in the Indian Subcontinent', *Tigers of the World*, A.J.T. Johnsingh, Bivash Pandav, and M.D. Madhusudan

Tiger in the Indian subcontinent

The paper, 'Status and Conservation of Tigers in the Indian Subcontinent', *Tigers of the World*, A.J.T. Johnsingh, Bivash Pandav, and MD Madhusudan gives an excellent overview of the status and conservation of tigers in the Indian subcontinent—historical and present range, current population estimates and the potential of identified reserves and landscapes, specific threats etc. Given below is an overview of the ecological and demographic context of tiger conservation in these countries.

Country	Land Area (in sq km)	Human Population Density	Forest Cover	Tiger Habitat (in sq km)	Protected Tiger Habitat	Tigers
Bhutan	47,000	49.5/sq km	72.5%	14,313	70%	67-81
B'desh	133,910	1123.5/sq km	6.7%	6,000	100%	200
Nepal	143,181	201.9/sq km	25.4%	9,000	50%	98-123
India	2,973,190	308.0/sq km	22.8%	364,200	20%	1600

CHINA

Tigers in China face extinction

Wild tigers in China face the danger of extinction in about three decades if loss of habitats and illegal trade continue, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has warned. "If urgent and proper measures are not taken, there is a risk that wild tigers will no longer be found on

Chinese territory," Zhu Chunquan, Conservation Director, Biodiversity, WWF China Program Office.

"The country now has fewer than 50 wild tigers,"

Wang Weisheng, director of the wildlife management division of China's State Forestry Administration (SFA), told *China Daily*. South China tigers are believed to be extinct in the wild after the species has not been sighted for more than 25 years, according to WWF. The country is left with 20 Siberian tigers, 10 to 20 Bengal tigers and 10 Indochinese tigers, Wang added.

Time magazine reports that in half-a-century, the wild South China tiger population in China has been reduced from perhaps 4,000 to—Beijing disputes this—none. During Mao Zedong's time they were considered a pest and extermination campaigns were launched against them. Also taking a toll were loss of habitat, declining prey numbers and, as the economy took off, a growing demand from traditional Chinese medicine for every part of the animal: whiskers, penis, bone, even feces. The report adds **that not one but four subspecies of tiger—Siberian, Indochinese, Bengal and South China—have been all but killed off within China's borders.**

China has banned trade in all tiger derivatives since 1993, and has faced pressure from neighbouring countries not to lift the ban under pressure from tiger farm owners.

Animal welfare organisations have criticised China for the rising number of captive-bred tigers. "The ban is in place but there is plenty of evidence that it is being violated in China. This will only increase pressure on wild tigers", said Ashok Kumar, Wildlife Trust of India.

Around 9,000 tigers are raised in farms worldwide, of which China has about 5,000.

Xie Yan, director of Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) China Program, said although the number of wild tigers in the country is on the decline, there is a ray of hope for Siberian tigers in northeast China - home to about 20. "The number of tigers in Russia has reached saturation, and they are migrating to northeast China," she added. However, lack of prey species and too much human activity in forests on China's side remain a worry, she said.

In contrast, wild tigers in southwest China's Yunnan and Tibet are few and geographically isolated, and will gradually become extinct, she said.

Source: Wang Zhuoqiong, 'Tigers in wild face risk of extinction', *China Daily*, 19, January 2010, Andrew Marshall, Tale of the Cat, *Time*, March 1, 2010

China Dream: Reintroduce tigers in the wild

A plan is under way to **reintroduce the South China tiger, the rarest of the world's five surviving**

subspecies, back into its natural habitat jointly by Minnesota Zoo, China's State Forestry Administration (SFA), and a Bangkok-based environmental financier called International Consultancy Europe (ICE). In this Year of the Tiger, the project has secured \$3 million to restore a 250,000-acre (100,000 hectare) nature reserve straddling the borders of Hubei and Hunan provinces. Half of this grant has been provided by the Chinese government, whose high-level interest in the project is easy to understand. *Panthera tigris amoyensis* is the progenitor of all modern tigers and the only subspecies unique to China. **By pulling a Chinese subspecies from the brink of extinction, China seeks not only to overturn an appalling record on conservation and the environment but also to gain a powerful new icon of national resurgence.** Adds Ron Tilson, director of conservation, Minnesota Zoo, **"China is an economic juggernaut, a military powerhouse. As part of that portfolio they need to bring back the icon of Asian wilderness. And that's the tiger."** Hopes for resurrecting the South China subspecies rest largely on a captive population of 67 tigers, held in zoos across China. It will be challenging. Derived from just six animals — two male, four female — caught between 1958 and 1970, they are so inbred that they are virtually brothers and sisters. But,

The potential site has been identified, Hupingshan-Houhe reserve though the wilderness and prey base needs to be 'restored', tigers need to be bred successfully—they would have to cross breed with another subspecies for gene vitality, and it would be a long time before tigers can be even soft released into the wild.

Questions have been raised about this programme: How can the same SFA officials who plan to save the South China tigers ignore the fate of thousands of their farm-raised cousins? Plus, the validity of pouring huge amounts of money into this exercise, while surviving wild tigers across its range urgently require protection.

Source: Andrew Marshall, Tale of the Cat, *Time*, March 1, 2010

China blocks reporting of Amur tiger's death

The first Amur tiger cub to be found in the wild in China in at least 20 years has died less than two days after being discovered. Apparently the cub was discovered by Han Deyou, a forester in the Wanda mountains in the northern province of Heilongjiang trapped in a pile

of firewood in his yard on February 25. He then called local police and forestry officials, who fed the cub beef and chicken as they waited for wildlife experts from a tiger breeding centre to arrive the following morning.

The cub was anaesthetised with a dart, taken away and kept in the jail of the local public security bureau. Experts confirmed it was an Amur tiger thought to be about around nine-months-old.

Regional media said the cub had probably sought shelter after being separated from its mother in the unusually deep winter snows. Authorities have covered up the death, which casts a shadow over what is potentially the best conservation news China has had for decades. But the case has been quickly shrouded in mystery, tragedy and secrecy.

Ma Hongliang, the propaganda chief of The East Is Red Forest Bureau, told *The Guardian* that this news was being withheld. He had advised Central China Television and other domestic journalists not to report the death because of possible negative publicity. The full details of the case have yet to emerge. It could yet prove a sad, but essentially positive indication of the potential for the remaining wild tiger population to breed. Alternatively, it may raise fresh doubts about eco-fraud among a public that has become cynical about conservation claims. In 2008, forestry officials in Shaanxi province endorsed a photograph of a South China tiger, which suggested the animal – until then assumed extinct – was still alive. It was quickly proved a fake.

The financial incentives for such duplicity are substantial because the existence of wild tigers improves the prospects for tourism and the possibility of conservation funds. But conservation groups said there was reason to believe the latest case may be genuine. There are only about 20 Amur tigers left in the wild in China.

Source: Jonathan Watts, 'Chinese authorities block reporting of wild Siberian tiger's death', *The Guardian*, March 4, 2010

INDONESIA

Save tigers? Keep two in your backyard

The Indonesian government is considering a conservation initiative that could see the general public legally keeping tigers as pets. For a **\$100,000 deposit ordinary citizens would be allowed to care for a pair of critically endangered Sumatran tigers in their own backyard**—the only criteria being that the yard should be at least 60 sq metres or one tenth the size of a baseball field. The proposed money from the 'sale' will go towards conservation efforts, though it was unclear who would manage these funds.

The government says that it is basing this initiative on a similar one that they launched for the Balinese mynah bird that was on the brink of extinction. The government says that the tigers and their cubs will still remain property of the state and will be closely monitored. "Let's think of the tigers' new homes as mini-zoos," forestry ministry conservation chief Darori said.

"This idea of selling the tigers to the public came about after several wealthy businessmen proposed buying them," another ministry official Didi Wuryanto said. "They don't just want to own horses. They want to be acknowledged as special people with prestige, so they want to keep tigers. But we're not in it for the money. We want to save the tigers."

The forestry ministry said the plan could be put into practice possibly from this year itself despite reservations from environmentalists, who say that the focus should be on protecting the remaining few tigers in the wild, and conserving the dwindling tiger habitat in Sumatra. Deforestation for logging and oil palm plantations has devastated tiger habitat on the island.

Illegal poaching and an eighty percent loss of tiger habitat has caused the number of Sumatran tigers to dwindle down to around less than 400 left in the wild.

Source: AFP, CNN, February 14, 2010

Comment: *Absurd is too mild a term for this initiative to 'save' tiger. Is this conservation? Will putting captive tigers in small areas conserve wild tigers? Is this an exercise to save tigers or to make money? The real answer lies in conserving species in the wild, giving them strict protection, and conserving their habitat, in which Indonesia has taken little efforts as logging and deforestation continues to devastate tiger habitats at an unprecedented pace.*

Tiger poacher arrested

In a curious incident, Indonesian conservationists said they had caught a 92-year-old man who had admitted to killing dozens of critically endangered Sumatran tigers over a lifetime of hunting. 'We caught him on Thursday while he was sailing a traditional wooden boat in a river in Kuala Cinaku with evidence of skin, skull and 8.3 kilos of bones from a tiger,' Iwin Kasiwan, from the Natural Conservation Agency in Riau province, Sumatra, told AFP. The man, named Wiryo, told conservationists that he started hunting tigers for a living when he was 17 on Java island. He moved to Sumatra in 1960 as the population of Javan tiger decreased. 'He said that he has killed more than 50 Sumatran tigers in Riau province alone,' Kasiwan said. Wiryo explained that he managed to sell the tiger parts in Singapore.

Source: AFP, March 19

MALAYASIA

Tiger killed

A tiger was found dead in northern Malaysia with bullets, spear and snare wounds a wildlife official said. The tiger attacked a local tribal, possibly as self defence. Shabrina Shariff, wildlife department director in Perak state, said seven men from one of Malaysia's indigenous groups had admitted injuring the four-year-old male tiger in an attempt to trap it before the attack. "We will submit a report to the prosecution for action," she said, adding that the men faced five years in jail if found guilty of trying to poach the tiger.

Source: AFP, 8, February 2010, Kuala Lumpur, www.mysinchew.com

NEPAL

Tiger conservation in Nepal

Among the most progressive measures are the efforts of Nepal to restore 50 per cent of the habitat in the Barandabhar, Khata, and Basanta corridors, reduce retaliatory killing of tigers by streamlining a compensation mechanism for conflicts and measures to reduce the number of poaching and smuggling incidents. One stretch of habitat where Nepal's conservation attention is needed is the Churia and foothill forests between the eastern part of Sukhlaphanta Reserve (the northern part of which is connected to the foothill forests) and the Sharada river, so as to create the Brahmadev corridor across the river to connect with the 1,200 sq km intact forests on the Indian side (Nandour Valley). This may one day enable tigers to range from the forests on the west bank of Yamuna to Sohelwa.

One of the serious problems in Royal Chitwan National Park-Parsa Wildlife Reserve is the high levels of tiger-human conflict. Efforts are under way to decrease the levels of tiger-human conflict by employing Tiger Watchers who alert the villagers of tigers in the vicinity, and to increase the value of compensations and make faster decisions regarding their disbursement.

Source: A.J.T. Johnsingh, Bivash Pandav, and M.D. Madhusudan: 'Status and Conservation of Tigers in the Indian Subcontinent'

NOTE: In October 2010, Nepal announced that the government will establish a National Tiger Conservation Authority as well as a Wildlife Crime Control Committee. These initiatives are welcome-especially considering that tigers in Nepal are in a precarious state. Last year, the first ever nationwide estimate of Nepal's tiger population revealed the presence of 121 breeding tigers within four protected

areas of Nepal. Areas like Shuklaphanta and Bardia have shown a sharp decline in tiger numbers.

RUSSIA

Russia to host tiger conservation forum

An international forum to discuss tiger conservation efforts will be held from 9th to 12th September in Vladivostok. The summit is expected to be attended by representatives of 13 range nations. "We expect the meeting to be held at the level of the heads of governments, allowing not only the raising of the necessary finances for national tiger conservation plans, but also the integration of these schemes into social and economic development programs," Igor Chestin, the head of WWF Russia,

Source: RIA Novosti, Moscow, January 27, 2010

International Conference on Amur tiger

An international conference "Amur tiger in Northeast Asia: Planning for the 21 Century" was organised by the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Science, WWF and WCS. A total of 109 representatives from 13 countries participated in the conference which focused on the current status of the Amur tiger population, its prey base and habitat, conservation measures taken till date and changes which have occurred during the last 12 years of monitoring. The Amur tiger is functionally extinct in the Korean peninsula and only about 20 tigers inhabit North-East China. Numbers of Amur tigers in Russia had bottomed to 30-40 animals at the early 1940's, but timely conservation measures had revived them by the mid-1980's. A 2005 survey estimated 428 to 502 individuals. Approximately 95 per cent of all Amur tigers in the wild are part of one contiguous population, probably the largest in the world. However, a recent survey has indicated possibly a 40 per cent decline over the last four years. Increased poaching, loss of quality habitat to logging, fires and developmental projects like construction of oil and gas pipelines have led to this crash in population.

A set of recommendations from the conference are listed below:

- a. Ensure the protection of Amur tiger habitat
- b. Resolve organisational and funding issues related to Amur tiger conservation, including speeding up revision of the federal Amur Tiger Conservation Strategy and initiating Sino-Russian talks for a joint conservation programme for restoration of Changbaishan tiger population in China

- c. Complete the development of a network of protected areas in Amur tiger range
- d. Contain poaching by changes in law and better protection and enforcement.
- e. Efforts to contain logging and illegal poaching of ungulates.

Source: *Resolution of the International Conference "Amur Tiger in North-east Asia: Planning for the 21st Century"*

Tigress captured, released in wild

On February 18 a female Amur tiger which had killed two horses in a village in the vicinity of Orlovka in Lesozavodsky district was captured by specialists of the Primorsky Game and Rare Species Department (Primorsky Hunting Management Department), Pacific Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Science and Wildlife Conservation Society. After obtaining necessary permissions, the tigress was radiocollared, transported to an unpopulated place at the border with the Udege Legend Nature Park and released.

Source: 18, February 2010, *Phoenix Fund; 21st Century Tiger*

Russian jailed for felling 'Siberian tiger' trees

A resident of Russia's far east was sentenced to nearly four years in prison for chopping trees necessary for the preservation of the massive Siberian tiger. "It's extremely rare that a person is sentenced to prison in such a case," said a WWF representative in Amur, Russia's Primorye region, in remarks cited by the Ria Novosti News Agency on 12th February. A WWF representative and a forest inspector reportedly questioned the man last year in an area where more than 2,600 cubic metres of Korean pine had been cut illegally. The trees provide the foundation of a critical food chain on which the Siberian or Amur tiger is on top, environmentalists say. Local logging operations over the past half century have decimated the Korean pine, WWF says, and illegal logging continues.

Source: *AFP*, February 13, 2010

SINGAPORE

Tiger parts on sale in jewellery shops

A three-month investigation by Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) found that **59 out of 134 jewellery and antique shops it visited**

in the Southeast Asian city-state were allegedly selling tiger parts, including claws, teeth and pieces of skin. All commercial tiger trade has been banned by the international CITES convention that Singapore has signed, and under domestic law the sale of tiger derivatives is prohibited, even if the products turn out not to be real, ACRES said. The key findings of the ACRES report are:

- The demand for tiger parts and the amount of tiger parts being stocked by the shops appeared to be higher over the Chinese New Year period in this Year of the Tiger, as reported by a shopkeeper.
- At 52 shops, the alleged tiger parts were openly on sale. 28 shopkeepers mentioned that an order for more tiger parts could be placed with them, and the delivery time ranged from one week to three months or more.
- Seven shopkeepers recognised that tigers are protected animals, that it is illegal to sell tiger parts.
- The alleged tiger parts were claimed to originate from Thailand, India, China, Myanmar, Indonesia, Lao and Cambodia.

Source: Reuters, March 19, 2010, ACRES

WILDLIFE CRIME

The Countdown: Tiger deaths in 2010

India is **23 tigers down till May 1, 2010**. It is feared that the demand for tiger bones and other products will accelerate and put further pressure on India's dwindling wild tiger population in China's Year of the Tiger

Given below are the details of the tiger mortality cases across India in the current year.

January 1: The new year begins on a grim note. A **tiger skin is seized** and three people arrested by the Forest Department in **North Wayanad Division, Kerala**.

January 5: A **male tiger**, probably about three-year-old, was found dead in Phulei *chaur*, **Dhikala range in the Corbett Tiger Reserve**, Uttarakhand. An examination revealed that he had succumbed to injuries from a fight with another big cat. This raises concerns as it is third dead tiger in Corbett within the month—one on December 13 in Dhikala, and another at Sarapduli three days later.

January 6: A male tiger, believed to be about ten, was found dead in Paraspur, **North Kheri Forest Division near Dudhwa Tiger Reserve**, Uttar Pradesh. The carcass was far too decomposed for a cause of

DETAILS OF TIGER MORTALITY 2010

Date	Place	State	Tiger skins	Tiger bones	Tiger poaching cases	Other tiger deaths
01-Jan-10	North Wyanad Division	Kerala	1 skin			
05-Jan-10	Corbett Tiger Reserve	Uttarakhand				1 tiger
06-Jan-10	North Kheri Division	Uttar Pradesh			1 tiger	
07-Jan-10	West Siang District	Arunachal Pradesh			1 tiger	
11-Jan-10	Corbett Tiger Reserve	Uttarakhand				1 tiger
27-Jan-10	Pench Tiger Reserve	Madhya Pradesh			1 tiger	
09-Feb-10	East Mandla Forest Division	Madhya Pradesh		4kg bones		
14-Feb-10	Kaziranga Tiger Reserve	Assam				1 tiger
18-Feb-10	Kaziranga Tiger Reserve	Assam				1 tiger
20-Feb-10	Bandipur Tiger Reserve	Karnataka			1 tiger	
24-Feb-10	Chamrajnagar District	Karnataka	1 skin			
07-Mar-10	Ranthambore Tiger Reserve	Rajasthan			2 tiger cubs	
08-Mar-10	Wyanad Wildlife Sanctuary	Kerala				1 female cub
11-Mar-10	Valmiki Tiger Reserve	Bihar			1 tigress	
14-Mar-10	Terai West Division	Uttarakhand			1 tiger	
19-Mar-10	Thenmala Forest Division	Kerala	1 skin			
30-Mar-10	Bandipur Tiger Reserve	Karnataka				1 tiger cub
07-Apr-10	Brahmapuri Territorial Division	Maharashtra				1 tiger
14-Apr-10	Nilgiris North Division	Tamil Nadu	1 skin			
19-Apr-10	Kanha Tiger Reserve	Madhya Pradesh				1 tiger cub
30-Apr-10	Bandipur Tiger Reserve	Karnataka			1 tiger	
01-May-10	Tadoba Tiger Reserve	Maharashtra		Bones & claws		
	Total		4 tigers	2 tigers	9 tigers	8 tigers

Credit: Wildlife Protection Society of India

This table indicates that 15 tigers have been lost to poaching (including seizures) and eight come under 'other tiger deaths'

death to be determined with officials saying they stumbled across it 48 hours after its demise, though reports say that the forest outpost is closed by. There were also conflicting reports over whether or not a cell phone and steel trap were found near the carcass and the 'state' of the body when found. A villager was arrested in connection with the case.

January 7: In a horrifying incident, villagers of Numuk village in the West Siang district in **Arunachal Pradesh killed a tiger, tied it to a bamboo stake, ate the meat and then sold the skin**, apparently to a buyer in Assam for Rs. 1.5 lakhs.

January 11: **Fourth 'Corbett' tiger lost** within a month. The carcass of a young male tiger was found dead in Gaujra, **Dhikala** range, of the Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand. It is suspected that **the cat died after consuming a poisoned carcass**.

January 27: A seven-year-old male tiger was found dead in the **Karmajhiri Range of the Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh**. The official reports suggest poisoning, as the post mortem reports an enlarged liver and kidneys. But a major controversy erupted with questions being raised whether tranquilising and lack of monitoring thereafter could have been the cause.

February 9: **Four kg tiger bone seized in the East Mandla Forest Division** (near Kanha), Madhya Pradesh.

February 14: The carcass of a full-grown tiger was found on an isle of the Brahmaputra to the north of **the core area of the Kaziranga National Park**.

February 18: Four days later **another tiger succumbs to infighting**—as indicated by marks on its body and the flurry of pugmarks around. A three to four year-old sub-adult male was found dead in the **Kohoro range of Kaziranga National Park**.

February 20: Officials at the Bandipur Tiger Reserve in Karnataka found the carcass of a **10-year-old male tiger in the Kollegal Forest near Gundlupet, close to the reserve. Its claws were missing and one of its paws had been chopped off**.

February 24: A **tiger skin was seized in Chamrajnagar District of Karnataka**. Two people have been arrested. The tiger was trapped in a wire snare and was shot thereafter. The skin had **three bullet wounds**.

March 7: In a tragic incident, **two tiger cubs were poisoned** by angry villagers in retaliation for the killing of two of their goats in the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve.

The cubs were 18 to 21-months-old. (see states for details)

March 8: A tiger is found dead in **Wayanad Wildlife Division, Kerala.**

March 11: **A tiger carcass was found in the Madanpur Range of Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar.** Villagers informed the local forest officials that firewood and grass collectors had seen few people burying a dead tiger in Kanti Forest area in the Range. The forest staff dug out the carcass, which was without any external injury. The body parts and organs were intact. The tigress was about 5-6 years old. It is suspected that the **kill (a cow) of the tigress was poisoned**, and she succumbed after consuming the toxic kill. After interrogation and preliminary investigation, **four villagers including two daily wage workers of forest department were arrested.** The villagers agitated tried to set the suspects free from the custody. There is huge grazing pressure in the Madanpur range. Poaching is also of major concern here. A male tiger died in May 2008, after getting entrapped in iron leg-trap laid by poachers, in the same forest range. Also, in December 2009, three leopard skins were seized from traders at Lakhimpur village, 6 km from the reserve.

March 14: **A male tiger was found dead in the Phato range of the Terai West Forest Division near the Corbett Tiger Reserve.** The tiger had been **strangled** by a wire snare.

March 18: **A tiger skin was seized by the forest department in Thenmala forest division, Kerala.** Two people were arrested. The tiger is alleged to have been killed in Kalakkad-Mundanthurai tiger reserve in Tamil Nadu.

April 7: **A tiger is found dead in Brahmpuri division near Tadoba.** It is said to have succumbed to infighting with another male.

April 14: Forest officials **seized a 'fresh' tiger skin from a four-member gang in the Sigur forest area near Anaikatty.** Interrogation revealed the involvement of three others, who were also arrested. The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve field director Rajiv K Srivasatava, said five of the seven suspects were remanded in custody after being charged under the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

April 30: An old male tiger was trapped in a snare. He managed to escape but succumbed to the injury about half a kilometer away on the North Begu-Moliyar range on the boundary of Bandipur (Karnataka) Tiger Reserve. All its claws were missing.

May 1: Seizure of skin and bones from Tadoba in Maharashtra

Source: Wildlife Protection Society of India, with additional information from Tigernet, *Sanctuary Asia*, April 2010, Samir Sinha, WTI

CBI probe for Panna proposed

Unhappy with the report submitted by a state committee appointed to investigate the cause behind the missing tigers of Panna Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh Forest Minister Sartaj Singh said he wanted a CBI inquiry into the disappearance of tigers.

The state government had ordered its own probe because it disagreed with the findings of a Special Investigation Team set up by the MoEF (see last *TigerLink*). The central team's report, submitted in June 2009 said the reserve lost most of its tigers to poachers and that little heed was paid to repeated warnings of the dire situation.

In fact NDTV reports ('The Great Panna Cover-up', April 29) that all officers held responsible by the committee for the Panna tragedy have been promoted. In fact, to 'protect' its officers, the state set up its own committee. This report laid the blame on a skewed male-female ratio, territorial fights, revenge killings by villagers, unbridled tourism activities and poaching. The latest probe has not impressed Singh who joined the Cabinet in October, five months after the committee was set up. In a notesheet to the Chief Minister, he said the issue was serious enough to warrant an inquiry by the CBI. Would such a probe not embarrass his own government? "No, it is in public interest. In any case, it is up to the state government to recommend it and for the CBI to entertain it," said Singh.

However, former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests JJ Dutta, a member of the state committee maintains "that there were many reasons for the tiger's disappearance and poaching didn't occur inside the park."

Source: Milind Ghatwai, 'Unhappy with Panna probe forest minister calls for CBI enquiry,' *The Indian Express*. March 7, 2010

Sansar Chand discharged in tiger bone case

In a blow to the wildlife conservation movement in India, notorious wildlife trader, **Sansar Chand was discharged on March 10 by a Delhi court, after the prosecution failed to prove his guilt in a case dating back to 1993.** This case was registered against Sansar Chand on 30th August 1993 when a huge cache of illegal wildlife goods was seized in Majnu-ka-Tila and nearby areas in Delhi. The seized goods included nearly 400 kilograms of tiger bones, 43 leopard skins, 128 otter skins, eight tiger skins, and other skins of small cats, civets and antelopes. Sansar Chand was discharged on the grounds of lack of evidence. The prosecution failed

to establish any direct link between the seized goods and Sansar Chand, and the fact that there was no recovery from him went in his favour. However, charges have been framed against the co-accused, Mohammad Yakoob.

Sansar Chand has been involved in poaching activities for over three decades; his first wildlife case was registered against him in 1974. Since then, **there have been more than 57 wildlife cases filed against him and his gang members** in different parts of the country. In 2006, **under interrogation by the CBI, Sansar Chand apparently admitted to selling 470 tiger skins and 2,130 leopard skins to just four clients from Nepal and Tibet.**

So far, Sansar Chand has been acquitted or discharged in five cases in Delhi. He was convicted in two cases in Delhi in 1982, and in one case in Rajasthan in 2004. He still has cases pending against him in Delhi and Uttarakhand, and is currently in prison in Ajmer in connection with several wildlife cases registered in Rajasthan, including those in relation to the disappearance of tigers from Sariska.

Source: WPSI, March 10

Four get jail for poaching tiger

In the second case of its kind in the state four persons were convicted in a tiger poaching case on March 20 by the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) court of Sakoli, Bhandara. Chandkiran Kodape, Tarachand Soyam, Sampat Soyam and Shiva Pingare were sentenced to three years in jail and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 for poisoning a tiger on September 29, 1992, near Nagzira National Park in Maharashtra. The tiger had killed a cow and the accused had poisoned the carcass using the chemical Thimet. Range Forest Officer Pradip Kottewar had investigated the case and seized the tiger skin from the accused. Assistant Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Kishore Mishrikotkar pushed the case to bring about the conviction.

Source: Vivek Deshpande, *The Indian Express*, Mar 21, 2010

Four suspected poachers arrested

Four poachers, suspected to be involved in rhino poaching at the Orang National Park were apprehended from two different places on the periphery of the park in January. Abdul Rashid was caught in a poaching case five years back, but continues to be involved in poaching activities. A police official in Sonitpur district is reported to have said that the nationality of a large number of people who had settled in the area was doubtful and suggested that a proper survey would help in establishing

this fact. All those who were arrested too are believed to be Bangladeshi nationals.

Source: 'Four rhino poachers arrested in Orang', *The Telegraph*, 14/01/10.

Comment: *It has been witnessed time and again that poachers are repeat offenders. With the conviction rate so low—less than one percent--this has become a serious problem. We are just letting poachers go free, only so they get back to poaching again.*

Leopards on death row

India has lost no less than **115 leopards in the first three months of 2010—more than a leopard a day. The killings are mainly concentrated in Uttarakhand: 42 leopards within the same period.**

The killings are brutal—in just one day, February 12, a leopard was found ensnared with its limbs chopped off. Another was found hanging from a tree entangled in a metal wire noose in Jhajhra forest range, also near the State capital. Intelligence sources say that there has been a spurt in leopard killings (almost a threefold increase within the same period last year), and a number of carcasses were found with their legs chopped off—this may be attributed to the fact that claws are considered good luck charms, and their demand increased due to a huge spiritual mela held in Hardwar.

Poaching and conflict incidents occurred across the country. In Uttar Pradesh, a leopard was beaten to death by villagers near Bahraich on February 21; while in Yusmarg, in Jammu & Kashmir, the animal was found dead in a trap, markedly the handiwork of poachers, on January 21. Another was stoned to death in the first week of April near Jorhat in Assam.

From 235 leopard deaths in the country in 2008, the mortality has escalated to 291 in the next year to about 115 in just the first three months of 2010.

Ironically, such large mortality does indicate a fairly decent population of leopards, but points out a senior forest official in Uttarakhand, "it cannot survive this large offtake". Also, it may well be remembered that the leopard's habitat has declined drastically, forcing it out in the open, where it is more noticeable — and vulnerable.

Neither the conflict issue nor the consistent poaching of leopards has been seriously dealt with. In early 2009, the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau sent alerts to Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh to be vigilant - but got no response. The leopards continue on the grim path to extinction.

Source: Perna Singh bindra, *The Pioneer*, February 28, 2010, leopard mortality data provided by WPSI

Poaching hits heart of Tadoba

Forest department officials have busted a poaching racket in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) with the arrest of six persons and recovery of tiger bones. Acting on the basis of a tip-off given by Wildlife Protection Society of India, RFO BS Padve arrested Mangaldas Madavi with three tiger nails in Chimur near Tadoba on May 1. Madavi is a resident of Jamni village, inside TATR. Further raids led to the arrest of five more people. Investigators were shocked to learn that the accused had poached a tiger, whose nails were seized, in Kolsa range of TATR. The accused also identified the place of poaching near Hirdi Nullah in Kolsa range. Forest officials found 20 tiger bones at the spot. Six wire traps were also recovered after the accused revealed their location.

It is uncertain when the tiger was killed but officials say it is likely to be the tigress with two cubs in Hirdi Nullah. She used to roam in the territory between Shivanzari, Hirdi Nullah and Kakadghat, but has been missing about an year ago," sources say. .

Source: Mazhar Ali & Vijay Panjarkar, 'Another Tiger Poached in Kolsa in TATR', May 5, *The Times of India*

Profile of a Poacher

In this paper, the author Ramesh Pandey based on his experience both in the field and with the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has built an exhaustive profile of the Bawarias, an ancient hunting tribe, originally from Rajasthan. The bawarias have consistently been involved in poaching tigers and leopards across the country. Based on this research, the author details their roots, family life, religion, their modus operandi in poaching, links with other hunting tribes, local people, dealers, traders, how they operate and where.

Such a 'profile' will help understand the lesser known aspects of Bawaria poachers involved in organised wildlife crime, and thus better equip enforcement staff, officials and investigating agencies to counter the crime and help take all possible preventive measures to protect endangered megafauna. .

The study also provides recent information that reflects changing trends. It is interesting to note how bawarias earlier mainly targeted tigers. But as tiger numbers declined, and their killing became more risky and 'high profile', they have also taken to killing leopards. The tribe has spread their area of operation to the north-east, and even in neighbouring countries of Bhutan and Nepal. Bawarias are connected with all the other poaching nomads like pardhis, bahilyas, and also have

links with big traders like Sansar Chand, as well as with dealers across the border (Nepal-Bhutan) who reach the goods to China. Their approach has also become more 'professional'. While earlier they moved in large groups they now move in smaller groups to avoid detection. Bawarias kill using iron traps; do not keep sophisticated weapons, and are experts at skinning the animal. The author also writes an intriguing case study of Bawariya poachers caught in a tiger poaching case in Katarniaghat, where he served as DFO for nearly four years. Pandey gives series of recommendations that include intensive foot patrolling and monitoring, training of guards and staff, strengthen intelligence gathering, strict vigil etc to counter the increasing pressure of poaching .

Source: Ramesh Pandey, 'Involvement of Bawaria communities in organised wildlife crime with special reference to poaching of tigers and leopards' *The Indian Journal of Criminology and Criminalistics*, Vol XXX, Issue No.1

MEDIA

Campaign to save tigers

Most of India--atleast urban India--is now aware that India has 1411 tigers (the National Tiger Conservation Authority-WII study puts the median figure for living wild tigers in India at 1,411), thanks to a high profile campaign launched by Aircel, a mobile company, in partnership with WWF-India. The little lost tiger cub waiting, in vain, for its mother has touched the hearts of over two lakh Indians who have joined the online pledge to save the tiger. This campaign is a bid to draw attention to the dwindling number of wild tigers in India, Apart from television and print advertisements in newspapers, magazines and hoardings, a website www.saveourtigers.com has been launched.

In the **second phase of the campaign**, NDTV has **partnered in the initiative**, providing a platform to tiger conservationists for issues to be raised, engaging key stakeholders in discussions and providing concerned citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions and contribute to the cause. They are doing a series of special stories raising important issues like accountability for the Panna debacle, the mining issue in Tadoba, the ongoing concern for adverse tourism impact on tigers etc.

Actor Amitabh Bachchan was roped in as a campaign ambassador for the initiative. *Sanctuary Asia*,

FILMS

as Knowledge Partner for Aircel & NDTV will help to strategise the campaign. Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) is the Implementation Partner and will also provide financial support by matching the public donations up to 2.5 crores. Kids for Tigers, the Sanctuary Tiger Programme will be an intrinsic part of Phase II of the campaign, which will focus on supporting the tigers' protectors—our forest guards and field staff.

Saving the tiger: New Brand Equity?

Call it CSR or brand promotion, wildlife seems to have become the new cause celebre in corporate India. "While corporates may hesitate to admit it, these campaigns earn them goodwill even as they spread awareness of wildlife conservation programmes," says brand guru Jagdeep Kapoor. After all, what does a telecom company have to do with tigers? Gurdeep Singh, COO of Aircel says that their 'Save Our Tigers' campaign was aimed at creating mass awareness about the diminishing tiger population and engaging the youth to spread the message, especially in digital space. It has served the brand well too—it cannot be denied that it has given the relatively lesser-known brand prominence in the public domain. But Aircel isn't the only one, other corporates have launched campaigns around other endangered species. For instance, Tata Chemicals, along with the Wildlife Trust of India and the Gujarat State Forest Department, started a project in 2003 to create awareness for whale shark conservation. They work with the local communities off the coast of Gujarat. That apart, they also partnered with the Gujarat state forest department to built parapets around 1,002 open wells, which cause considerable lion mortality, in and around Gir national park.

At HSBC, which goes by the mantra of sustainable development, the projects have ranged from mapping avifauna diversity and protecting nesting habitats of Olive Ridley turtles which visit Orissa's shores, to working with Reefwatch to assess the habitat for the sea cow or the dugong.

Often though, initiatives have been spearheaded by an individual or corporate leader as in the case of Bank of America-Merrill Lynch where their eight-year old interest in environment and tiger preservation was driven by their ex-chairman Hemendra Kothari, an avid wildlife and conservation enthusiast.

In fact, Kothari set up Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) in 2002 which funds protection work either through forest department or through NGOs in 14

protected areas. WCT also supports vocational training of youth and health camps in villages along the periphery of parks.

Source: Lisa Mary Thomson, Ravi Teja Sharma & Aman Dhall, ET Bureau, February 10, *The Economic Times*

FILMS

The Truth About Tigers

Award winning wildlife and conservation filmmaker Shekar Dattatri's *The Truth About Tigers* is a gripping 40 minute film that is a must see for all those who are concerned about the precarious status of the charismatic predator. Using arguably the best tiger footage available, the film explains in a simple yet powerful and effective manner how to save our tigers. Narrated by renowned actor, Roshan Seth, **it takes viewers through the natural history of the big cat, key problems facing its conservation and the potential solutions to the crisis. The film highlights strategies that people can employ to get pro-active about saving tigers.** *The Truth about Tigers* is a unique educational documentary that will be particularly useful to all those involved in conservation education. Two years in the making, it combines extraordinary footage with deep insights from experts such as renowned tiger biologist, Dr. Ullas Karanth, of the Wildlife Conservation Society, and illegal tiger trade investigator, Belinda Wright, of the Wildlife Protection Society of India. One of Britain's top documentary composers, David Mitcham, has contributed to the music score. Free copies of the DVD can be obtained by using the 'Request DVD' button on the home page of an accompanying website, www.truthabouttigers.org, which also provides practical information on tigers and their conservation.

BOOKS

Handbook on Wildlife Law Enforcement in India • by Samir Sinha • Traffic India and Natraj Publishers • Rs 495

It may not be a coincidence that the author begins each section of the book quote from Sun Tzu, the ancient war guide from China, which happens to be the single most 'consuming' country for the illegal wildlife trade, notably, tiger derivatives.

That apart, the book, coming from a serving forest officer, currently employed with TRAFFIC, is a complete handbook on one of the biggest threat to wildlife today—

the continued illegal trade that runs into billions of dollars. It covers everything conceivable about the 'business'—various poaching methods, an overview of the illicit market, including in the virtual world, the various species involved, even the lesser known ones like corals, sea-horses, spiders, birds, medicinal plants—to the point that it appears that there is no species not under pressure from trade. All of which is supported photographs, graphics and maps.

The best part is that the book also deals with how best to prevent the crime. And so, will serve as a useful tool to those dealing with wildlife crime—as it also covers prevention of the crime, steps to be taken to prevent offences, to identify warning signs, aids in investigation, intelligence gathering, interrogation and guidelines for making arrests. Though essentially a niche book, the author has gone easy on the jargon making it an easy read even for the unacquainted. The book is good reference material and it will be well advised to translate it into Hindi and other languages for wider use.

—Inputs from Jose Lewis, DTE

Tracking Tigers in Ranthambhore • by Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj • Aureole Publishing Pvt Ltd

Ranthambhore and its tigers have inspired many a book and films. A new, and welcome, addition to the stable is *Tracking Tigers in Ranthambhore* by the man who served as the deputy director of the park. The author is an accomplished photographer and the coffee table book showcases striking photographs of tigers and other wildlife of this famous reserve. It has some rare moments—a cub sniffing at a turtle, another cub, still young and unskilled at the art of predation, 'playing' with a langur. The book follows the lives of the famous tigers of Ranthambhore, details the challenges and the problems about their conservation, focuses on the controversy that surrounded the reserve when 22 tigers went missing in 2005, and has the curious dairy of two orphaned cubs who were 'brought up' by the forest department. *Tracking Tigers in Ranthambhore* is an insider's account of a much loved park and its tigers, and a must for the library of tiger and Ranthambhore aficionados, and for the lay reader learning about the ways of the wild.

A Naturalist and Other Beasts: Tales from a Life in the Field • by George B Schaller • Sierra Club Books

Dr George Schaller is renowned for his pioneering studies on the behavior of charismatic fauna such as the giant panda, mountain gorilla, tiger, snow leopard, African lion besides lesser known species like the Southeast Asian takin, Mongolian gazelle etc. Those in

India are well aware of his pioneering work *The Deer and the Tiger*, as well as his studies on the tahr and the Kashmiri Markhor and the snow leopard.

The world's best known field biologist is a rare animal in many ways... amongst Schaller's many achievements is that unique ability to combine scientific precision and knowledge with remarkable wit and an unabashed love for his subjects in his writing. His is not the scientific tome, inscrutable to his readers. Schaller's quest is for "a deeper understanding, one beyond soulless statistics." He is convinced that "an appeal for conservation must reach the heart, not just the mind." And this he seeks to do, with his beautifully sculpted words that touch the soul and enrich the mind. The book is an interesting collection of 19 essays that take us through the vast expanse of his travels to discover new species in Vietnam, on the trail of the jaguar in Brazil's Pantanal Swamps and in the vast expanse of the Hindu Kush in search of the elusive snow leopard. He despairs for the tiger, yet he says, "The situation is not wholly bleak, and tigers can continue to burn bright in the forests if countries devote willpower and long term commitment to their survival."

The writing is engaging, inspiring, evocative... without getting too effusive, let's just say, it's simply brilliant. Read it.

Prerna Singh Bindra

Wild animals in Central India • AA Dunbar Brander • Natraj Publishers, Rs 425

Though Wild Animals of Central India was first published in 1923 it's a classic on wildlife in India and remains a wonderful chronicle on the central Indian highlands. The author a conservator of forests, spent many years in what is now Kanha Tiger Reserve and the book serves not only a useful reference material, but also it forms a benchmark against which we can measure the status of wildlife and its habitat. The chapter on wild buffalo is of particular interest, given the critically low numbers of the genetically pure buffalos today. He talks about elephants, and whether they existed in the Central provinces...and while he has seen them in Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh), and he writes that in the rains these animals trek as far west as Mandla, which as we know is the small town close to Kanha! Natraj's reprints of wildlife classics, otherwise inaccessible, have long served a useful purpose. Other recently released classics include P D Stacey's *Elephant Gold, Tiger & Other Game* by Colonel A. E. Stewart, *Mauled by a tiger: Encounters in the Indian Jungles* by Arthur W. Strachan.

RESEARCH & PUBLICATION

PAs, connectivity critical for species survival

A study of extinction patterns of 25 large mammal species in India finds that improving existing protected areas, creating new areas, and interconnecting them will be necessary for many species to survive this century. It puts to rest the 'co-existence' model, of human and wildlife sharing the same patch, which found a platform in the tiger Task force. If species are to persist, protected areas are critical. More importantly, the paper provides a broad template to identify no go areas from a wildlife-endangered species conservation perspective, as pressures from development projects i. mines, highways, power projects etc increases.

The study appeared in the March 10 online edition of the British peer-reviewed journal, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*. The team's analysis showed that forest cover and local human population densities are also key factors. Fostering greater human cultural tolerance for wildlife likewise will be critical.

The study examined extinction probabilities for a range of species. It looked at species considered endangered or critically endangered on the 2009 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, including tigers, lions and elephants. And it looked at species of least concern, like jackals etc.

"India's fragmented network of relatively small protected areas has high carrying capacities for large mammals," said Krithi K. Karanth, who conducted the study as part of her doctoral thesis at Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment. "But given the overall patterns of extinction estimated in our study, **we need to create new areas, and connect them better, if many of the mammals are to persist into the future.**"

To identify factors critical to the species' survival and estimate their extinction probability, she and her team collected 30,000 records, including hunting, taxidermy and museum records dating back to 1850. They divided India's geographical area into a grid with 1,326 individual local 'cells' and entered the historical data into each cell. The occupancy estimation models, based on observations of more than 100 local wildlife experts were then used to infer the current occurrence of species in each cell.

The analysis revealed that protected areas were associated with lower extinction probabilities for 18 species. Higher proportion of forest cover was associated with lower extinction of seven species. On the other hand, time elapsed since the last historical citing was associated with higher extinction probabilities of 14 species, and human population density in a cell was associated with higher extinction probabilities of 13 species.

One of the most important findings is that **culturally tolerated species animals that humans perceive as nonthreatening or beneficial fared better** overall. Therefore, encouraging local communities' tolerance of species and enforcing existing laws, along with improving protection in parks, will go a long way in saving species.

For conservation to succeed, policymakers and land managers must also take into account rapid changes in land use, climate, population growth and spread, and economic development now occurring in India and southern Asia.

Krithi Karanth's co-authors on the study were Norman L. Christensen Jr., professor of ecology at Duke's Nicholas School; James D. Nichols and James E. Hines of the U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center; and K. Ullas Karanth of the Wildlife Conservation Society India Program and the Centre for Wildlife Studies in Bangalore.

Source: Tom Lucas, *Duke University, Office of News & Communications*, 'Large Mammals Need Protected Areas In India: Forest Cover and Connections Between Reserves Key to Survival', Seema Singh, *Mint* 'How the blackbucks fought off extinction', March 11, 2010.

Tiger relocation not viable

June 2008 saw the first tiger reintroduction programme when a tigress was flown to Sariska from Ranthambhore, following the extinction of tigers in Sariska. Consequently, two more tigers were shifted to Sariska. The next park to fall from grace was Panna, the tiger was 'officially' declared extinct here in 2009. Three tigers have been translocated there from Kanha, Pench and Bandhavgarh. Currently there is a proposal to shift more, and reportedly a tigress has been selected in Pench to be relocated to Panna. Also, the NTCA had advised an in-situ build-up of tiger population (a founder population of two tigresses and a tiger) in 11 reserves

to save them from local extinction, after translocating them from similar habitat.

In this context, when large carnivore reintroduction is being given serious consideration, the authors, A.J.T. Johnsingh and M.D. Madhusudan examine the feasibility and advisability of this exercise.

They cite that most experience with large carnivore reintroductions comes from North America, Europe and South Africa, where carnivore declines have ensued from their direct persecution by humans. Once the factors responsible for the original extirpation of a large carnivore have been removed, reintroduction has proved a viable conservation option given the backdrop of low human densities, extensive land availability and the commitment of adequate financial and socio-political support for the reintroduction project.

In India, the situation is completely different. Here, tigers have been extirpated from many parts of its former range—not only through direct persecution, but also due to prey depletion and habitat loss. Given the complex socio-cultural, economic and political factors that drive habitat loss and prey depletion for the tiger, the authors review the feasibility of reintroduction as a conservation intervention. In the Indian setting, which is characterised by the persistence—even aggravation—of conservation threats to tigers, the authors argue that the prudent course is to first invest in effective means of reducing threats to tigers and their habitats before exploring the option of tiger reintroduction.

It is first necessary to clearly articulate the objectives of the reintroduction, to understand—and eliminate—critical factors that contributed to the extirpation of the tiger in the first place ie poaching, conflict etc. Then there are the technical considerations—how many tigers, and what should be their age and sex. It is also pointed out that in the context of limited resources, the economics of competing conservation options of, say, habitat protection versus reintroduction must also be carefully examined before decisions are finally taken.

The various potential sites are also thoroughly scrutinised—not just the obvious ones like Sariska and Panna, but also Nandhour-Ladhya Conservation Reserve (Uttarakhand), Madhav National Park(MP), Namdapha Tiger Reserve (Arunachal)—to assess the feasibility of the exercise and advise on steps that are a prerequisite to reintroduction of tigers.

The authors argue that most of the causes of extirpation of tigers have not been addressed—be it poaching, hunting of prey species, degradation, and

fragmentation of habitat, conflict or failure of the official system to protect tigers. Besides, with the stress on economic growth, ecological concerns have been eclipsed.

Also, we have failed to address the issue of benefits of tiger conservation reaching local communities. The authors conclude that if "we are serious about tiger conservation, there is no alternative but to invest in effectively protecting breeding populations from poaching and prey depletion, securing dispersal corridors to link breeding populations, and managing ubiquitous human presence and resource-use in tiger habitats in a more scientific and just manner."

Source: A.J.T. Johnsingh and M.D. Madhusudan, '*Tiger Reintroduction in India: Conservation Tool or Costly Dream?*', *Reintroduction of top predators* + Edited by Matt W. Hayward and Michael J. Somers © 2009 Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Landuse planning around PAs

In India and most parts of Asia, protected areas are embedded in human-dominated landscapes. Typically, communities living in and around these PAs have low income levels and depend on them for fuelwood, fodder, water, and other ecosystem services. Focusing on three tiger reserves Kanha, Ranthambore, and Nagarhole, a recently conducted study stresses the need for scientifically-based regional-scale land use planning around protected areas to balance human needs and conservation goals in the larger landscape.

Protected Areas often depend on landscapes surrounding them to maintain flows of organisms, water, nutrients etc. Land use change, dams, other development projects and infrastructure can have major ecological impacts on protected areas. It is impractical and unrealistic to curtail all anthropogenic activities around parks. The scientific imperative is to identify which activities in which locations are most detrimental, as well as what opportunities exist to satisfy land use needs with minimal harm to ecology.

As a first step to maintain the integrity of the PA, the authors propose the designation of a 'Zone of Interaction' around parks. The ZOI is determined by various criteria which includes: (1) the upstream watershed for rivers and streams that enter the protected area, (2) contiguous habitat for protected area species that extends the effective size of the protected area's actual habitat, (3) migration corridors to crucial areas such as breeding grounds, dry-season habitats, and

upstream locations, and (4) the extent that humans interact with the protected area through extraction of resources, hunting, spread of invasive species, and other activities.

The ZOI is an attempt to expand the previous concept of buffer zones. Rather than limiting land use and access over an arbitrarily-defined buffer, this approach can specifically identify target areas and biological-socio-economic processes that influence the ecological functionality of PAs.

Quantitative understanding of which activities (e.g. collection of forest products, grazing, road construction, tourism development) and which locations within the ZOI are most crucial to conservation goals will enable improved land use planning around PAs. Restrictions for detrimental development and tourism projects, and for use by local communities can then be targeted to areas identified as critical from the conservation perspective.

The concept is illustrated by delineating the ZOI in the three reserves—and while all are in human dominated landscapes they vary considerably in their respective watersheds, presence of migration corridors, and types of surrounding land uses. The ZOI in Ranthambhore is three times the park size and is largely determined by human interactions as there is little contiguous habitat, corridors or watershed. In contrast in Nagarhole, it includes elephant corridors, upstream watershed and is seven times larger than the park. Kanha's ZOI is approximately four times larger than the park and is mostly defined by contiguous surrounding forest. The analysis for this paper revealed the growing influence of urbanisation and expanding middle class on protected areas in India especially in terms of growing tourism infrastructure, which could be both a positive or a negative force for conservation.

By delineating a ZOI based on specific criteria and pinpointing locations and activities within it that are most crucial for park function, communication and management between park managers and other decision-makers may be more productive. One major hurdle is that park managers rarely have control over use beyond the protected area.

Targeted, science-based opportunities for regional planning that balances conservation with development is recommended. However, delineation of a ZOI is only a first step towards understanding and managing the linkages between ecological processes in the park and

the larger landscape, and several avenues of research are needed to improve understanding.

Source: Ruth DeFries, Krithi K. Karanth, Sajid Pareeth: /Interactions between protected areas and their surroundings in human-dominated tropical landscapes/. Biological Conservation (2010)

Landscapes for long term tiger conservation

The authors have identified 19 priority tiger conservation landscapes (TCLs) for the long term conservation of tigers in the Indian subcontinent. A brief profile of each landscape, including a listing of threats is based on the likely number of adult tigers that they could realistically support. These were classified under four broad categories.

It is suggested that the Indian subcontinent has five general areas which, together, stretch over nearly 150,000 sq km, and are each capable of supporting at least 200 tigers. These include the *Palakad-Bandipur-Dandeli*, an extremely rich tract that may currently support 250 adult tigers but has the potential to support at least twice as many if current poaching levels and anthropogenic pressures are contained; Melghat-Tadoba-Pench-Kanha may also support twice its current population of 250 tigers if habitat encroachment, conflict, poaching of tigers, annual forest fires, heavy livestock grazing, mining, and reservoir projects are curtailed. The *Kaziranga-Intanki* landscape is amongst the most productive tiger habitats and could potentially support c. 300 tigers (as against the current estimate of c. 150) provided insurgency and other anthropogenic impacts on forests and wildlife are curtailed. *Jigme Dorji-Manas-Namdapha* is an extensive forested transboundary landscape with possibly 100 tigers, but with prey restoration could support nearly 500 tigers. Given low prey base and huge human pressure it is very likely that the number of tigers in Sundarbans is considerably lower than the official 250, but it has a potential to hold about 200 tigers.

Two important but distinct landscapes, each capable of supporting 100–200 tigers, occur along the *terai-bhabhar* tract of northern India and Nepal. These are the *Yamuna-Sharada landscape*, which also encompasses Corbett TR, one of the finest reserves in India. The other is the *Suklaphanta-Bardia-Dudhwa-Pilibhit landscape*, which has the largest remnant patch (4,000 sq km) of the once extensive *terai* habitat and species such as the swamp deer and Indian rhino.

Poaching and anthropogenic pressure is immense and connectivity fragmented in this landscape. Transboundary co-operation is needed to deal with these issues where tiger landscapes encompass two countries.

Simlipal (Orissa), *Chitwan-Valmiki*, *Chota Nagpur*, *Anamalais and Periyar* along the Western ghats are capable of supporting 50 to 100 tigers. Of course these come with their own set of unique problems. Landscapes which can hold lesser than 50 tigers i.e Ranthmabhore, Panna, Sahyadris, Satkosia and Krishna river landscape (Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem) have also been detailed.

The authors estimate that there may be less than 1,600 tigers in the whole of the Indian subcontinent and the realistic maximum number of tigers that could be supported with its current habitat would be around 3,700. Some of the most critical issues are analysed and summarized and means to address these are suggested to secure the future of this majestic big cat.

Source: 'Status and Conservation of Tigers in the Indian Subcontinent', *Tigers of the World*, A.J.T. Johnsingh, Bivash Pandav, and M.D. Madhusudan

AWARDS

WCCB bags Clark R Bavin Award

The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) in the Ministry of Environment and Forests has been awarded the prestigious Clark R Bavin Award, 2010 for exemplary enforcement action and prioritising wildlife crime in the Ministry and other enforcement agencies.

The award is presented to persons who have demonstrated their commitment to fighting wildlife crime and to protect species of wildlife listed in the Appendices of the Convention through the strict enforcement of national and international laws. It is issued by the Species Survival Network (SSN), an international coalition of over 80 non-governmental organisations, including Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), a non-governmental organisation based in the United States of America. The awards, named after a former chief of the law enforcement division of the US. Fish and Wildlife Service, have traditionally been presented by the Secretary-General of CITES during meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

A large number of nominations were received this year from a number of countries and organisations for individuals and agencies.

Carl Zeiss Awards

The Carl Zeiss Wildlife Conservation Awards are given to conservationists from across the country. Since 2001, this event has been held annually, where wildlife conservationists—as identified by an expert panel led by Valmik Thapar—are recognised for their achievements and contribution in the field of tiger conservation. In 2010, five conservationists were awarded for their excellent and dedicated efforts towards the cause of tiger conservation.

The awardees are:

TANA TAPI, a remarkable officer of the Arunachal Pradesh State Forest Service, he has effected a dramatic change in the Pakke Wildlife Division (Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary & Tiger Reserve, Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary, Sessa Wildlife Sanctuary) ever since he took charge in 2004.

NITIN DESAI is of the most experienced non-government individuals in the field of enforcement and prevention of wildlife crime. As the Director, Central India, of the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), he manages WPSI's Tiger Poaching and Illegal Trade Investigation Project in the three critical states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. He also received the prestigious Clark R Bavin Wildlife Law Enforcement Award, 2010, awarded on 16th March, for his exemplary work in anti-poaching and law enforcement activities.

SAMBA KUMAR specialises in developing field protocols for surveying large mammals in Asian forests. His prime interests are in investigating ecological determinants that influence distribution and abundance of large herbivores in the Western Ghats in India. His field research work has included reliably estimating tiger and prey populations in different bio-geographic habitats within India and establishing field protocols for monitoring them over time.

JOYDIP KUNDU has no formal training in the field of wildlife but his interest in wildlife photography and conservation have led him to spend a lot of time in India's wildernesses. Working with *Sanctuary Asia* on the 'Bengal Tiger Campaign' and on 'Kids for Tigers', he is now key to the task of fighting to protect the Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve where he works with several NGOs and forest officials to campaign for local support for tiger conservation.

ADITYA PANDA is all of 23 years and has been passionately in love with wildlife from early childhood.

He is associated with Wild Orissa and helps document and monitor wildlife habitats in order to gather material to aid in conservation advocacy, lobbying for the expansion and creation of protected areas, protecting wildlife corridors, bringing attention at national levels to rich, yet ignored wildlife habitats and mitigating human-wildlife conflict. Aditya works for various wildlife conservation issues across Orissa but intends to channel most of his activities on the Satkosia and Similipal Tiger Reserves in order to make them viable source populations of tigers. Aditya also assists in editing *TigerLink*.

NGOs AND INSTITUTIONS

Western Ghats study

A recently commissioned study on integrated carrying capacity in Uttara Kannada aims to be a model guide for sustainable development. The study will take into account at least 14 themes to come out with a comprehensive document on various aspects of ecological parameters and biodiversity in the region besides a developmental plan for sustainable productivity of the district.

The two-year study project with a budget of Rs 40 lakhs launched by Chief Minister Yeddyurappa is planned to serve as a guide and tool for policy makers to "choose development and income generating projects which are in tune with the ecology of the district". The implementing agency is the Biodiversity Board in association with the Western Ghats Task Force. The study, dubbed to be the first of its kind on sustainable development strategies, is being conducted by the Centre for Ecological Science, Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

Source: *Deccan Herald News Service*, 11, December 2010

Solar lights for villages around Ranthambhore

Tiger Watch, an NGO working in and around the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve, has started a 'Solar Light Distribution Programme' in a bid to connect with locals and gain their support for tiger conservation. It has partnered with The Energy Resources Institute (TERI) and the Shri Ram Foundation in this initiative.

Villages with no electricity and those with a direct

impact on forests have been selected for this project. Five villages were given priority because they exist close to the Ranthambhore-Keladevi tiger corridor and are not within reach of the authorities.

Source: *Tiger Watch*

Solar energy for tiger reserves

Keeping wildlife conservation in mind, The Energy Resources Institute's (TERI) flagship project, Lighting a Billion Lives (LaBL), intends to light up inhabited areas on crucial wildlife corridors. The unique model gives villagers a monetary incentive and additionally addresses the enlisted major concerns leading to diminishing tiger population. Ranthambhore, Bandhavgarh, Similipal, Sariska and Melghat are among the target tiger reserves. TERI is collaborating with organisations that are doing quality work in the field- The Corbett Foundation, SPARDA, Tigerwatch, Humana India and Apeksha Homeo Society, etc. TERI is also in discussions with WWF-India, Wildlife Trust of India and Wildlife Conservation Trust to reach out to key tiger habitats.

Source: *Rajiv Chhiber, TERI, www.teriin.org*

IT programme for villagers near Pench

Satpuda Foundation launched a programme to teach computer skills to youth around Pench Tiger Reserve as part of their ongoing skill-building programmes aiming at empowering communities to leave their traditional forest-destructive occupations, become part of mainstream society and earn higher incomes. The programme is being carried out on a pilot basis in Sawra, one of over 160 villages with resource dependence on the park. Keeping with the Foundation's policy of involving urban people directly in grassroots tiger conservation, the programme has been conceived and implemented by the Foundation's Mumbai volunteer unit. Seven computers were donated by individuals and also by ICICI Bank. The trainee turned trainers have now started teaching 37 school children according to a set curriculum and a timetable in keeping with the limited local power supply. The model is expected to be applied to other villagers in the region.

Source: *Rajashree Khalap, The Satpuda Foundation*

Course for young conservationists

In an attempt to channel the enthusiasm of young and aspiring conservationists the Satpuda Foundation and

Nature Conservation Society of Amravati organised an intensive five-day certificate course in April that exposed conservationists-to-be to the problems and possible methods of working in wildlife conservation.

The course had both indoor and field sessions around the Melghat Tiger Reserve to help participants understand the problems of and possible solutions to conservation issues around the reserve.

Source: *Satpuda Foundation*

Workshops for officials, school children

The Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh State Office of WWF-India organised four workshops in Chhattisgarh to sensitise forest department personnel and field staff of national parks and sanctuaries about provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Sangita Saxena, State Director, MP SO, WWF-India, discussed case studies and the importance of forensic evidences. The legal aspects of the Wildlife (Protection) Act were taken up by RN Saxena.

Later, a similar workshop was organised at the Chhindwara Circle of Madhya Pradesh Forest Department. In another effort, education and awareness campaigns were carried out across 15 schools coming under the Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve in the Chhindwara, Betul and Hosangabad districts of Madhya Pradesh.

Source: *WWF-India*

WWF-India helps strengthen protection

With the aim of strengthening tiger protection, WWF-India has donated four motorcycles and one four wheel drive vehicle to the Panna Tiger Reserve on 26th January. The vehicles are expected to help strengthen the monitoring capacity of the staff. WWF-India has provided two Bolero Camper vehicles to the Maharashtra Forest Department for use in Bor and Nagzira wildlife sanctuaries, specifically for anti-poaching and fire protection purposes.

WWF-India has also been closely working with authorities in providing education to children of *Pardhi* tribe, traditional hunters who are thought to be behind many poaching incidents in and around Panna Tiger Reserve in the recent past. Along with other support to Panna, rehabilitation of *Pardhis* into mainstream society is critical for the survival of wildlife not only in Panna but also many other reserves across the nation.

Source: *WWF-India*, February 24, 2010,

Walk for the tiger

In a unique tiger conservation initiative, thousands of people took part in a five-day 'Bagher Jonyo Hatun' (Walk for the Tiger) from 9th to 13th November 2009, through villages on the fringes of the Sundarban Tiger Reserve. The campaign, coordinated by Joydip and Suchandra Kundu of *Sanctuary Asia*, was a collaborative effort of *Sanctuary Asia*, Bengal Tiger Line, Wildlife Conservation Trust, Wildlife Protection Society of India, WWF-India, ICNL, Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve and the Sundarban Tiger Reserve authorities.

The objective of the march was to improve the relationship between the forest department and the local people towards the protection of the mangrove forests and wildlife of the Sundarbans.

It was flagged off on 9th November from Bijoynagar Adarsha Bidyamondir, a high school on Bali Island.

Environment and Wildlife Law Orientation

The Delhi Judicial Academy invited TRAFFIC India to conduct a one-day orientation programme on environmental and wildlife law for 83 trainee judicial officers on 30th March. The purpose of this programme was to provide an overview on the current status of forest and wildlife policies and legislations and to raise awareness on the field situation and challenges of wildlife conservation in India. The content of the programme included detailed sessions on issues of forestry conservation in India, overview of illegal wildlife trade in India, environmental law in India, an overview of the Gowdavarman case, and on the Supreme Court and Biodiversity Conservation in India.

Source: TRAFFIC-India

Consultation on conservation of Corbett

The Corbett Foundation organised a consultation to discuss conservation issues in and around the Corbett Tiger Reserve and bring them to the attention of relevant authorities. Representatives of the villages around Corbett were given a hearing and they voiced their concerns about various issues that affected them such as crop depredation, man-animal conflict, fuel wood collection. The cattle compensation scheme, a joint effort of WWF and Corbett Foundation has been a successful model since 1998 that was recommended to be replicated in other parks (see *TigerLink* Vol 1 for detail).

OBITUARY

Participants of the "Consultation on Challenges of Tiger Conservation in the Corbett Landscape and Possible Solutions", held at Dhikuli near Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) on 24th April, came up with list of recommendations together with WWF-India and Wildlife Trust of India.

These include the conservation of the Corbett landscape preserved in totality with a 'tiger landscape approach', implementation of strict rules and regulations for hotels and resorts around CTR, protection of corridors, formation of 'Quick Response Teams' including locals, NGOs, police and forest personnel for tourist awareness, fire prevention, garbage disposal, etc, spread awareness among local communities and relocation of *gujjars* living inside CTR, installation of speed barriers on roads cutting through CTR.

The recommendations were endorsed by the participants and were forwarded to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests, Chief Minister of Uttarakhand and State Minister of Environment and Forests, Uttarakhand.

Source: The Corbett Foundation

Nature Orientation Initiative in Kaziranga

The Kaziranga National Park in association with NGOs Aaranyak, Bhumi, WWF-India, Kaziranga Wildlife Society, Jeep Safari Association, ATREE, Saku and Dagrob organised a three-day camp for school students from around the fringe areas of Kaziranga National Park (KNP). It was held at Bagori Range Office complex from 31st January to 2nd February 2010.

It was inaugurated by S Chand, PCCF (Wildlife), Assam. The camp involved presentations on KNP, wildlife film shows, dramas, safari drives for the students in the park, nature walks, interactions with park staff and wildlife experts among other miscellaneous activities to spread awareness about the significance of Kaziranga and orient the children about conservation issues.

OBITUARY

Billy Arjan Singh

HONORARY TIGER' Padma Bhushan Billy Arjan Singh breathed his last on the first day of the Year of the Tiger' – January 1, 2010.

Born in Gorakhpur in , three decades before India's Independence, the feisty Billy Arjan Singh was a man

ahead of his time. He will be remembered as a pioneer conservationist, and for his long and courageous battle for India's wildlife. He campaigned incessantly for putting a ban on game hunting in India, ensuring the closure of many *shikar* outfits; used elephants to drive the barasingha, a critically endangered species into the forest from fields where they were gunned down. He swooped down, and spared no poacher or wood smuggler unlucky enough to cross his path. And he battled incessantly to create Dudhwa, a sanctuary for tigers. Billy was a fearless warrior for the wilds. His life was mired in controversy because of Tara, a hybrid, zoo-born tigress he reintroduced into the wilds of Dudhwa. The Forest Department insists that the cat had to be shot as a man-eater; but Billy insisted to his last breath that Tara's progeny are still doing well. He lived all his life at Tiger Haven, a wilderness he saved from agriculture. Throughout his life, he fought for the tiger's cause, and had a particular fondness for the leopard, who he said had few friends. He advocated for a separate department for forests and wildlife, which has finally been given the go-ahead by the Prime Minister in the National board of Wildlife Meeting (see National). He had always been critical of the Forest Department, which he accused of being both ignorant and incompetent.

Tributes

Billy, a wounded tiger indeed. And he always fought like one. He bled because of the decimation of his kin – other tigers. A lovable, large-hearted gentleman. "Quo Vadis" Billy. You will always inspire us.

-Brijendra Singh, Honorary Wildlife Warden, Corbett Tiger Reserve

Many of us are passionate about tigers, Billy was too, and where it mattered most: fighting in the trenches around Dudhwa. What inspired me most about Billy, however, were the insights he gained from a deep field knowledge of tigers. Whether it was debunking the pugmark census, or decrying needless habitat manipulations, or asking for a fully professional wildlife service, Billy was ahead of his times.

-Dr Ullas Karanth, Senior Conservation Scientist

Billy fought alone for conservation against corrupt officials and unscrupulous politicians, dacoits and encroachers to establish the Dudhwa Wildlife Sanctuary, home to the swamp deer and the tiger,

when most Indians did not understand the meaning or the value of conservation. He will remain an abiding model to many of our conservation warriors in the country.

-Dr. A.J.T. Johnsingh, Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore and WWF-India

Of all the people I have known, Billy was the only person who was concerned about the well-being of tigers and conservation of their habitat in all his woken moments. He was one with his chosen subject through his long and eventful life and was amongst the last of the great generation of senior tiger conservationists.

-Ravi Singh, Secretary, General and CEO, WWF-India

Convinced of the fact that tigers would die unless they had space to live, he fought for the forests of India to the day he died. I cannot think of any better way to honour his memory than to work to fulfill his dream of keeping tigers safe from humans.

-Bittu Sahgal, Editor, Sanctuary Asia

Source: Tehelka, January 16, 2010, www.sanctuaryasia.com

ERC Davidar

ERC Davidar who passed away on April 7th in Puducherry at 87, was one of the early advocates of wildlife conservation. He operated in an era when environmental protection had not been institutionalised. As the honorary superintendent of the Nilgiris Game Association, he took a series of pioneering conservation steps in this wildlife rich area. He enlisted the cooperation of the licensed hunters — before the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 banned hunting—for conservation of wildlife.

In 1975 he conducted a detailed census of the tahr and announced in the Journal of the *Bombay Natural History Society* that there are only 2,200 tahrs left. The animal then entered the Red Data Book of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and plans were drawn for its conservation.

Reading his notes on tahr, wildlife biologist George Schaller came to the Nilgiris and in his book *The Stones of Silence*, he pays tribute to Davidar's work in saving the tahr. Davidar retired in 1981 and devoted his time to conservation. It was a volunteer job for him when there were very few wildlife biologists doing field work. He was active in this field for nearly 40 years. Davidar's book *The Chital Walk: Living in the Wilderness* is a collection of delightful essays on his experiences in the

forest on the periphery of the Mudumalai sanctuary, now a tiger reserve.

Theodore Baskaran, April 24, *The Hindu*

'Papa' John Wakefield 1916-2010

The legendary Colonel John Felix Wakefield, passed away peacefully aged 94 on 26th April 2010 at his beloved home at Kabini, John Wakefield was born in Gaya, Bihar, in 1916 where his father worked as the Manager of the Maharaja of Tikari, who became his adopted family. A child of the jungles, he shot his first leopard at the age of nine, and his first tiger the following year. After a stint as the manager of the Tejpur estate at Bijnor, he served in the army from 1941 to 1955, where he was a veteran of the Burma war. By then a staunch conservationist, John became a pioneer in wildlife tourism in 1967 leading tours around India's national parks, before joining Tiger Tops in 1978. John came to live in Kabini in 1982 after Tiger Tops collaborated with the Karnataka government to establish the Kabini River Lodge. He presided over Kabini, as the Resident Director and later the Brand Ambassador, for nearly 30 years.

A wonderful host, inspiring raconteur, and father figure to all the inhabitants of Kabini and its surrounds, John steadfastly promoted wildlife conservation and responsible wildlife tourism. He insisted on a respect for regulations and local employment, without the frills of swimming pools, television sets, telephones and other urban luxuries. The recent loss of two renowned gentleman conservationists and naturalists who I had known all my life, Billy Arjan Singh and John Wakefield two close friends who shared warmth and good humour - has left an irreplaceable void in many of our hearts

Belinda Wright, WPSI

John Wakefield was the Resident Director at the Kabini River Lodge at Karapura since its inception. And has been largely responsible for its success and that in turn has been the basis of Jungle Lodges expansion. John Wakefield gave the project credibility and profitability. As with any such project it is a team effort but John was a guide, friend and conscience for almost 30 years. Universally known as 'Papa' and loved by many, John was an example how hard work and enthusiasm enables one to overcome numerous obstacles without compromising your principles. In 1990, the eminent historian of Southern India, S. Muthiah said Karapura was "a model of what can be done with little resources if you have the right man in charge". After a short illness John returned to his beloved Karapura where he died on 26th April 2010.

Toby Sinclair

ABOUT RANTHAMBHORE FOUNDATION

The Ranthambhore Foundation has an outstanding record in the field of wildlife conservation. Most of its activities have been centred around the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve of Rajasthan. Its various conservation activities particularly in Sawai Madhopur and around the reserve include education and awareness programmes, nursery development and tree plantation. **As part of its Environmental Education Project, the Ranthambhore Foundation organises various activities for school children living around the Ranthambhore with an intention to inculcate environmental education and conservation to young children right from their formative years.**

Its activities from April 2009 to March 2010 included 24 'Ranthambhore Nature Camps' involving 22 school nature clubs and the distribution of over 9,000 saplings to about 3,250 students. Two cultural programmes involving about 12,100 children and 36 schools were held. A teachers' meeting had 18 participating schools, 19 environmental quiz competitions in which over two thousand students took part. Five national park visits were carried out. Mobile libraries also serve students and children in various villages. Two environmental rallies were held, in which a total of 739 students and teachers took part.

At the national level, the foundation plays a pivotal role in policy advocacy. Through its executive director the foundation has been participating in a large number of meetings, workshops and deliberations and is part of various government committees. It has intervened in pursuing the Central Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court of India to reach a viable solution to the Rajaji National Park Elephant Corridor and diversion of National Highway-7 which passes through the crucial Kanha-Pench tiger Corridor.

The Ranthambhore Foundation also publishes *TigerLink*, a news letter that serves as a valuable resource library and is a strong pressure lobby to counter misguided development policies of the government. It is distributed widely, especially among policy makers, decision makers, experts and NGO's concern with tiger conservation across the globe. It also serves as an information base for media professionals and those seeking concise information on tiger conservation issues.

USEFUL LINKS

MoEF: www.moef.nic.in
NTCA: www.projecttiger.nic.in
TIGERNET: www.tigernet.nic.in
Wildlife Institute of India: www.wii.gov.in
Wildlife Crime Control Bureau: www.wccb.gov.in
WWF-India: www.wwfindia.org
TRAFFIC-India: www.trafficindia.org
Sanctuary Asia: www.sanctuaryasia.com
Environmental Information System:
www.wwfenviis.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
Friends of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve:
www.nbralliance.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
Website of Shekar Dattatri tiger film:
www.truthabouttigers.org
Aircel campaign: <http://www.saveourtigers.com/>
NDTV-Aircel 'Save our Tigers' Campaign:
www.tiger.ndtv.com
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
Sumatran Tiger Conservation Program:
www.wild-tiger.blogspot.com
Wild Aid: www.wildaid.org
Environment Investigation Agency: www.eia-international.org
WWF International: www.panda.org
Tigris Foundation: www.tigrisfoundation.nl
21st Century Tiger: www.21stcenturytiger.org
The Sumatran Tiger Trust: www.tigertrust.info
The Tiger Foundation: www.tigers.ca
Mongabay: www.mongabay.com
TRAFFIC: www.traffic.org