



TIGERLINK

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

NEWS

REVIVED VOL-7

OCTOBER-2010

From the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

Project Tiger is about to complete 38 years of conservation. In these 38 years, it has received many bouquets and brickbats.

While some of its initiatives have succeeded, others have failed.

Meanwhile, new initiatives have also been taken up. Out of the many new initiatives taken by the Government of India, enhancement of the relocation package, smoothening procedural delays in transferring funds to the field, restocking tiger habitats where local extinctions have taken place, etc can be considered historical. I know that some other new initiatives might not have the desired impact, but it is my considered opinion that between success and failure, the tiger has caught the global limelight and is surviving today. The credit for this must go to Project Tiger. Many global experts had categorically announced that end of 20th Century would see the end of wild tigers in India. But with my long association with Project Tiger, I am quite sure that the tiger will not go extinct in India in next hundred years.

The millennium issue of a leading fortnightly magazine hailed Project Tiger as "one of the ten major initiatives of the Government of India since Independence".

Four decades of conservation has given us considerable experience and knowledge to understand the priorities of tiger management and conservation. We know the path we must take to save the tiger.

Contrary to the general perception, we neither require more funds nor the wisdom. What we do need is concerted effort in the field and timely and honest utilisation of available funds and the political will to address the major issues. State Governments will have to be more pro-active and a confrontational attitude must be avoided.

However, I feel some reserves are suffering due to lack of adequate attention primarily by the State Government. The sixteen tiger reserves put in the 'poor' category, most of them have more tigers than Panna and Sariska even after relocation of tigers. If we think that by relocating five or seven tigers to Panna or Sariska can bring back their old status, then by the same logic why are we ignoring those sixteen? My personal opinion is Government of India's pressure on states can bring desired result in these reserves.

Our city-centric tiger conservation efforts have not done any good in last four decades. We have to shift our focus around tiger areas where, particularly the Non Government Organisations have to take very active role. Support from the District Administration in ameliorating causes of distress of the villagers should be a major state policy as they have the resources for addressing such issues. The forest department should act as a catalyst to gain confidence of the local people. The existing efforts, largely centred in the metros and the conference room, may seem glamorous but unless some of us take our conservation initiatives to the field, they will not yield any positive result.

P.K. Sen

Editorial

A new study reiterates what we already know: India has the maximum number of source sites and breeding populations: The future of the tiger rests with us; India is the tiger's best hope.

So are we living upto our responsibility as the guardian of the tiger? We have much to be proud of: India committed to the cause nearly four decades back, and has set aside land and resources—difficult, given the spiraling population—and the race for growth. Our fund commitment is more than all range countries put together.

Yet the crisis worsens by the day...and the Tiger Doomsday Clock ticks on.

Here's why:

The tiger's most unfortunate truth—besides the fact that Man wants to make a meal of its bones—is that the ground beneath the tiger's feet is rich with minerals, and greed has cast its eye on it.

Tiger habitat is just about one per cent of India's landscape, and even this tiny domain is not safe. The gravest threat is the pressure to open up forests for coal and thermal power plants, in pursuit of a double digit GDP, never mind that tigers, its forests, and water catchment areas are destroyed in the process. Mines and coal projects have ravaged the landscape around Tadoba. And there are still more in the pipeline, inspite of the fact that coal has made the region inhospitable for humans with high levels of pollution, falling water tables, poisoned soil, water, air. There is a slew of proposals for mines in the central Indian tiger landscape, some bang on crucial tiger corridors. Equally worrying are the highways, hydel-power projects, dams, that will fragment and devastate tiger habitats. The much publicised expansion of the NH 7 through the Kanha-Pench corridor slashes over 60 km of crucial tiger habitat, isolating and dooming sections of India's most viable source populations. The Supreme Court has been silent on the issue for nearly two years, encouraging the highways authority to bring the expanded highway right upto the edge of Pench. The devastation need not be spelt out.

Why this doublespeak? The government has stressed its commitment to save the tiger. But the same government also presses for mines, thermal and hydel-projects, highways—even if they impinge on the tiger's forests.

The cause of the tiger is not an isolated one, it must be a concerted effort-taken up by the Ministry of Environment and Forests supported by the ministry of roads, mines, coal, power, agriculture etc. led by no less than the Prime Minister's office. Preserving our ecosystem must be a mainstream issue—a preoccupation as much as a galloping economy—simply because on it rests our future. There can be no economic security without ecological security.

I have said it before, and I will stress it again—commitment is the key, from the state, the polity, bureaucracy and the citizens of the country. .

There are other issues.

Man-tiger conflict: It is a miracle that the tiger survives

in a country of 1.3 billion, with their growing needs and aspirations. This also means that tigers and people live cheek-by-jowl, resulting in constant—and sometimes fatal-faceoffs. But we still haven't taken on **board the gravity of the issue**. Our action is reactive, in response to a desperate, difficult situation, usually to trap or tranquilise the animal and release it elsewhere, or pack it off to the zoo. In rare cases, the man-killing tiger is 'disposed off'. But such ad-hoc measures lack long term perspective. The plague of conflict is spread all across tiger country and is further aggravated by degraded fragmented habitats. Conflict takes a terrible toll on both people, and tiger. Its impact goes beyond the immediate loss of life and livelihood. It leads to loss of support for the tiger and fuels poaching.

Why is it that there continues to be a paucity of funds even after 35 years of conservation efforts, and much ado over 'Saving the Tiger'? Why has the situation on the ground remained static even after three decades? Why is it that reserves have no fuel for patrolling vehicles, to fight forest fires or to pay frontline staff? Why is it that we cannot even meet basic needs of tiger reserves and managers have to beg and borrow to maintain some semblance of protection? The point is: is there actually a paucity of funds? Or is it that huge amounts of money is being poured on dead-end and lucrative plantation and afforestation schemes rather than the crucial task of protection? Why is the CAMPA fund—hundreds of crores, primarily marked for restoring degraded forests and wildlife protection, being allocated to the old favourites—afforestation and plantations? And why is there focus on civil construction works within PAs at the cost of protection? Tigers do not need defunct check dams or fancy watch towers within their sanctuary. If park managers fail the tiger, how can we expect support from outside?

Why is it that we have not created sound management systems and enabled protectors? Why do we not support good, committed managers and hold those fail in their duty (remember Panna?) accountable? Why is our frontline staff highly inadequate, unequipped, untrained? Can we expect a forest watcher, unpaid and unarmed, to take on well-armed gangs of timber smugglers and poachers. They must be *enabled*, so that they can be taken to task when they fail in their duty.

Why is it that we have let fecund tiger habitats wither away and die? There are plenty of examples: Hazaribagh in Jharkhand, Shivpuri in MP, Suhelwa in Uttar Pradesh, Kawal in Andhra Pradesh. Why are there no efforts to conserve tigers in these protected areas? Why is the main focus largely concentrated on celebrated tiger reserves, while the lesser-known ones suffer due to lack of much-needed attention and support even from the centre? Why are we 'ignoring' tigers outside the reserves-good breeding populations that survive, for instance, in Lansdowne forest division close to Corbett or the Moyar Valley near Mudumalai? Why is there no strategy for tigers outside PAs, or efforts to take such viable areas under Project Tiger? Are they the 'Tigers of a lesser God'?

Purna Singh Bindra

NATIONAL NEWS

Saving tigers saves water, and us: Jairam

While announcing that Nagzira-Navegaon and Bor forests (in Maharashtra) are soon expected to get the status of tiger reserves, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests (MEF), Jairam Ramesh stressed that tiger conservation must be understood in the true sense. “Project Tiger,” he explained, “is just a name. **Saving the tiger ultimately leads to conservation of forests and water resources, benefiting people in the end. Tigers have to be saved to save the forest, from where rivers flow. Forests are catchments for rivers.** It is a misconception that it is ‘just a massive effort only to save a few hundred tigers.’ We need to communicate effectively that saving the tiger is not some middle class obsession. It is an ecological imperative — by saving the tiger, you are saving the forests.”

Source: ‘Project Tiger helps us in the end’, *TNN*, Sept 14, 2010

Tourism guidelines by NTCA

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) issued guidelines on August 12 regarding eco-tourism policies:

1. Patrolling camps/*chowkis*/watch towers inside a tiger reserve should not be used for tourists or facilitating tourism, as these are for the sole purpose of accommodating the frontline field staff, and must be used only for patrolling/anti-poaching work.
2. Tourists should not be allowed to patrol the core critical tiger habitat due to the risk involved. Further, exposing tourists to sensitive patrolling routes and presence/location of animals, and the patrolling strategy poses a threat to the safety of tigers and other rare wildlife. Patrolling is effective and successful only if it is organised discretely.
3. The frontline staff should not be burdened with the task of acting as ‘caretakers’ for the tourists.
4. Under no circumstances forest produce or material should be used for any construction to facilitate tourists in the core/critical tiger habitat.

5. It is reiterated that provisions under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 should be implemented in letter and spirit for ensuring the inviolate status of the core critical tiger habitat.

For detailed guidelines view http://projecttiger.nic.in/whtsnew/Tourism_advisory.pdf

Committees for assessing management of TRs

The NTCA has constituted committees for an independent Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves. The teams have been divided into four clusters. Their task is to evaluate:

- a) Whether the funds allocated are being used effectively for meeting the objectives of management of reserves as laid down in the respective Tiger Conservation Plans/Management Plans.
- b) Whether the chosen approaches in tiger reserve management are sound, adequate and appropriate.
- c) Whether the management of the reserve is effective in achieving its objective of conservation of tiger and its ecosystem.
- d) To evaluate the process and outcome of long-term monitoring of the biological and socio-cultural resources of tiger reserves and the impact of management on local communities.

These are to be judged on various—over 40—parameters. The criteria are based on the World Commission on Protected Areas (IUCN) framework, but have been adapted to the Indian context. The exercise is being carried out in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) who will collate, analyse and publish the data.

Committees for assessing relocation

With the central government giving priority to relocation of villages from within tiger reserves to create inviolate areas, and given the sensitivity of the issue, the National Tiger Conservation Authority has constituted committees for monitoring the progress of village relocation. The task of the committee will be to monitor actual progress on field implementation of relocation of families vis-à-vis the Wildlife Protection (Act) 1972 and the advisories/guidelines issued in this regard from the NTCA. The

team will also assess and evaluate shortfalls and complaints from the relocated people, if any, and give suggestions for improvement.

Committees for assessing management plans

In a notification dated August 25, committees constituted of wildlife biologists and a few retired officers have been set up to examine and critically review the Tiger Management Plan of various reserves as required under the Wildlife Protection Act as amended in 2006. They will submit their suggestions to the NTCA.

National Board for Wildlife reconstituted

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has been reconstituted with Rajya Sabha member Karan Singh, besides Lok Sabha MPs Chandresh Kumari and Dushyant Singh being nominated.

The board, which is constituted for three years, is chaired by the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, while the MEF Jairam Ramesh is the vice-chair. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Aranyak from Guwahati, Satpuda Foundation from Amravati, Nature Conservation Foundation (Mysore) and Wildlife Society of Orissa (Bhubaneswar) are the organisations nominated for the reconstituted board.

Among those representing the board in their individual capacity are Brijendra Singh, MK Ranjitsinh, Valmik Thapar, AJT Johnsingh, Bittu Sahgal, Divyabhanusinh Chavda, Mitali Kakkar, Sugatha Kumari, Uma Ramkrishnan and Perna Singh Bindra. The NBWL is the apex body for wildlife conservation in the country and advises the government on issues concerning the same.

The non-officio members of the Standing Committee include Satpuda Foundation, BNHS, Nature Conservation Foundation, Brijendra Singh, MK Ranjitsinh, AJT Johnsingh, Divyabhanusinh Chavda and Perna Singh Bindra.

The Standing committee, chaired by the MEF, is required to advise the central and the state governments on the ways and means of promoting wildlife conservation, make recommendations for setting up of and management of protected areas, and advise on restriction of activities in these areas. It is mandated to

assess and scrutinise impacts of various projects and activities on wildlife and its habitat.

A TigerLink Report

Tiger number up, Ramesh drops hint

The new tiger census—the results of which are expected in November may have some ‘good news’. **Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh has said he is expecting the tiger count in the country to go up.** “I hope we are going to see some good news on tigers when the new results come out in November,” he said. CNN-IBN has accessed information that puts the number of tigers in the country at around 1,600 to 1,800—it was earlier 1,411. However, YV Jhala of the Wildlife Institute of India says that they are still analysing the census data and it is too soon for them to make any projection. WII officials, however, later said that it was too preliminary to say anything definitive.

Source: *IBN Live*, New Delhi, 6, August 2010

Part report of census in November

It is learnt that a part report of the ongoing—and the IIInd all India tiger census—will be ready by November. Currently, the Phase-I data from the forest department was getting collated and organised. The complete report is expected to be out by March or April next year.

About 5,00,000 sq km of forests, including 39 tiger reserves in 17 states, are being surveyed.

Cameras fail to work, tiger census delayed?

The malfunctioning of about half of the cameras used by the Wildlife Institute of India in various tiger reserves of the country for the ongoing tiger census may have delayed the estimation exercise. The WII had procured 500 new cameras from a reputed US firm Moultrie, but about 250 of them developed a technical snag in their motherboard, resulting in the camera trap process in areas like Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve getting affected. “Yes, there was some problem. We have collected these cameras back from the field and have sent them to the US for replacement under warranty,” Y V Jhala, scientist with the WII said. “As a result of the malfunctioning, the deployment was cut down by

half. But we already have 200 cameras purchased previously, which we are using now. We were hoping to complete the process in some reserves before monsoon, but now it will be somewhat delayed. He added that “all the defective cameras have been replaced and we shall commence the camera trapping exercise again after the monsoon.”

Source: July 1, 2010, Nagpur, *The Indian Express*; www.tigernet.nic.in

Over 17,000 hectares of PAs encroached

Minister of State for Environment and Forests (Independent Charge) Jairam Ramesh informed the Parliament that over 17,000 hectares of land in national parks and wildlife sanctuaries has been encroached. According to ministry records, the details of encroachment in national parks were till 2007 and amounted to 17,190 hectares. It is pertinent to note that a large part this encroachment is from tiger reserves—though it may be that the encroachment in tiger reserves is better-documented. Assam has the dubious distinction of having the maximum encroachment in its protected areas, with Kaziranga National Park reporting 7,790 hectares of encroachment. The state’s Nameri National Park reported 2,100 hectares, while 1,700 hectares had been encroached in Manas. All three are tiger reserves. ‘There have been reports of encroachment in some of the protected areas in the country from time to time,’ Jairam said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

Jairam clarified that the management of protect areas is primarily the responsibility of state governments. The central government has issued guidelines for eviction of encroachment from forest lands.

Source: IANS, August 18, 2010

No split in forest service

Speaking at a conference organised by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) attended by field directors of tiger reserves from different states on August 10, Dr P J Dilip Kumar, Director General (Forest) said that the MoEF has rejected a proposal to split the forest services into two, with one looking after wildlife, as has been proposed by conservationists. “Wildlife conservation has to take support from forest conservation only and the

two cannot be separated,” he said. However, he stressed that the ministry recognised the need for specialisation and there were plans to develop a specialised cadre within the service. In each batch officers will be identified and trained in wildlife conservation. In fact, the ministry is planning to start three Fellowship Programmes aimed at creating specialisation and expertise in the forest service from the next plan period. These are ‘Hari Singh Fellowship’, ‘S K Fellowship’ and ‘C Ranganath Fellowship’.

Seven officers, who passed out this year from Indian Forest Service (IFS) and have showed an interest and aptitude in wildlife have been identified and selected for specialised training in Wildlife Management. They will directly go to Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun after their training and before joining service under the Hari Singh Fellowship which is aimed at fresh recruits. Mid-career officers can avail the S. K. Fellowship, while under the CR Ranganath Fellowship, the ministry will support selected candidates/officers with grants for travel, equipment, to engage research assistance and to study abroad.

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

Source: *PIB*, August 10, 2010

NTCA : CBI probe for hit-and-run case

The National Tiger Conservation Authority pressed for a CBI enquiry into the death of tigress, popularly known as the ‘Jhurjhura female’. The tigress was killed in Bandhavgarh National Park by a speeding vehicle on May 19. She had three six-month-old cubs. NTCA member-secretary Dr Rajesh Gopal, who visited Bandhavgarh, in a report dated June 1, 2010 to the MEF Jairam Ramesh stated that: “There are enough arguments/evidences to indict the two vehicles carrying chief executive officer of zila panchayat, Umaria, Akshay Kumar Singh and his relatives; range officer, Magdhi, Lalit Kumar Pandey; Veterinary Assistant Surgeon Dr. KK Pandey, and others were involved in the accident.” Three vehicles—two park vehicles and

one belonging to the zilla panchayat entered the park in late afternoon, apparently to inspect NREGA work for water impounding at the Magdhi Range. The vehicles did not return and stayed on. Two of the vehicles, including one of the RO, Magdhi range, visited the in-situ enclosure at Baheraha for viewing the tiger cubs who were housed there. The vehicles also went to the 'tigress spot' in Tala and returned via the Bhadrashila barrier instead of the main gate, which is also suspicious.

Gopal later said that **the involvement of forest staff and local administration was shocking and very shameful**. "They have killed a tiger in its den—worse, a tigress with cubs. It's unthinkable, unpardonable, especially in this day and age when we are struggling to save each one. The strictest action possible must be taken"

Since then the state forest department suspended the assistant director and two Range Officers (RO Magdhi and RO Tala). However, the state has not acceded to a CBI enquiry.

The report also requested the state government to probe into the possible nexus between the lower functionaries of the park and tourist operators and address corruption within the forest department and local administration. It also urged the state to expedite the notification of buffer zones around the core areas and accord them further statutory protection under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. These, it was recommended, should be placed under the unified control of respective field directors. It was also requested to strengthen the hands of the field director, who is a dedicated, trained officer with good track record by posting motivated personnel and fill shortage of frontline staff.

Also see 'States'

Source: 'Tiger panel for CBI probe in Bandhavgarh death', Chetan Chauhan, *Hindustan Times*, June 1, 2010; Perna Singh Bindra *Mint*, June 29, 2010. For full report see: http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Report_NTCA.pdf.

Note: *This is the third such incident in Bandhavgarh, of a tiger crushed, fatally, under the wheel in the past few years. A fourth in Kanha (last year), allegedly involving a forest vehicle, remains unconfirmed.*

Wanted: Tigers for Sariska and Panna

Conceding that the tigers of Ranthambhore may not be able to ensure 'genetic vigour' in the new population being raised in Sariska, Environment and Forests Minister Jairam Ramesh has written to the chief ministers of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, requesting them for tigers for Sariska. It was earlier reported in *The Hindustan Times* that siblings were sent from Ranthambhore to repopulate Sariska and stressed that tigers be sourced from adjoining reserves to avoid a genetic bottleneck. However, the forest and the wildlife establishment had so far resisted the demand for sourcing tigers from outside Rajasthan. While some argued that the 'purity' of Rajasthan tigers was at stake, others felt inter-state negotiations on shifting tigers would invariably hit roadblocks.

In his letters sent in mid July to chief ministers Ashok Chavan and Shivraj Singh, Ramesh wrote: "To bring in genetic vigour, we need a few wild-caught tigers (males as well as females) for Sariska from other adjoining states. I would very much appreciate if two straying males are provided at the outset to Rajasthan. A positive gesture from your end could go a long way in ensuring a viable gene pool for our wild tigers..."

Welcoming the decision, conservationist Valmik Thapar said, "This is a highly positive move by the minister and we hope the states respond positively. We can also look at an exchange as the male that has so far failed to breed with his siblings in Sariska should now be sent to Panna (Madhya Pradesh) to give him a fair chance."

Source: 'Send Tigers to Sariska: Jairam to Maharashtra and MP', Jay Mazoomdaar, *The Hindustan Times*, July 15

Home Ministry: Forest dept collaborating with Maoists

While addressing the 'National Conference on Forestry Administration in Leftwing Extremist Areas', the Union Home Secretary GK Pillai accused the forest guards of "collaborating" with the banned CPI(Maoists). The CPI(Maoist) is an unlawful and banned organisation. But today we find forest guards collaborating with them." Recently, a forest official in Sunabeda in Orissa

went in an official jeep to attend a programme of the Maoists, thus giving official recognition to them.” In a letter to the MoEF, Pillai also accused the forest department of atrocities against tribals that have led to increased Left-wing Extremism. His letter had claimed that the forest department in MP was illegally occupying people’s lands, blocking the rights of the people and committing atrocities on tribals leading to alienation.

The conference was attended by forest officials from 35 worst Naxal-affected districts of the country. It was aimed at evolving a framework to ensure the forest administration infrastructure at the field level became an effective element of an anti-Naxal strategy. And also, to find out how the departments of forest and tribal welfare besides civil and police administration could work in tandem at the local level to support the anti-Naxal strategy.

In a rejoinder to the home ministry, the MoEF pointed out that, “the relations of the forest department with the local communities are the least antagonistic among the various wings of the government apparatus. The real reason for disaffection, it was stressed, is to be found in overall poor nature of governance, in the lack of justice for the poor, repeated displacement on account of various development projects and lack of productive work.”

It was stressed that the forest department was the only government functionary in remote areas, and usually the conduit for sizable wage payments to the community. Besides, collection of forest produce accounts for over 15 percent of the incomes in these schedule areas.

What is required, particularly in such areas, is good governance and social infrastructure development, especially in the field of education, public health, sanitation, drinking water, agriculture. Education is the key as it will enable the young to come out and into the broader economy.”

The ministry also discounted the notion that it is not that the ‘forests (or foresters alleged highhandedness) that are fostering Left Wing Extremism, since there were many forest areas with no such activity and conversely degraded forests where naxalism is rampant. They argued that that the forest department needed to be strengthened and better equipped and empowered—it

was currently woefully insufficient to carry out its gamut of duties from protection to community development. It must be augmented—this also opens up employment opportunities for local communities.

The ministry has also questioned the type of development, representing by mining, which destroys productive land, water, soil, means of livelihood, causes displacement and has a devastating overall impact on the community. Such development has contributed little to the local economy and caused unrest.

The ministry also retaliated to the accusation that forest officers attend meetings of naxals etc, explaining that “they are especially vulnerable being the only visible government machinery in remote areas. They cannot be openly confrontational if they are to continue in their posts and do their mandated task of protection etc. They must be strengthened and allowed to function to maintain administrative functionality in the field.

Source: ‘Green ministry denies MHA charge of tribal atrocities’, M Madhusudan, *The Pioneer*, Nitin Sethi, *The Times of India*, Aug 26, 2010

Comment: *Officers who have experience of working in a highly volatile and naxal affected area stress that it is the failure on the part of the administration to effectively implement welfare and development schemes meant for tribals and other forest dwellers that has led to the unrest. Corruption at all levels has ensured that huge funds for development of the poor under various schemes have been siphoned off.*

It may be mentioned here that forest infrastructure has been destroyed, staff brutally beaten and one forester killed by naxals in Sunebada in Orissa, where they have been accused of collaborating with extremists.

Another point worth mentioning here is the attempt of the bureaucracy to dilute the Forest Conservation Act and the Wildlife Protection Act, as these empower foresters. The Forest Rights Act has provision of transferring ownership to individuals, be it tribal or any forest dweller. If such land is transferred for any purpose like mining or any other so-called developmental activity it will not attract either FCA or WPA and thus the objective of using forest lands for non-forestry purposes is achieved.

INTERVIEW: DR RAJESH GOPAL, Member Secretary, NTCA

Only 1,411 tigers after over 35 years of Project Tiger—the lowest number ever—has led to the belief that the project is a failure.

The common perception is numbers have plummeted to 1,411 (from about 3,700 in 2002); that tigers are dying, everything is doomed. And that Project Tiger has failed. I beg to differ; Project Tiger is not a failure. The refined estimation method using a different methodology has given a realistic picture of tiger status. It also clearly showed that whatever tigers we have today are inside tiger reserves; the protection rendered by the project has saved the tiger. What we have not succeeded in is saving tigers in unprotected areas.

But aren't we losing tigers at unprecedented rates?

Yes, I am not denying the crisis, but the answer is complex. While our 'source' populations are vulnerable, what we are mainly losing is the sink, or tigers outside reserves. The quality of forests outside reserves cannot sustain tigers. There is immense human dependence on forest resources—grazing, development infrastructure, no protection, no prey base—which also leads to bitter man-animal conflict. Poachers capitalise on this resentment and help the villagers rid themselves of the tiger.

Unsustainable land use outside reserves that doesn't factor in tiger concerns is killing tigers. Any conservation strategy must consider the behaviour and the ecology of the animal; how tigers breed, multiply, move out (which is essential for the genetic vitality and viable populations)—and get killed. What I am trying to stress is we cannot save tigers by just managing tiger reserves. We have to think beyond that, at the landscape level, and manage the land use around tiger reserves.

The answer raises other questions: but first, poaching. Demand from China (for tiger skin and body parts) is killing tigers, but doesn't our protection leave a lot to be desired?

China must contain its demand and halt tiger farming, which puts pressure on wild tigers. We are in dialogue with them, and the response is encouraging.

Yes, I agree. Slack protection and poor leadership has cost us dear, we have lost tigers—and even caused local extinction in some reserves. We are trying to address these. I think good leadership is the key factor which makes or breaks a park. I would say that we should give weightage to officers who have a passion for the job; merely passing an exam does not ensure that you have what it takes to save the tiger.

NTCA has emphasised on creating buffer zones, yet state governments are reluctant to notify these.

About 25 reserves out of the current 39 do not have buffers. It is a difficult task; ultimately the land belongs to the states, so unless the Centre and the state are on the same wavelength and the importance that we give to tiger conservation is equalled by the states, it doesn't work. For states to come on board, we need the involvement of chief ministers.

There is constant pressure to open up tiger habitats to mining, highways.

Infrastructural and development projects in tiger habitat are the most serious threat. Tiger areas are rich in minerals—coal, uranium, bauxite—so there is demand for mining in buffer and corridors. The Tadoba landscape is totally tattered because of coal and still there are some 40 more power and coal projects proposed! In Pench, NH-7 (National Highway) threatens to cut through its connectivity with Kanha. In Nagarjuna-Srisailem (Andhra Pradesh), there is pressure for quarrying and mining for uranium. It's endless. This is not an office for clearance, our mandate is to conserve. We have mapped crucial tiger habitats and their connectivity, which are already very fragile. We cannot afford to stress these habitats further by mines, roads or any such damaging development activities if we want a future for the tiger. There cannot be any clearances in these areas. Tiger concerns must be factored in any development project in tiger habitats.

Is the current Project Tiger budget, lower than last year's at Rs 196 crore, sufficient for relocating villages from core areas?

Voluntary relocation of villages to create inviolate habitats is a priority and the Central government has enhanced the package to Rs10 lakh per family. Communities are eager to move out, but with 762 villages inside core areas the current budget is insufficient. The minister has taken this up with the Planning Commission and we hope to have sufficient funds to give relocation a fresh impetus.

Tourism in reserves has created a huge controversy with even the Prime Minister cautioning against intrusive tourism.

I am not against tourism per se but core critical areas must be kept inviolate with minimal disturbance. Local communities should benefit and it must be regulated, especially in heavily visited parks like Corbett, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Ranthambhore, etc.

Given all these issues, will the tiger survive?

Yes. I am optimistic. It will-and must survive. We will give it all that it takes, but our ministry alone cannot save the tiger. It is a collective responsibility between different arms of the government and the civil society, and unless we walk in unison, it's going to be very difficult.

Your wish list?

I would like on board, both at the national and at the field level, a sub-cadre of committed professionals in wildlife management and related fields, whether from inside or outside the government. Also, protecting the identified connectivity between the tiger reserves, good leadership, a crack protection team drawn from local communities and intensively trained to effectively counter poaching.

The tiger must not be viewed as a negative or as an impediment to growth. The tiger is India's life support system—hundreds of rivers flow through tiger reserves, and its forests are a shield against Climate Change impacts.

Source: 'Reserves alone cannot save tigers', Prerna Singh Bindra, *Mint*, June 29, 2010

For the full text read: <http://indianaturally.blogspot.com/2010/06/interview-with-dr-rajesh-gopal.html>

No buffer for tigers

Most reserves are still to notify their buffer areas –**only 14 of the existing 39** have notified buffer zones under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006.

Amount disbursed by NTCA to states in the current financial year (2010-2011)

Sl. No.	Tiger Reserve	States	Amount Released as 1st Installment for 2010_11	Sanction is ready for Release as 1st Installment for 2010_11. (Awaited for MOU)
1	Nagarjunasagar	Andhra Pradesh	108.915	
2	Namdhapa	Arunachal Pradesh		75.5
3	Pakke	Arunachal Pradesh		
4	Kaziranga	Assam		295.484
5	Manas	Assam		237.504
6	Nameri	Assam		63.588
7	Valmiki	Bihar	158.355	
8	Achanakmar	Chhattisgarh	840.700	
9	Indravati	Chhattisgarh	50.385	
10	Udanti-Sitanadi	Chhattisgarh	120.398	
11	Palamau	Jharkhand	130.616	
12	Bandipur	Karnataka	126.854	
13	Bhadra	Karnataka	154.114	
14	Dandeli Anshi	Karnataka	158.812	
15	Nagarhole	Karnataka	116.215	
16	Periyar	Kerala	166.018	
17	Parambi Kulam	Kerala	91.304	
18	Bandhavgarh	M.P	225.454	
19	Kanha	M.P	417.080	
20	Panna	M.P	296.298	
21	Pench	M.P	180.680	
22	Sanjay Dubri	M.P	162.760	
23	Satpura	M.P	190.620	
24	Melghat	Maharashtra	144.425	
25	Pench	Maharashtra	88.920	
26	Tadoba-Andheri	Maharashtra	164.767	
27	Sahyadri	Maharashtra	50.000	
28	Dampa	Mizoram		99.352
29	Satkosia	Orissa	72.384	
30	Similipal	Orissa	709.026	
31	Ranthambhore	Rajasthan	200.260	
32	Sariska	Rajasthan	170.000	
33	KMTR	Tamil Nadu	93.970	
34	Mudumalai	Tamil Nadu	269.792	
35	Anamalai	Tamil Nadu	99.892	
36	Corbett Tiger	Uttaranchal	237.850	
37	Buxa	West Bengal	57.090	
38	Sunderbans	West Bengal	361.063	
39	I) Dudhwa II) Katerniaghat	U.P U.P	234.385	
Total			6649.40	771.43
G. Total			7420.83	

List of Core and Buffer areas of Tiger Reserves in India, (as on 16.08.2010)

Sl. No.	Year of creation	Name of Tiger Reserve	State	Area of the core / critical tiger habitat (In Sq. Kms.)	Area of the buffer / peripheral (In Sq. Kms.)	Total area
1	1973-74	Bandipur	Karnataka	872.24	118.27*	990.51
2	1973-74	Corbett	Uttarakhand	821.99	466.32	1288.31
3	1973-74	Kanha	Madhya Pradesh	917.43	Notification awaited	917.43
4	1973-74	Manas	Assam	840.04	2310.88	3150.92
5	1973-74	Melghat	Maharashtra	1500.49	Notification awaited	1500.49
6	1973-74	Palamu	Jharkhand	414.08	Notification awaited	414.08
7	1973-74	Ranthambore	Rajasthan	1113.364	Notification awaited	1113.364
8	1973-74	Similipal	Orissa	1194.75	1555.25	2750.00
9	1973-74	Sunderbans	West Bengal	1699.62	885.27	3470.27
10	1978-79	Periyar	Kerala	881	Notification awaited	881
11	1978-79	Sariska	Rajasthan	681.1124	Notification awaited	681.1124
12	1982-83	Buxa	West Bengal	390.5813	367.3225	757.9038
13	1982-83	Indravati	Chhattisgarh	1258.37	1540.70	2799.07
14	1982-83	Nagarjunsagar	Andhra Pradesh	2527	Notification awaited	2527
15	1982-83	Namdapha	Arunachal Pradesh	1807.82	Notification awaited	1807.82
16	1987-88	Dudhwa (DNP 490.29 + Kishanpur WLS 203.41)	Uttar Pradesh	693.70	Notification awaited	693.70
	1999-2000	Katerniaghat-(extension)		400.09	Notification awaited	400.09
17	1988-89	Kalakad-Mundanthurai	Tamil Nadu	895	Notification awaited	895
18	1989-90	Valmiki (Not received)	Bihar	840*	Notification awaited	840*
19	1992-93	Pench	Madhya Pradesh	411.33	Notification awaited	411.33
20	1993-94	Tadoba-Andheri	Maharashtra	625.82	1101.7711	1727.5911
21	1993-94	Bandhavgarh	Madhya Pradesh	716.903	Notification awaited	716.903
22	1994-95	Panna	Madhya Pradesh	576.13	Notification awaited	576.13
23	1994-95	Dampa	Mizoram	500	Notification awaited	500
24	1998-99	Bhadra	Karnataka	492.46	Notification awaited	492.46
25	1998-99	Pench	Maharashtra	257.26	Notification awaited	257.26
26	1999-2000	Pakke	Arunachal Pradesh	683.45	Notification awaited	683.45
27	1999-2000	Nameri	Assam	200	144	344
28	1999-2000	Satpura	Madhya Pradesh	1339.264	Notification awaited	1339.264
29	2008-2009	Anamalai	Tamil Nadu	958	Notification awaited	958
30	2008-2009	Udanti-Sita Nadi	Chattisgarh	851.09	991.45	1842.54
31	2008-2009	Satkosia	Orissa	523.61	453.25*	976.86
32	2008-2009	Kaziranga	Assam	625.58	548	1173.58
33	2008-2009	Achanakmar	Chattisgarh	626.195	287.822	914.017
34	2008-2009	Dandeli-Anshi	Karnataka	814.884	Notification awaited	814.884
35	2008-2009	Sanjay-Dubri	Madhya Pradesh	831.25*	Notification awaited	831.25*
36	2008-2009	Mudumalai	Tamil Nadu	321	Notification awaited	321
37	2008-2009	Nagarahole	Karnataka	643.35	Notification awaited	643.35
38	2008-2009	Parambikulam	Kerala	390.89	252.772	643.662
39	2009-10	Sahyadri (including Chandoli NP : 317.67 and Koyna WLS : 423.55) = 741.22 Total Area	Maharashtra	741.22	Notification awaited	741.22
		TOTAL		32878.36	11029.0781	44786.82

* Not yet notified.

- Total core area notified (32878.36 – 840 – 831.25 = 31207.11 sq.km.)
- Total buffer area notified (11029.0781 – 118.27 – 453.25 = 10457.5581 sq.km.)

Comment: The Corbett and Tadoba buffer were notified by the states after much pressure and only after the PMO intervened. And though it is commendable that the buffers were notified, is the delineation rational, and does it really benefit the tiger? For instance, the buffer for Corbett does not include the crucial tiger bearing areas like Lansdowne and Ramnagar Forest Division. As far as Tadoba is concerned most of the crucial tiger habitats have been omitted to accommodate other interests. States that have taken the lead in this like Orissa seem to have just viewed the notification as a mere formality as efforts have not been made to diligently delineate crucial areas, or bring them under unified control. Satkosia's core critical habitat has left out prime tiger areas which have recorded presence of breeding tigresses. The Tiger Management Plan itself mentions those areas as 'tiger bearing' areas. There is considerable confusion in the management structure with no unified command over the reserve. In Similipal too, the field director has no control over the buffer. While it is commendable that Indravati has notified the buffer zone; most of the park has long been under the hold of left-wing extremists and forest staff has little presence in the area.

ISSUES

Mining in Tigerland

As detailed in the last *TigerLink* one of the dominant issues faced by the Ministry of Environment and Forests is to fast track clearances of development projects—coal, thermal power plants, mines, dams and highways that impinge on, and will devastate, critical tiger and wildlife habitats. The statistics are frightening: The government has set an ambitious target to add approximately 78,000 MW of installed generation capacity by 2012, and given that 70 per cent of electricity is generated by thermal power plants, one gets an idea of the pressure to increase coal supplies. The demand for coal is currently it is around 600 mt and is set to touch 2,340 mt per annum by 2030. Rather than optimising capacity of existing mines and power plants, and aggressively pushing alternate energy sources, India is opting for thermal power plants—the worst offender of climate change. The import of the impacts of such unplanned ‘development’ is rarely understood. Mining in forests—essentially water catchment areas—will poison our water sources, and the soil. It causes loss of livelihood, huge amounts of displacement and the consequent unrest. The impact is never restricted to the physical area, displacement also results in further encroachment to forests, ancillary development etc.

Unfortunately, India’s forests are also her last repositories for coal—millions of hectares of ‘tigerland’ have been diverted for mining, and the pressure to open up more forest for ‘black gold’ has only increased. The battle for coal gets bitter by the day, with various flashpoints—projects around Tadoba, the mines in Hasdeo-Arand (the project involved diversion of 2301.260 hectares of very rich and pristine forestland for opencast mining), in the semi evergreen forests of Goa and Sindhudurg, which record tiger presence. And of course Niyamgiri in Orissa. The resistance came not just from the environmental lobby—it was the local communities who protested loudest, fearing that their livelihood, their way of life and cultures would be devastated, besides raising concerns of health, water table etc.

Given the bitter opposition from local communities, the grave environmental concerns and the pressure on the ministry to open forests for coal to meet the increasing demand, the MoEF spelt out the broad parameters for opening coal mines in the future. The

ministry had marked about 35 per cent of the total area as a ‘no-go’ zone, where no coal mining could take place as these are ecologically rich and fragile supporting excellent forest cover. The ‘go’ and ‘no-go’ areas were demarcated after a thorough study, including the use of satellite pictures. MEF Jairam Ramesh said that this was an attempt by his ministry “to balance conservation and development.” Another proposal put forth was that the MoEF should be consulted at the conceptual stage of mining projects so that those in ecologically fragile habitats can be ruled out in the beginning. The example given by Jairam was the Adani mine bordering Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve, which would have been rejected at the first stage had the MoEF been in the picture at the inception.

However, this move to rationalise, and restrict the opening up of forests for coal was met with stiff resistance not just from corporates who had vested interests and the ministries of power, coal, mining who had their targets to meet—but also the PMO. The Prime Minister’s Office, unhappy with the definition of “no go” areas for coal mining pointed out that it is likely to deprive the Central and state exchequers of several thousand crores. It felt there was a need to review.

On July 6, came the news that coal had won over ecological security. *Governance Now* reported that “Succumbing to pressures from the PMO and the coal ministry, the MoEF has released 36,000 hectare land for coal mining—which was earlier classified as “no-go” area because of fragile ecological condition.” On September 2, *The Economic Times* reported that more forests will be freed for coal, and I quote, “In what is widely seen as a climbdown by the MoEF, the so-called ‘no-go’ areas—where mining would have been barred on grounds of danger to the environment—have been scaled down. The change in stance came after the PMO intervened.”

Many tiger landscapes have been impacted and are threatened by mining. It is learnt that 14 such proposed projects which are in and around five tiger reserves in two states are currently with the NTCA for their comments/inputs. The reserves include Sahyadri and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, Pench, Satpura and Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh.

Some of the tiger habitats threatened by mining are discussed below:

Tadoba-Andhari: has no less than 16 proposed mines, coal washeries and thermal power plants

coming up in its fringes (in addition to the 25 that are already operating around the reserve) threatening to choke Tadoba, and reduce the landscape into one big coal quarry and overburden dumping ground. Four of these would cut crucial tiger corridors that link the north and south Chandrapur forest divisions. The already operating Western Coalfields Limited has also sought an additional 550 hectares of forest land in Chandrapur Forest Division. This area has recorded good tiger presence, including breeding tigresses. Three leases for mining in the buffer zone of Tadoba have been cancelled. One of the mines which did not get the green nod was the Adani mine—at 1,750 hectares it was believed to be the biggest opencast mine in the country, 90 per cent of which was forest land bang on the Tadoba boundary. This was a rare victory, as Ramesh pointed out: “There are no less than 40 power and coal projects coming up near Tadoba.”

Several coal mines have been proposed in the forest corridor between the Bori-Satpura Tiger Reserve and Pench Tiger Reserve. Six coal mines are proposed in Chindwara—a politically sensitive zone since it falls in the constituency of Roads and Highways minister Kamalnath, who is ‘at war’ with the MoEF for saying ‘no’ to the expansion of NH-7. This highway cuts through the crucial Kanha-Pench corridor. One of the projects cuts through the connecting link of Pench and Satpuda TR buffer. **A series of mines are proposed in Mandla which falls in the Chindwara forest circle.** The presence of mines in the forest in such close proximity to each other will wreak havoc on the fragile ecosystem. The series of mining leases bordering forests and on wildlife corridors is of serious concern. Corridors are vital for the survival of long-ranging species like the tiger. Allowing mining next to, or in corridors will isolate tiger populations and have a domino effect—increasing inbreeding and territorial disputes. The latter is particularly worrisome as lack of ample, inviolate space pushes tigers out of parks and into human settlements leading to conflict.

It may be added here that this region is already stressed with a number of roads and railway lines crisscrossing through it. The NH-6 and NH-7 issue has been detailed in ‘Death on Road’ and in the last issue of *TigerLink*. Work is currently on to upgrade a railway track passing through this dense forest corridor. The railways have played smart—they have constructed and upgraded the track on both sides, leaving the middle stretch from Balaghat to Nainpur which cuts through

the Kanha-Pench corridor, so that there is pressure on the MoEF to grant clearance.

There are also a series of **proposed coal mines in the periphery of Bandhavgarh TR.** The state is yet to delineate and notify Bandhavgarh’s buffer, and it is feared that there will be pressure from the mining and power lobby to ‘adjust’ it to accommodate the projects. incidentally, land acquisition for the projects is going on without the mandatory environmental clearance.

A bauxite and iron ore mine is proposed south of the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra. The project site is located just 15 to 20 km away from the Chandoli National Park of the Sahyadri TR. This provides a link between the Chandoli National Park to Pendagale range. This is a rich wildlife area and there has long been a demand to declare this a sanctuary. The mining site in between the Chandoli and Pendagale range will cut the wildlife corridor and will lead to human-wildlife conflict in future. Seven Bauxite mines are already operating in the Chandoli area and six more are proposed. Local groups have suggested the study of cumulative impacts of ongoing and proposed mines around the Sahyadri TR. The core and buffer of the reserve must be notified.

A series of projects—mining, thermal power plants, and a nuclear power plant have been proposed near Catigao and Netravali Wildlife Sanctuaries in Goa, Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri in the Konkan region in Maharashtra. It is imperative to halt habitat fragmentation to maintain the continuity of the wildlife corridor upto Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve. All these areas fall in the Western Ghats—a global biodiversity hotspot.

Saranda, in Jharkhand, the finest and the largest sal forest in Asia has been gouged by existing mines. Over 1,100 hectares of virgin forests has been devastated by mining with more than 40 per cent canopy cover presently under iron ore mining leases. There is worse in store, with demands to release huge swathes of forests for iron ore. Jindal Steel & Power Limited (JSPL) wants the 537 acre spread of Jaraldaburu in Saranda while Arcelor Mittal has its eye on an adjoining chunk of 212 hectares in Karampada in the same reserve forest. Tata Steel and Essar Steels Jharkhand Limited and others are awaiting the state’s nod for their individual mining proposals. Saranda was once a rich tiger habitat and the legendary forest officer SP Shahi, shot his last tiger here in 1966.

Saranda has rich biodiversity and is home to many endangered wild animals including tigers, elephants, leopards, sloth bears etc. **If all the mining proposals**

go through two-thirds of the forest will go under mines, and Saranda, will be lost forever.

Sundargadh that borders Saranda is another fecund tiger habitat, as was Keonjhar in Orissa, both of which are now devastated by mining. Just one block of Chhattisgarh, Dabra, has nine thermal projects in a 10 km radius. MoUs have been signed for 49 projects in Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh.

Committee to examine projects in tigerland

Since all projects potentially impacting tiger habitats are referred to NTCA, committees have been constituted to examine and evaluate the proposals of mining, infrastructure development and industries, and understand the adverse impact on tiger conservation in the concerned landscape.

The committee constituted to evaluate mining and other development in the buffer area and tiger corridors of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra has categorically stated that there should be no new clearance for the seven mines under their scrutiny and that any further proposals must be rejected given that the area falls under a tiger corridor and would be detrimental for the long term survival of long ranging animal like the tiger.

By Prerna Singh Bindra with inputs from *Sanctuary Asia*, Subhash Narayan, *The Economic Times*, Sept. 2. "More land to be freed up for coal mining," *Governance Now*, Satpuda Foundation

Hydroelectric Projects

Hydroelectric projects have had an equally devastating impact and have over the years drowned huge tracts of pristine forests and tiger habitats across the country. Currently, hydel projects across the country are the subject of a raging debate, with huge projects across the country—be these a series of dams that will cease the flow of the Ganga or the series of hydroelectric projects in the North-east, particularly Arunachal Pradesh which has a gargantuan network of 168 dams being built, that will drown miles of pristine forest or the Human dam which will submerge part of Tadoba. The latest flashpoint is the Brutanga valley project which borders Satkosia Tiger Reserve, and will submerge the tiger-elephant corridor that links the reserve to the forests of South Orissa.

However, while the MoEF took a firm stance on coal and promises to put mining projects in close

proximity to protected areas under scrutiny, their policy on hydel-projects appears to be more *laissez-faire*, with the decision to allow irrigation projects even if they lead to submergence of wildlife areas. "Irrigation projects are absolutely essential and cannot be put on par with mining projects," Ramesh said, in an email response to *The Hindustan Times*. This was in context of the Bratunga project.

From an ecological point of view, this perspective is a disaster. Irrigation projects cannot be seen in isolation as large hydroelectric dams have equal, if not more, impact than mining projects. In almost all cases of large hydroelectric projects it has been seen that the entire catchment cover is lost within a few years of construction. The ancillary impact adds to even more destruction—just one example is the Srisailem dam which not only drowned large tracts of forests but a big chunk of the reserve has been lost to the ever expanding irrigation and labour colony. It has been observed that the labour employed becomes a permanent feature, encroaching on forest land and dependent on forest resources.

How effective the projects are, and whether they serve their purpose is the subject of another story. What must be said is that siltation levels are so high, that the lofty irrigation objectives have not been realised.

Fact of the matter is, all hydro-electric power projects get clearance in the garb of meeting irrigation requirements "to help the farmers". But do they? Take the example of Damodar Valley Corporation, one of our earliest mega-irrigation projects. Five major dams were constructed, each with a promise of producing more than 200 mg watts of electricity. Each dam was expected to irrigate more than 2,500 hectares. It is reported that the project never met with even 20 per cent of its promised target of irrigation, and 30 per cent of electricity.

It's the same story with the Salal hydroelectric project in J&K or Bhakra Nangal in Punjab or Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem in Andhra Pradesh, or for that matter any other major hydro-electric project. All these projects have destroyed entire catchment areas rendering the dam ineffectual. This has necessitated huge expenditure—sometime far exceeding the investment in the dam itself—on afforestation of the catchment areas. The benefits to irrigation have been marginal and the lifespan of the dams have been reduced to a fifth of the envisioned 100 years

A *TigerLink* report

DEATH ON ROAD

Roads cutting through forests are an increasing and a grave threat to wildlife. But before we elaborate it is a better to get a sense of the broader picture first to understand the scale of the problem. In an article ‘Death on the Highway’ written by TR Shankar Raman, he cites India’s National Economic Survey of 2007-08, which says India has a road network of 3.34 million km, second only to the USA. In 2006, India had around 86 million registered motor vehicles. A study from IIM, Lucknow, estimates a staggering total motorised traffic volume of around 5,600 billion passenger-kilometres per year, currently. With an annual rate of increase hovering around eight per cent, this is poised to skyrocket to nearly 13,000 billion passenger km by 2020.

Of our concern are **roads through protected areas and natural habitats which take a huge toll on wildlife** with thousands of wild animals being killed. Tiger and elephants killed on the roads may still come under public glare, but the thousands of ‘smaller’ beings—from snakes to rare lion-tailed macaques to butterflies that are crushed under the wheel every year largely go unnoticed. Around India, millions of animals risk daily encounter with increasingly fast vehicles plying on an expanding meshwork of roads and highways.

There are few studies available from Indian forests but these indicate a grave situation. For example, a rough calculation indicates that in 10 km of road that cuts through Nagarahole–Bandipur tiger reserves in southern India vehicles kill around 15,000 animals (including butterflies, reptiles etc) every year. At least as 50–100 vehicles zip past every hour, on weekends the situation is worse.

Given below are some of the highways that cut through tiger habitat:

- There has been consistent **pressure for the expansion of NH 37, which circumvents Kaziranga Tiger Reserve**. Already the fatality on this road is high, killing about 50 animals every year—including rhinos, tiger, hog deer, barasingha—not counting the ‘smaller life forms’—especially during the monsoons when the park floods and the animals seek refuge in Karbi-Anglong hills.
- It is reported that the central government has accepted an Assam government proposal for construction of a road along Assam’s entire stretch of international boundary with Bhutan, between Udalguri and Kokrajhar. **This essentially cuts through the Manas Tiger Reserve and the Ripu-Chirang Elephant Reserve and the**

connectivity with Bhutan forests will be permanently lost. There is already a National Highway (31) that is running parallel to this proposed road, so why the need for this one?

- NH 7, cutting through the Kanha-Pench corridor has been in the news for long (detailed in the last issue of *TigerLink*) **NH-7 encircles Pench tiger reserve and will cut over 60 km of crucial tiger habitat including over nine km of critical tiger habitat. This corridor has been identified as a very vital tiger corridor linking Kanha, Pench and Satpura Tiger Reserves**. This landscape 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. On the Maharashtra side, work has already begun and nearly 25,000 trees cut. It is unfortunate that the matter is pending with the Apex court for nearly two years.
- Less publicised but equally damaging is the road widening (six-laning) of **NH-6** (also see States). **Stretches on this highway form a part of crucial wildlife and tiger corridor that connects the Nagzira Sanctuary and the Navegaon National Park** in Maharashtra. In most stretches the work has already been completed and thousands of trees chopped for the purpose. One little known fact is that the same national highway also borders Similipal, cutting through tiger and elephant corridors.
- The Delhi-Dehradun highway (and other impediments like canals etc) zipping through **Rajaji has snapped a critical tiger and elephant corridor, and in effect this has led to the near local extinction of the tiger in Western part of Rajaji—there has been only one tigress there for over a year.**
- **There is news that NH 121, which circumvents the eastern and northern boundary of Corbett Tiger Reserve, is to be expanded and ‘upgraded.’** Trees have been marked from Mohan to Chimtakhil, approximately 6-7 km from the northern boundary of CTR (part of which falls in Almora forest Division and the other in CTR-Kalagarh Forest Division). So far, about 1,500 trees have been marked along the northern boundary, though the number of trees expected to be axed is much higher. This is a vital tiger and elephant corridor, which is already stressed with tourism resorts and the Sundarkhal village. It is understood

that clearance from the Forest Appraisal Committee has not yet been obtained.

- **No less than 35 border roads have got clearance in Arunachal Pradesh, which will gravely impact the pristine rainforests of the north-east.**
- A 1,730 km long highway connecting Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh) with Ranchi (Jharkhand) has been proposed. **More than 1,200 km will pass through Orissa and will fragment almost all of Orissa's tiger and elephant landscapes.** It will circumvent the Satkosia Tiger Reserve. Forests of Keonjhar and Sundargarh, already reeling under the impact of uncontrolled mining, shall be severely fragmented by this highway. These forests are vital tiger and elephant habitats and form a vast landscape connecting Similipal and Saranda.
- Two state highways run through Sariska. There are roads cutting through Dudhwa, Nagarhole, Bandipur, Nagarjuna Srisailem Tiger Reserve (see 'States'), most of which have caused considerable wild animal mortality including those of tiger.

In some cases, night traffic has been stopped. An example was the hard-won victory when the High Court of Karnataka passed a judgment on March 9 asking NH 212 and NH 67 the highway to be closed from 2100hrs– 0600 hrs. These two national highways slice through the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. But these are rare victories, and there is constant pressure to ease or remove such bans as in the case of the road that runs through Nagarjuna-Srisailem in Andhra Pradesh (see 'States').

There is demand for new roads and a constant pressure to broaden and upgrade the existing roads. The problem is the lack of sensitivity of other agencies to tiger concerns. Even with perfectly viable options available, these are not considered. To give just a few examples, options of viable routes have been identified by competent authorities for the roads impacting Kanha-Pench, Kaziranga and Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem TR but have not been considered.

Roads are just *one* amongst the litany of threats to the survival of wildlife. Scientists warn that the additional mortality on roads can tilt the demographic scale against an already stressed, and declining population. The real impact of roads is rarely understood. Besides that which is visible to the eye—the tragic accidents that crush rare wild creatures, there are other not-so-obvious but equally lethal fallouts of roads in protected areas.

Roads fragment an already highly fragmented habitat. They break contiguity of habitat, impinging

on forests and well-worn migratory paths of animals. They break tree cover, slice vegetation and causes stress to wildlife living along the roads, due to increasing disturbance. For example, how does a hoolock gibbon, a creature of the canopy cross a road minus tree cover? How does a tiger or a herd of elephants navigate a highway with trucks and other heavy vehicles hurtling on, continually? The other 'unseen' impact is that roads give accessibility—they are the first step to ancillary development and an increasing human footprint in the area. For example, a road circumventing and cutting through the Velavadar National park is proposed to be upgraded, reportedly to cater to the special industrial and investment zones coming up in the vicinity.

Roads also increase the probability of accidental encounters between tigers and people, leading to more conflict situations. They give easy accessibility to timber smugglers and poachers. As the recent arrests in Karnataka showed, ungulates were shot in protected areas from vehicles on roads. A study in the Russian Far East showed how roads directly lead to tiger mortality. From 1992 to 2000 Wildlife Conservation Society studied the fate of radio-collared Siberian tigers in the Russian far-east living in areas with no roads, secondary roads and primary roads. Their findings showed that there was a 100 per cent survival rate for adult tigers living in areas with no roads and just 55 per cent survival rate for adult tigers living in areas with primary roads. Yet, such factors rarely find concern in mainstream planning.

Prerna Singh Bindra

NEWS FROM THE STATES

ANDHRA PRADESH

No road widening through NSTR: Jairam

The Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh has urged the Andhra Pradesh government to shelve a proposal to convert the existing two-lane roads passing through India's largest tiger reserve, Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem, into a four lane highway and advised additional speed breakers to avoid the high incidence of accidents killing endangered wildlife.

In a letter to Chief Minister K Rosaiah, Jairam stressed the urgency **to notify the buffer zone of the reserve.** Referring to the Centre's policy of providing compensation of Rs 10 lakh per family for relocation from the core critical tiger habitats, he stressed that the

relocation needs to be expedited, particularly since 75 per cent of the families had expressed their willingness to move out. He reminded the CM that this reserve is co-terminus with the Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary and therefore its continued preservation would be “a fitting tribute to the memory of the late leader who was so passionate about environment and wildlife issues.” To overcome the delay in funds, it was advisable to **authorise the Tiger Conservation Foundation** to avail central assistance. Jairam referred to the report of the expert team that had visited NSTR last year and said that the action on their recommendations needs to be expedited.

He complimented the state government, the forest authorities and staff in bringing the conflict-ridden reserve back to normalcy. He also appreciated the initiative to employ the local Chenchu tribals—about 400 of them are employed as watchers and tiger trackers—in conservation efforts. It must be remembered that NSTR was in the grip of naxalism for a period of 16 years from 1990 to 2006. The reserve had become the citadel of left-wing extremists who had made the reserve their base and even had their training camps inside making effective protection and monitoring difficult. A massive effort on the part of the state government particularly through an elite police force, Greyhounds saw an end to naxal activity within the reserve. In the past three years, the park has seen remarkable recovery, largely due to good leadership at the top.

A *TigerLink* report

VIPs want to vroom in tiger reserve

The state police have written to the AP Forest department to remove around 20 speed breakers from the Mannanur-Dornala road that cuts through the core area of the Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve. The speed breakers have been built to decrease fatal accidents by speeding vehicles on the road leading to the Srisailam temple. **Forest officials are opposed to the idea, saying that it would be disastrous and lead to more accidents.** There is a ban on the movement of vehicles from Mannanur to Dornala on a 130-km stretch after 9 pm but there is constant pressure to stretch the time up to 11 pm. Vehicular traffic, stopped from 9 pm to 6 am throughout the year on the road to Srisailam, is allowed during festivals like Shivratri, Ugadi and Kartikamasam.

An earlier study by the AP Forest Department has revealed considerable wildlife mortality on account of

road accidents. Three leopards and four sloth bears were killed in recent accidents on this stretch of the road. There is also a serious problem of drunken driving at night and this is largely responsible for the mortality. Chief Wildlife Warden, Hitesh Malhotra, said, “**We are proposing an alternate route which would be 25 km longer than the existing road.** There is stiff resistance from the locals but we are trying to convince them.”

Incidents of animals being run over on highways are also common at Pakal, Warangal, the SV National Park in Tirumala and the Lankamalai Sanctuary of Jerdon Cursor habitat in Kurnool.

Source: ‘VIPs want to vroom in forests’ *Deccan Chronicle*, May 2, 2010, August 10

NSTR-GBM road death knell for tigers

The Guntur-Kurnool State Highway divides NSTR and Gundala Bramheswaram (GBM) Sanctuary and runs through the forest for 30 kms. GBM sanctuary is an extraordinarily fecund tiger habitat with minimal anthropogenic pressure and amazing biodiversity. It is also a proposed extended core of NSTR. The state highway cutting through is a death trap, and animals such as leopard, sloth bear, leopard cat, rusty spotted cat, etc have been killed in recent accidents. This is an important area for tiger, and there have been regular sightings by the guards and watchers in the beat *chowki* at the gate. Tigers are known to regularly cross this highway.

The traffic in this stretch is heavy, with trucks plying consistently through the night, when movement of animals is maximum. There is **an urgent need to divert traffic and enforce closure of the Guntur-Kurnool State Highway between dusk and dawn.** **There is also an alternate route that is a mere 22 km diversion.**

A *TigerLink* report

Wild boar culling ordered

Orders have been passed by the Chief Wildlife Warden **authorising Divisional Forest Officers to kill wild boars for destroying crops. The order also specifies that DFOs could assign the job of culling to hunters**, a move which has been heavily criticised. The orders are applicable to the entire state. According to sources, the decision was taken after reports of crop damage by wild boars came in from Chittoor, the home district of state forest minister Ramchandra Reddy.

Illegal hunting of boars is already rampant, with farmers killing them by setting snares and fencing fields with live electrical wires. It is feared that this order will lead to a massacre of wild boars, which is an important prey species.

Source: Mir Ayoob Ali Khan, Times News Network, August 16, 2010, Hyderabad

YSR Memorial Park committee taken off task

The central committee entrusted with the task of assessing the green impact of the YSR memorial at Nallamala forest has been removed from the job. The committee had been set up following stiff opposition by environmentalists against the proposed memorial.

The four-member committee, comprising wildlife experts from across the country, was constituted in May and was supposed to visit the proposed YSR memorial site in Kurnool district and submit a feasibility report. Environmentalists alleged that the site was cutting into the Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve and the Gundalabrahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary that is contiguous to the reserve. “The first notification that we received about 14 sites had a mention of this project. But in the second one, it was scrapped,” said PK Sen, former director of Project Tiger and head of the committee, adding, “We are unaware of the reasons.”

According to an official of the YSR ‘Smrithi Vanam Project’, the memorial is set to come up on 22 acres of private land outside the reserve forest area, which is about eight km away from the crash site and will not disturb the natural habitat,” he added.

This project was earlier planned at the helicopter crash site (in which YSR died on 2nd September, 2009) which is in the Gundalabrahmeswaram Wildlife Sanctuary.

Source: Sudipta Sengupta, TNN; www.sanctuaryasia.com, July 15, 2010, Hyderabad

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Low tiger density in Pakke TR

Camera trap estimation has indicated a low density of tigers in the Pakke Tiger Reserve: 1.9 tigers per 100 sq km. The very rare clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) has been captured on camera for the first time in the reserve during the exercise.

However, it must be pointed out that this low density does not necessarily mean bad news—some habitats inherently have low densities. “Looking at the terrain

and the habitat, the density of 1.9 tigers can be considered fair,” says Jimmy Borah, Senior Project Officer, Tiger Programme, North Bank Landscape, WWF-India, who carried out the survey.

Arunachal Pradesh forest department carried out the census between 4th February and 30th March 2010 in collaboration with WWF-India using the camera trap method. The sampled area was 261.81 sq km of the reserve’s total area of 862 sq km. “Large areas of the park have still not been covered as they are inaccessible,” an official of the reserve said.

Sanctuary Asia reports that Pakke TR has seen marked improvement and good management under able leadership. The director Tana Tapi, who won the Carl Zeiss Conservation Award this year, has been credited with changing the face of the park. Though a relatively new reserve (2002), it has in the past four years seen the setting up of anti-poaching camps in strategic points. Pakke now has 24 anti-poaching camps, with 140 people patrolling it, though this is insufficient, considering the area and the difficult terrain. There are also committees formed by tribal heads to penalise wildlife violations, which has led to a noticeable decline in illegal hunting. The ‘grains-for-grains’ scheme of the Wildlife Trust of India initiated in 2005 which provides food grains to farmers whose crops are destroyed, has helped reduce hostility towards wild elephants and there is a general wave of support for wildlife conservation.

However, it must be pointed out that the Assam side of the reserve, ‘Nameri’ is besieged by problems—it is heavily encroached-and it is learnt that prey base and tiger numbers have declined sharply.

Source: Roopak Goswami, *The Telegraph* July 29, 2010, Guwahati; Nandini Velho *Sanctuary Asia*, April 2010

Comment: *Some parks inherently have a low density of tigers, like Pakke, which is essentially a rainforest. Scientists say that one must look beyond the narrow vision of the tiger, and management must be site-habitat specific i.e. what is good for Kanha, which has huge meadows, does not necessarily apply to the semi-evergreen rainforests of Annamalai TR or most forests of the Northeast, which many have low tiger densities of about 1-2 per 100-200 sq km, but still have high biodiversity values.*

There is a tendency to propagate conversion of woodland to grasslands for increasing tiger population, but this cannot be a generic prescription. Such management must be prudent, site-specific, and based on sound science.

ASSAM

Forest Department gets powers at par with Police

In a path breaking order issued on July 14, 2010, the Assam Government has given powers to use weapon to all forest department staff at par with the police. The order was issued as the staff is very vulnerable in the face of increasing threats to protected areas, and the fact that they may face criminal proceedings while discharging their mandated duty and responsibility. It was important, therefore, to provide them immunity from criminal persecution. Forest staff will be able to open fire in the course of their duty, and have immunity from prosecution in the same manner as the police. The Forest Minister and the Chief Minister of Assam recommended the order to the Governor.

Source: Roopak Goswami, *The Telegraph*

Comment: Assam is perhaps the only state in India to have such an order. It was much-needed, given that many forest personnel—from the watcher to field director are facing persecution for using weapons in the course of duty.

The threats are increasing, as is the vulnerability of the staff in encounters with poachers, timber smugglers and even extremists in some areas—who are usually well armed. The order must be replicated across the country.

Women on the frontline

Over 21 women foresters and 35 women forest guards have recently started working in different wildlife divisions in Assam, with the forest department recruiting 30 per cent women in all posts. They have been appointed in a number of areas that include the Kaziranga and Dibru-Saikhowa National Parks and the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

The women work force is being trained by experts from the Assam Forest Protection Force, National Security Guard, Assam Police and the Assam Olympic Association in areas like physical fitness, arms bearing, yoga and martial arts. This is in addition to rigorous classroom training in wildlife management, forest engineering and social forestry.

In the Kaziranga National Park, authorities have got the women involved in Eco Development Committees (EDC). Presence of women staff is also expected to help in anti-poaching activities, particularly while conducting search or raid operations.

Source: 'Jungle belles - Assam reinforces its frontline forest protection force with trained women guards.' *The Hindu Business Line*, August 6, 2010

Tigers using river islands as corridors

A study by Aranyak, an NGO 'Assessing the Potential of the Brahmaputra River Islands to Support Dispersing Tigers within Central Assam', has found that **tigers, rhinos and elephants are using river islands in the Brahmaputra as corridors and habitat to migrate to new ranges and find new territories.**

The river islands dotting the 185 km stretch of the Brahmaputra from Kaziranga to Orang National Park — called the Kaziranga-Orang Riverine Landscape (KORL) — is a major gateway for dispersing animals migrating within the protected areas in the Brahmaputra's floodplains in the central Assam region. The KORL includes Protected Areas, viz. Kaziranga NP, Orang NP, Laokhowa WLS and Burhachapori WLS as well as few other reserve forests. Of the 78 small and large river islands present in the landscape, 52 were sampled for the presence of tigers, prey, habitat suitability, human beings and livestock. Evidence of tigers was found in eleven islands. The tiger population of Kaziranga is considered as the 'source population' in the entire region. And given the high density of tigers in the park (32 per 100 sq km), the KORL has potential to hold a good number of tigers.

The study, covering an area of 1,100 sq km, **revealed the presence of tigers in 84.26 square km.** However, settlements on the river islands in the section west of the Kaliabhomora Bridge are a major hindrance for animal movement. The islands, further west, toward Orang are more thickly populated and extensively used for agricultural activities and livestock grazing. The recent spotting of tigers in Koliabor, Naltali and Dhakuakhana, about 10-40 km from Kaziranga confirms that the animals are dispersing out of protected areas and looking for potential areas to establish a home range.

The entire KORL needs conservation and management strategies for long term survival of the threatened species and the report recommends that **the entire KORL region be brought under effective control and management of the forest department at the earliest to facilitate protection and habitat management practices.**

The forest department is also keen to connect the meta-population of tigers in Kaziranga, Orang, Laokhowa and Burhachapori by declaring it a single Tiger Conservation Unit.

The study was undertaken in collaboration with the state forest department and WWF India.

Source: Aaryanak, August 12, 2010, *The Telegraph*, Roopak Goswami, For the full report: http://www.aaranyak.org/report_page.htm

Comment: A survey by WWF-India, done by Brig Talwar about a decade back, had recorded the presence of tigers and prey species in the river islands and recommended conservation strategies for the same. It was also suggested that there should be river check posts in the islands to monitor and protect these populations.

Good News

Seven cat species in a forest—a record

A little-known rainforest in north-east India could be home to the highest diversity of wild cats in the world. **Seven cat species—the highest diversity of cat species yet photographed in a single area—were recorded in a 570 sq km in Jeypore-Dehing over a two-year survey.** Among the cats camera-trapped in the lowland rainforest are the elusive and rare clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), tiger (*Panthera tigris*), marbled cat (*Pardofelis marmorata*) Asian golden cat (*Catopuma temminckii*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) and jungle cat (*Felis chaus*).

Wildlife biologist Kashmira Kakati was studying the gibbons of Jeypore-Dehing and became curious about the predator tracks she kept finding on the ground. With 30 digital camera traps, Kakati captured not only the cats but six primate species besides the Asiatic wild dog, the Malayan sun bear, binturong, mongoose, porcupine, otter, civets between 2007 and 2009.

“The discovery is significant in that it points to the importance of protecting less-known patches of wilderness in the country that hold tremendous biodiversity,” says Ravi Chellam of the Wildlife Conservation Society-India Program.

The research was supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, the Rufford Small Grants Foundation, and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Source: Dan Morrison, *National Geographic*, March 12, 2010; “Scientist discovers Himalayan wildcat haven”, Divya Gandhi, *The Hindu*

Encroachers evicted from Orang

Forest staff, accompanied by police and security

personnel evicted over 400 people, suspected to be from Bangladesh from the Orang National Park on May 17. This development came close on the heels of the police and security personnel evicting a large number of suspected Bangladeshis from the park in the first week of May.

According to sources, the park staff was prevented by some people from erecting posts in the boundary of the park for the construction of a fence on May 16. By next morning, over 400 people with livestock had crossed over from across the border and started to encroach land at Hazarbiga on the southern part of the park by erecting about 20 thatched houses. The park authorities along with policemen, para-military forces and a local magistrate rushed to the spot and started the eviction drive. The encroachers attacked the security personnel, who were compelled to fire several rounds in the air and resort to lathi-charge and tear gas shelling.

Source: Mangaldai, *The Sentinel*, May 17, 2010

Comment: There is a problem of encroachment in protected areas and forests by people from Bangladesh. Lakhs of refugees have encroached in Bhitarkanika National Park in Orissa, in and around Sundarbans, the Kaziranga-Karbi-Anglong landscape causing deforestation on a huge scale. The problem of such encroachment exists across the country—with Assam being the state to suffer the most with over one lakh hectares taken over by refugees from across the border.

Panel to reconsider Manas TR's danger tag

For years, as Manas battled militancy, poaching and a complete breakdown of management and administration, it faced the threat of losing its World Heritage Site tag. There is good news for the park on its slow road to recovery: The site will now be considered at the World Heritage Committee's next session for removal from the 'World Heritage Site in Danger' list. However, it has been communicated that “a clear upward trend in the populations of key wildlife species needs to be demonstrated in order to enable removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger.” The state has also been asked to submit a detailed report on the state of conservation and on the implementation of the corrective measures for the park.

The IUCN-UNESCO mission shall visit Manas next year and examine the data on wildlife population and check other parameters to determine if it is ready to come off the list. Manas Wildlife Sanctuary was made a World Heritage Site in 1985, but in 1992 it had to be put in the endangered category because of insurgency,

and the consequent lack of total administrative and managerial control.

Source: World Heritage Programme, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), Roopak Goswami, *The Telegraph*, July 31, 2010, Guwahati

Comment: *Once one of the finest bamboo forests, huge parts of the 2,500 sq km Manas have been destroyed and most wildlife is concentrated in just 500 sq km of the core critical habitat.*

Blasting hills in Nameri TR

The Assam forest department has **allowed the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to widen the Balipara-Bhalukpong road in Sonitpur district in the buffer of the Nameri Tiger Reserve. The BRO has started massive hill cutting in the area without the mandatory clearance from MoEF.** Clearance is mandatory under the Forest Conservation Act and the proposal must be put up before the National Board for Wildlife since it involves a protected area. The state has also ignored and contradicted the findings of its three-member expert committee. On its visit on 2nd July 2010, the committee observed massive earth-cutting from the adjoining hillocks and noted that four km of the road inside the buffer area has already been constructed.

It is reported that “the construction of culverts and retaining wall at almost all places is complete. Even raw materials like earth for raising the road at certain points, besides sand and boulders for metalling, are being gouged from the adjoining hillocks of the buffer area. Mechanised appliances have been used for collection of these materials.

The BRO had requested the state forest department to give them forest clearance for widening the Balipara-Bhalukpong road since it is a strategic road for movement of heavy armoured vehicles. Sources in the forest department said the BRO had sought right of way of 36 metres, which was later reduced to 22 metres. In its report the expert committee has clearly stated that **“wild elephants from Nameri TR use this road frequently as a corridor throughout the year, more so in the winter season and move to Sotai Pahar, which is a part of Balipara Reserve Forest on the western side of the road. A major part of Sotai Pahar is still intact with presence of bamboo at many places and few degraded patches.”** The construction and widening of the road will result in the felling of large number of trees of varied species and devastate the vegetation resulting in loss of important habitat.

Reacting to the report, the National Tiger Conservation Authority has asked the Assam forest department for a status report on the road-widening project on Balipara-Bhalukpong. **“We have received information regarding a road-widening project in the buffer area of Nameri tiger reserve. It has been stated that the said area also forms part of the Sonitpur Elephant Reserve and work is on without the mandatory clearance from the Ministry of Environment and Forests,”** NTCA Member Secretary Gopal said in his letter to the Assam forest department.

Source: Roopak Goswami, ‘Tiger panel seeks report on forest road’, *The Telegraph*, August 31, 2010

Comment: *The Nameri Tiger Reserve reports 2,100 hectares of encroachment, amongst the highest in the country. It is a highly degraded forest, especially the Sonitpur division. This fragmentation of traditional migration corridors due to large-scale deforestation and human encroachment has resulted in huge man-animal conflict. The man-elephant conflict is particularly bad with tragic fatalities on both sides, and the upcoming road will only stress it further.*

BIHAR

CID to probe Valmiki tiger poaching

For the first time in Bihar, the CID will probe into the death of a tigress at Valmiki Tiger Reserve. Chief wildlife warden Mithilesh Kumar recently gave his nod to the formal request from the tiger reserve’s project director JP Gupta for a CID probe into the incident. This would be forwarded to the home department.

The body of an adult tigress was found in the Madanpur Range of the tiger reserve on March 11 this year, on the basis of information received from some villagers. **Preliminary investigations indicated that the tigress was poisoned, though it is yet to be confirmed as the state forensic lab has not yet submitted the viscera report.** Nanku Choudhary, a fire-watcher, and Umesh Patel, a tiger tracker were also arrested. Both of them are now out on bail as the forest officials failed to provide concrete evidence in support of the allegations levelled against them.

Valmiki field director said the reserve officials lacked resources for thorough investigation into the case. He cited the example of another tiger poaching case in Valmiki Tiger Reserve in 2008 where the guilty have not yet been nailed. Gupta said that every possible effort must be made to bring the criminals to book, and he

was sure that the CID would be helpful in this matter. "The CID had investigated the Gir lion poaching case in 2007 leading to the conviction of 36 persons," he said.

Source: 'CID to probe Valmiki tiger death', Sanjeev Kumar Varma, *The Telegraph*, 27, August 2010

KARNATAKA

Mining PSU KIOCL defies Supreme Court

In complete defiance of the Supreme Court and exploiting the gross inaction of the Government to evict KIOCL from the Kudremukh National Park, the mining PSU continues to be in possession of the lapsed lease area. Worse, the company is floating new proposals every day to hang on to public land within the limits of a fully notified National Park. There has been no compliance on the Apex court's directions on eco-restoration. There are continued attempts by the Steel Ministry to revive full scale mining within Kudremukh National Park. The Ministry of Steel and KIOCL is also attempting to file yet another appeal even though the Apex Court in its Judgment on 15th December 2006 has already observed that - "It is noted that at various times, petitions have been filed practically with a view to undo what had been definitely held to be imperative by this Court".

Wildlife First has in a letter requested the MEF Jairam Ramesh to apprise the Ministry of Steel on the adverse legal position on re-starting mining in Kudremukh and sought his intervention to ensure complete compliance of the Supreme Court judgment.

Source: Praveen Bhargav, *Wildlife First*

Comment: *Even with a Supreme Court Order and a government decision to close the mine, there is constant pressure—and renewed proposals to reopen the mining. Kudremukh is already a national park with amazing biodiversity and a healthy tiger population. Why not bring it under the fold of Project Tiger?*

NH through Kudremukh opposed

A proposed extension to NH-13, connecting Mangalore and Chitradurga in Karnataka poses a severe threat to Kudremukh as it will bifurcate the park. The extension has been proposed by upgrading the status of the existing State Highway-66 that passes through Kudremukh National Park to a national highway. This extension was notified by the Ministry of Surface Transport, Govt. of India, on 6th January 2009. The state highway was not even in existence prior to 1980 and it appears that the requisite permissions under the Forest Conservation Act were not obtained for its construction

inside the national park. The highway, if constructed, will fragment one of the last bastions of the critically endangered lion-tailed macaque due to loss of canopy connectivity.

At the time, Wildlife First, a Bangalore based NGO had then written to the Additional DG (Wildlife) and suggested an alternative route that not only avoids the national park but also lessens the distance by two kilometers besides adding connectivity with Chikmangalur, the district headquarters.

Wildlife first has written to the MEF Jairam Ramesh requesting that he take up the matter with his counterpart in the Ministry of Surface Transport and ensure that:

- The notification dated 6th January 1999, in respect of the expansion of NH-13 be appropriately modified and the existing road not be designated as a National Highway.
- The alternative alignment maybe considered for up-gradation as a National Highway as it does not pass through a National Park and thus eliminates the need for clearances from the Supreme Court.

Source: Praveen Bhargav, *Wildlife First*

GOOD NEWS

BRT proposed as tiger reserve

The Billigiri Ranganatha Temple (BRT) Wildlife Sanctuary has been given an in-principle approval by the centre to be declared as a tiger reserve. A detailed proposal for the same is awaited from the state. There are believed to be about 30 tigers in this sanctuary. Former Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), BR Hills, Biswajit Mishra says the sanctuary meets all the parameters necessary for a tiger reserve, adding that during the preliminary field collection for the ongoing census in January there were 20 direct sightings of the big cat in the sanctuary. The park also has excellent prey density.

Source: *Deccan Chronicle*, August 17, 2010; www.tigernet.nic.in

Gamehunt in PAs

Peafowl, sambar and deer for lunch and dinner. And a bison too, even if it means you shoot 22 times at it to get its meat. All with a .22 rifle. Shocked at the revelations by a gang trapped for poaching in BRT, Nagarahole and Bandipur parks, the forest department is now mulling over a **ban on entry of private vehicles into sanctuaries across the state.**

Three persons have been arrested in this connection. The arrest has revealed a network of poachers, who

operate in the guise of visitors in all the major national parks in Karnataka. Three persons have been arrested. However, the kingpin identified as ‘Salman’-who operated several ‘hunting’ groups is absconding.

A forest official said that the poachers confessed to moving in cars along forest roads, they killed and then hid the carcass in the vehicle or came back for it later. Apparently this was done even during ‘safari’ timings. B K Singh, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Chief Wildlife Warden has said that that they were shocked by the techniques adopted by the **poachers who were comfortably operating even in the tourism zones. “I have proposed that tourists go inside in government vehicles or government-owned vehicles only so that monitoring is easier.”**

On interrogation it was learnt that Salman was studying MBA in London and is a frequent visitor. The group was poaching ungulates in Bandipur and Nagarhole for the past five years. The trio reportedly confessed that they killed sambar, cheetal, guar, wild boar etc using .22 mm rifles, which make less noise. They confessed to shooting one particular guar no less than 22 times before it could be felled.

The accused have been booked under Wildlife Protection Act.

Source: ‘BRT forest staff expose ungulate poachers’ racket.’ Subhash Chandra N S, *Deccan Herald*; August 28, ‘Tourists’ hunt animals in parks’, Jayshree Nandi, *The Times of India*, Aug 30

Comment: *That the poachers could operate with impunity even during ‘safari’ timings indicates the abysmal levels of protection even in our better managed protected areas.*

Scientists have repeatedly stressed the importance of a healthy prey population to support tigers. There is a direct correlation between the number of prey species and tiger density. However, hunting for ‘game’ continues unabated, for consumption or to cater to the demand for wild venison in resorts and even towns and cities nearby.

KERALA

Two tourism packages suspended in Periyar

The Kerala Government has suspended two of its packages offered to tourists at the Periyar Tiger Reserve: Tiger Trail and Jungle Patrol. These involved trekking inside the reserve accompanied by a team drawn from the local tribals, some of whom were previously involved in timber smuggling and poaching, and also forest staff.

Source: August 15, 2010, New Delhi, www.indiareport.com

MADHYA PRADESH

Gypsy kills tigress in Bandhavgarh

A tigress with three cubs popularly known as the ‘Jhurjhura female’ was killed on May 19th by a speeding vehicle in Bandhavgarh National Park. She was spotted in an injured condition on the morning of May 19, 2010 in the tourism zone of the reserve. She **later succumbed. It was concluded that she had been hit by a vehicle and heavy internal injuries had been the cause of her death. She left behind three six-month cubs.**

Initially, the blame was put on a tourist vehicle. But, shockingly, it was a vehicle of the forest department and local administration that were involved in this fatal accident. This tragic accident—and the ‘blame game’ played by the forest department led to huge outrage. Local villagers, most of whom have a stake in tourism, were angry that the incident was being used to make tourism the scapegoat rather than pin the real culprit. They demanded that the accused be booked. They also urged for an immediate action plan for the safety of the cubs and a tourism policy that is inclusive of the locals and provides them a respectable livelihood. Sources said that though the locals supported the Field Director CK Patil who is perceived as an honest, fair officer, they were upset as the junior officials were harassing them and made them scapegoats for the death of the tigress. Dhruv Singh, who runs an organisation called Jan Sabha, and a resort owner felt that if the department does not hear the plea of the local people and bring justice they will lose the confidence of the community that is needed now for the relocation programme.

Investigations revealed that the people travelling in the vehicle included Akshay Kumar Singh, the CEO of Zila Panchayat, Umaria, his relatives, Lalit Pandey, a range officer K K Pandey, assistant veterinary surgeon of Tala and two drivers. They visited Baheraha in Magdhi Range, which is not open to tourists, late at night when vehicular movement or entry to the park is banned. Then they went to Tala, and returned via the Bhadrashila barrier, instead of the main gate. The barrier is a kilometre from the main gate.

The trio allegedly misinformed the field director that the tigress had either been wounded by a tourist vehicle or had sustained internal injuries in a territorial fight with another tigress. Fortunately, photographs of the injured tigress taken by tourists aided in uncovering the truth. Following forensic examination of the vehicle, the three officials were suspended.

The veterinarian K K Pandey is reported to be the key person in this tragedy. His resort ‘Tiger Haven’,

was sealed following allegations of his involvement in the case. The jeep had left from his resort the night of the accident.

Sources confirm that there is tremendous pressure on the field director from the collectorate to 'protect' Akshay Singh. Some of the junior collectorate officers even gave a complaint in writing that they would not go into the park on 'VIP' duty as they would be 'victimised'.

The forest department also bore the brunt of the police force. After the tragedy, monitoring at the checkpoint became more stringent. All vehicles, including official ones, were entered in the register. When the gate staff tried to halt a police vehicle, the police functionary got down and slapped and physically abused the staff.

Two weeks after the incident, the Madhya Pradesh government ordered a CID probe into the death of the tigress.

The death of the 'Jhurjhura female' has wiped out an entire generation of tigers. The future of her orphaned cubs is now uncertain. The forest department is currently feeding the cubs in an enclosure built in their territory. Unfortunately, but predictably, two months after the incident one of the cubs was found dead, reportedly killed by an adult tiger that had managed to enter the 42 hectare enclosure.

Some objections have been raised that the enclosure that the cubs occupy is prime real estate in the core critical habitat of the reserve, disturbing the resident wildlife. It has been proposed that they should be relocated to another part of the reserve. *Also see 'National' for NTCA report*

Source: 21, May 2010, Vijay Pinjarkar, *TNN*, 27, May 2010, New Delhi, *The Asian Age*, June 3, 2010, Bhopal, *The Hindu*, June 6, 2010, Bhopal, *The Pioneer*, August 10, 2010, Bhopal, *PTI*; *IBN Live*, *www.tigernet.nic.in*, *www.sanctuaryasia.com*, Dhruv Singh on e-mail

Tourists to patrol reserves, MEF disapproves

The MP forest department proposed a new tourism scheme called 'Patrolling Tiger Land' under which tourists could pay to patrol core areas of tiger reserves on foot with forest guards. Their stay will also be facilitated in patrol camps. The scheme was meant to begin from the coming tourism season with the reopening of parks on October 16. But this move was severely criticised by conservationists. NTCA also took strong objection and responded by bringing out an eco-tourism guideline for tiger reserves (see *National*). MEF Jairam Ramesh, expressed his 'shock' in a letter to MP Chief

Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, stating that the order "goes against the spirit of the Wildlife Protection Act." He suggested that such a scheme might compromise the safety of the park, as unsavoury elements may find out about sensitive routes. He argued that patrolling is a specialised job. That apart, the scope for misuse of such information is immense. It would also lead to increasing disturbance in the reserves.

Source: *Central Chronicle*, August 3, 2010, *The Sunday Pioneer*; August 8, 2010, Neha Sinha, *Indian Express*; August 9, 2010, *www.sanctuaryasia.com*.

Comment: *Questions that need to be asked: Why was the decision taken? Was it motivated by the money it would generate? Which areas are we talking about? It is understood even the core critical tiger habitat will be 'patrolled' by the tourists, which is in contravention to the Wildlife Protection Act. Isn't the purpose of patrolling protection? Won't protection be compromised by the presence of tourists in the patrol? Won't it expose the strategy, tiger location etc which maybe misused? There is also the risk of non-genuine tourists or poachers availing this scheme with malafide intentions, as has been seen in the recent Karnataka case. How does one propose to monitor the patrolling? Who is to say there won't be night patrolling, or other rules broken with the lure of generous tips doled out by high-end tourists? Will the forest guards become care takers of tourists? Won't it shift the focus to tourism from protection?*

Poaching and trade is a serious crime, the gravity of which needs to be understood, and there must be a comprehensive strategy to tackle it. It is not to be trifled with.

Stay in camps may also demand additional construction. The scheme—and the consequent disturbance—goes against the ethics of an inviolate core critical habitat.

Note: Tourism in tiger reserves continued to dominate headlines, more so in Madhya Pradesh which appears to be pushing tourism aggressively. This was taken note of even by the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh who wrote to the MP Chief Minister in May this year urging that tourism related commercial activities be regulated. The MP government proposed various tourism related schemes, one of which was to support the proposal for a private high-end resort in Rukhad in the Kanha-Pench corridor which was rejected by the MoEF (see last issue of *TigerLink*).

Violation of wildlife laws in Kanha

The forest department has moved a proposal for shifting a hotel of the MP Tourism Development Corporation

(MPTDC), called “Baghira Loghuts”, located in Kisli inside the core critical tiger habitat of Kanha Tiger Reserve- to the Khatia hutments of the forest department in the buffer zone.

It may be pointed out here that the forest department had constructed 20 rooms and related ancillary facilities for ecotourism at Khatia in 2006 without mandatory clearance under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. Ecotourism is a non-forestry activity and needs clearance under the FCA. Though it was mandatory to be put up proposal before the National Board of Wildlife since the lodge is located within a tiger reserve, this wasn't done. While it is being used for accommodating tourists, the property has been stated to be a ‘training center’ for forest officers in the proposal. Incidentally, till very recently MPTDC had this accommodation on offer in its website but it was taken off following media reports.

It is learnt that the idea is to ‘exchange’ the Baghira Loghuts hotel of MPTDC with the Khatia hutments of the forest department. This way, the department will get the existing property of MPTDC in the core zone of reserve, next to their Kisli FRH, and enhance its revenue through ecotourism (Baghira Loghuts are always in greater demand than Khatia.)

Can the forest department continue to use its own rest house in Kisli as a tourist hub if it shuts down the MPTDC one? This will violate both the Wildlife Protection Amendment Act, 2006, and NTCA guidelines. The forest department maintains that the Baghira Loghuts will be used as a training centre, but such a centre can very well be outside the core critical habitat. Is the real purpose to expand their tourism facilities?

White tigers to be captive bred in MP

The MP government has got the green signal from the centre for a proposal to start captive breeding of white tigers at Maand reserve near Govindgarh fort. White tigers are historically associated with Madhya Pradesh. In 1951, the Maharaja of Rewa had found the first white tiger cub who was captured and kept in Govindgarh fort till its death in 1970. ‘Mohan’ was bred and his lineage can be traced in various zoos in the country.

“White tigers were first found in Rewa forest and because of that reason locals are emotionally attached with these feline beauties,” said Chief Wildlife Warden H S Pabla. “Moreover, since they are the centre of attraction at zoos, we are planning to have this breeding centre in an area spread over 100 hectares,” he said. “After the approval from the Centre, we will now approach the Supreme Court for permission for establishing the breeding centre,” he added.

Meanwhile MEF Jairam Ramesh has suggested that the project could be in collaboration with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) which is presently overseeing conservation and management of tigers in the wild.

Source: ‘White tigers to be re-introduced into the wild’, *PTI, The Hindu*, June 16, 2010

Comment: *White tigers are not an ‘endangered species’ as repeatedly reported. They are the offshoot of a recessive mutant gene. There are none in the wild. The captive population of white tigers today has been bred in incaptivity because ‘they look attractive.’ They have zero conservation value, so where is the rationale behind breeding white tigers? Why concentrate on, and pour funds in such inane schemes when our tiger reserves remain starved of funds and focus?*

Tiger cub found dead in Kanha

A female tiger cub was found dead on June 6, 2010 in the Sondar area in Kisli range of Kanha Tiger Reserve. A cut was found on the cub’s stomach possibly indicating that it had been killed by a carnivore.

Source: June 6, 2010, *Press Trust of India*

24 tigers die in three years in MP reserves

Twenty-four tigers died in various reserves in the state in the last three years, the Madhya Pradesh Minister for Environment and Forests Sartaj Singh informed the state assembly on June 15. In a written reply to a question the Minister said that ten of these were adult tigers comprising six males and four females while remaining 14 were cubs. Kanha had the maximum mortality at 12 followed by six in Bandhavgarh, five in Pench and one in Satpura. Most of the tigers were killed in territorial fights while some died of various diseases or age, he added. Two tigers, including a cub, were killed after being hit by vehicles in Bandhavgarh, the Minister said.

Source: “24 tigers died in 3 years in various Madhya Pradesh reserves” July 20, 2010, Bhopal, Sartaj Singh, *The Hindu; PTI; www.sanctuaryasia.com*

THE PANNA RELOCATION UPDATE

Cubs missing, killed by father?

Three of the four cubs born to the Panna tigress who was relocated from Bandhavgarh, went missing in the beginning of September. One of the cubs eventually found its way back to the mother, but the remaining two cubs could not be located.

Two tigresses, one each from Kanha and Bandhavgarh, and a tiger from Panch were shifted to Panna in 2009, as part of a project to repopulate the reserve that had lost all its tigers. In April this year, the Bandhavgarh tigress was found with a litter of four, making it the first incident of success for the repopulation project.

While the department was initially hopeful that the two ‘lost’ cubs will be found soon, it is feared that they are dead, killed by their own father- the only male tiger in Panna. Field Director SR Murthy however, found it “intriguing” that the father could have killed its own cubs. Male tigers are known to kill cubs fathered by other tigers in order to bring tigresses into heat and start their own lineage, but have been documented to be affectionate and protective to their own cubs.

Official reports point out that the conflict was the result of an inexplicable intervention, in violation of the basics of cat biology, by a joint team of the forest department and Wildlife Institute of India that monitors the three reintroduced tigers in Panna. The field director, in a letter to the CWW, has admitted that the male tiger had approached the mother and the cubs soon after they were born, but the monitoring staff did not allow the meeting that is essential for natural familiarisation. The cubs were born between 14th and 15th April, but shockingly, it took the monitoring team four months to get “technical and scientific opinions from all quarters and the project team of WII” before the father was allowed to meet the tigress and cubs on 19th August. There were repeated fights between them once they were allowed to meet.

In a meeting of the NTCA board/experts held on September 16, it was strongly felt that the natural process/social interaction amongst tigers should not be interfered with since this prevents familiarisation between the resident male and the offspring. It was also pointed out that there have been many observations in the field where the resident male tiger, who had sired the litter, tolerates the presence of its offsprings at times even sharing a kill.

“Someone needs to explain how such a decision to keep the father away was taken under the nose of top forest officials and in the presence of experts from WII,” said tiger expert Valmik Thapar.

Concerned by the undue interference which may have resulted in the tragic death of the two cubs, mortality, **the NTCA will also issue an advisory to Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh stressing that monitoring must be unobtrusive, taking care not to disturb the natural interaction amongst reintroduced tigers in the habitat.**

Two more tigresses for Panna

Two more tigresses will be translocated into Panna soon. “We are going to get two more tigresses in two months in Panna,” Field Director RS Murthy said, adding that a male tiger will be brought in later into the reserve. The two tigresses in question are around five-years-old and will be brought from Kanha Tiger Reserve. They had lost their mother, probably to poaching, and were being ‘brought up’ in a huge enclosure in Mukki in Kanha.

NTCA has agreed to this proposal but has insisted on certain safeguards. The tigresses can only be relocated if they are successfully making natural kills within the enclosure. They must be reintroduced in the Panna plateau area, away from the natal area occupied by the tigress who has littered recently, and they must be monitored continuously in an unobtrusive manner using radio telemetry, through a technical monitoring team. Daily monitoring reports must be submitted. The state has been advised to also monitor cattle kills and ensure prompt payment.

Source: A *TigerLink* report, & “Killing Panna’s poster cubs”, Jay Mazoomdaar, *Open*, September 15, 2010

Tigers in Kuno?

For years, the Kuno-Palpur sanctuary awaited to receive the Asiatic lions. A lot of effort went into making the lion’s second home in India ready, including rehabilitating about 1,500 families from within the core, but Gujarat has consistently refused to part with its pride.

Now it appears, tigers are ready to populate the Kuno park again—even if only for a while. Two sub-adult tigers from the Bor sanctuary in Maharashtra who have been captive—and reared in-situ, have been proposed to be released in Kuno, which was the historical range of tigers. It is proposed that they may be later translocated to Sariska at an appropriate time after ascertaining their genetic compatibility.

MAHARASHTRA

Fatal conflict continues in Tadoba landscape

In yet another incident of man-animal conflict, a farmer from Pittichuha village in Chimur *tehsil* was mauled by a tiger on the evening of August 22. It is suspected to be the same tiger who had killed a person in compartment no. 24 of Chimur range close to Minzari village on April 1.” Forest officials have given ex-gratia amount for funeral formalities, while the compensation of Rs 2 lakh would be given to the kin of the deceased

after necessary formalities. In 2010, 12 people were killed in man-animal conflict, of which 11 were in Chandrapur district and one in Nagpur division. The man animal conflict has resulted in 67 human deaths over the last four years.

Just a week before this tragedy on August 15, high drama was witnessed near Bothli (Shirpur) village in Brahmपुरi division after a full-grown tiger moved out of the jungle and sat in the paddy fields in an adjoining village. It became a law and order situation as a crowd of about 2,000 people gathered. They tried to drive the tiger away and the tiger injured six people (fortunately, not seriously) who got close.

Comment: *First there is a need to understand why the conflict. As has been highlighted in the earlier issue of TigerLink, this landscape is plagued by man-tiger conflict. Tadoba, like most reserves is an islanded oasis for tigers, with over 40 tigers within its 625 sq km. But the landscape and corridors are degraded and fragmented by mines, thermal powers plants, an irrigation project, towns. Besides, there is huge anthropogenic pressure on the forests around the reserve. Nearly 10,000 families live in 60 villages around Tadoba, and most depend on bamboo extraction for their livelihood. Cattle pressure is another serious concern.*

The conflict needs to be mitigated by management inputs in this human dominated landscape. Action on illegal agricultural encroachments and MFP extraction in the forests has to be prioritised along with water management for wildlife surviving in these areas.

There are no less than 20 tigers in the forests surrounding Tadoba, including breeding tigresses. As this forest is not a protected area, it comes under the management of a territorial division. The need of the hour is to extend the area of Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve and bring it under unified control of the field director. This will give focus to management and protection issues and on strategy to mitigate conflict.

The state forest department has commenced 'Corridor Conservation Programme' in 2008 in collaboration with Tiger Research and Conservation Trust (TRACT) to mitigate the conflict between man and large carnivores. It is understood that the areas under this programme have had an impact in the past two years due to intensive field monitoring and sensitising the villagers.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, TRACT

GOOD NEWS

Buffer zones for Melghat, Pench

Buffer zones for the Pench and Melghat tiger reserves have been identified by the state and sent to NTCA for approval. They now await notification, and it is hoped that the state will hasten the process, given that the Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan announced his intention to notify buffers for both reserves on being presented the 'Tiger Agenda'—urgent steps required by the states to be taken for conservation—by the NDTV-Aircel Save Our Tigers campaign.

Chavan also stated that the state would not allow the widening of roads in forest areas and that wherever possible, national highways will be realigned.

Source: NDTV, 16, September 2010, Mumbai

Cops approach tigress, suspended

Four policemen who ventured dangerously close to a tigress in Nagzira National Park were suspended for flouting wildlife regulations. The four policemen—head constables Rajesh There, Ramu Bawne, Ghanshyam Ingle and driver Ranjit Dhurve have been charged with violating the Wildlife Protection Act. The charges include carrying weapons inside the sanctuary, entering without proper authorisation, alighting from the vehicle and stepping close to a Schedule I animal, according to the Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Gondia, Madan Kulkarni.

The four, attached to the Bhandara district police headquarters, left their official vehicles and went very close to a tigress in an attempt to get a picture on their mobile phone cameras while she was resting in a waterhole. The four disembarked along with their weapons and cameras and moved towards the tigress. The tigress apparently mock charged following which they got back in their vehicle. A group of tourists, who were present at the spot, informed forest officials about the incident.

Source: June 16, 2010, IANS; www.sify.com

Make Mansinghdeo part of Pench TR

Six new protected areas have been proposed in Maharashtra in lieu of the reduction of the area of the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) Sanctuary from about 8,500 sq. km to 1,223 sq km. The decision to reduce the area of the GIB Sanctuary was taken by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).

The Central Committee on Reconciliation of Boundaries of Protected Areas recommended that the GIB Sanctuary may be reduced subject to the condition that other suitable areas in the state would be included in the protected area network.

One of these is the **Mansinghdeo (182.29 sq. kms), which adjoins Pench Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra. The state has been dragging its feet over the creation of Mansingh Deo sanctuary since about a decade. In fact, it was in 1999 that the then Minister for Environment and Forests Suresh Prabhu proposed that Mansingh Deo be notified as a sanctuary and included as part of Pench Tiger Reserve.**

Don't reduce sanctuary size: MoEF

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has cautioned the Maharashtra government against any move to curtail the area of proposed Mansinghdeo Wildlife Sanctuary, adjoining Pench Tiger Reserve. Such a move would lead to holding back the denotification of the GIB (Nannaj) Sanctuary. The National Board for Wildlife had asked the state to notify six sanctuaries including Mansinghdeo in lieu of reducing the area of 8,500 sq km bustard sanctuary in Nannaj to 1,200 sq km. **In a letter to Chief Minister Ashok Chavan on July 28, MEF Jairam Ramesh said that his ministry may keep denotification of the bustard sanctuary in abeyance if there was any move to reduce the area of Mansinghdeo sanctuary.** The problem is that the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) is unwilling to give up its stake in the forest, so the state has taken a decision to reduce the proposed Mansinghdeo sanctuary area from 182 sq km to around 143 sq km. This has been condemned by conservationists who argue that the areas most crucial for tiger have been deleted from the reserve. The FDCM area is prime tiger habitat and without it, the sanctuary will have little meaning.

“The state is planning to reduce the best forest area which has connectivity to Nagzira, Pench, Tadoba and Melghat. This will be disastrous for wildlife,” said M K Ranjitsinh, eminent conservationist and chairman Wildlife Trust of India. Ideally, the area should be enlarged to 230 sq km by adding some more forest area.

Source: ‘MoEF warns state govt on Mansinghdeo pruning’ *The Times of India*, August 30, 2010’

Build eight underpasses on NH6

In a bid to mitigate damage to wildlife and to wildlife corridors resulting from the four-laning of NH-6 in an

80 km patch in Bhandara and Gondia divisions, construction of eight underpasses have been recommended to the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). The recommendation comes from two consultants RN Indurkar, former chief conservator of forests for wildlife, and SS Deshpande, ex-assistant conservator of forests.

The consultants have recommended eight underpasses of 10 feet height and 20 feet width at every two kilometres in the forest stretch. Other measures of the mitigation plan include fencing, water conservation works and providing a tractor-tanker fitted with a pump for Navegaon National Park.

The NHAI is implementing the four-lane project stretching from Chhattisgarh border to Wainganga Bridge near Bhandara. Of the total 80 km project stretch, about 24 km passes through forests. The four-laning will cut the corridor between Nagzira-Navegaon and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). Wildlife Trust of India had moved Centrally Empowered Committee of the supreme court in June 2009.

Source: August 18, 2010, Nagpur, Vijay Pinjarkar, *TNN*; www.sanctuaryasia.com

Comment: *A report by the regional office (Bhopal) of the MoEF in response to a complaint filed by Wildlife Trust of India notes that:*

Navegaon National Park is within 10 kms from the project area. At one point, the boundary of the Park is about 700 m. though this was misrepresented in the report submitted by the concerned DCF in 2008, which said that the highway project is beyond 10 km of the national park.

- *While granting felling permission, the concerned authorities have shown apathy to the fact that the stretch passes through a vital wildlife corridor.*
- *The concerned officers have completely overlooked the fact that the areas where trees have been felled and road widened pass through dense forest of canopy density more than 0.4 and hence come under the purview of the FCA, 1980.*
- *While, the proposal has been made for four-laning of the present two-lane highway, it was informed by the officers of NHAI that the proposal was actually for six-laning, which would eventually take place in the future.*
- *If underpasses are to be constructed in the existing road, then the level of the road would need to be raised—but most of the construction is already complete*

Nagzira to be declared tiger reserve?

A decade old proposal to upgrade Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary in Gondia district into a tiger reserve got a fillip when MEF Jairam Ramesh promised to act on the same, during his visit to Nagpur on 13th September. Chief Minister Ashok Chavan has also reacted positively and had asked officials to keep the proposal ready for consideration by the MEF during his visit. Ramesh had earlier written twice to the state on expediting the proposal.

The forests of Nagzira-Navegaon along with the Bor wildlife Sanctuary form a vital tiger habitat that is linked with the Pench, Kanha, Tadoba-Andhari and further to Indravati tiger reserve. Together these form one of the largest intact landscapes available for tiger conservation. A state panel, on August 10, 2009, has already approved it as a critical tiger habitat (CTH). Looking at Nagzira's tiger potential, the Wildlife Institute of India had recommended in 1988 to upgrade the sanctuary into a national park. A committee on reorganisation on boundaries for wildlife sanctuaries and national parks under Ranjitsinh had also made a similar recommendation.

Source: 'Nagzira tiger reserve proposal before govt,' Vijay Pinjarkar, *TNN*, Sep 17, 2010

Tadoba staff protests increased tourist inflow

From April 24-30th April, the staff at Tadoba Andhari Tiger reserve staged a black badge protest in protest that there weren't sufficient employees to handle the reserve's increasing tourist flow and asked for more recruitment for the purpose.

On May 1 & 2, all staff from Round Officer downwards went on a non-cooperation drive to press for their demands.

ORISSA

Elephant poaching rocks Similipal TR

The Similipal Tiger Reserve was shaken by the **discovery of over a dozen elephant carcasses in April and May 2010**. Biswajit Mohanty of the Wildlife Society of Orissa and other activists questioned the role of forest department and why the carcasses were not discovered even as an elephant census was going on at the time. It was also alleged that the forest staff were conniving with poachers and destroying evidence by burning the carcasses. Three staffers were suspended following the incident.

Alarmed by the high incidence of poaching the National Tiger Conservation Authority appointed a fact

finding team comprising of Belinda Wright of the Wildlife Protection Society of India and Biswajit Mohanty.

The team visited the reserve between June 6th-11th **and found seven carcasses**. In some of the cases the field staff were aware of the elephant deaths but chose not to report them; rather they deliberately attempted to conceal the elephant deaths/poaching incidents by destroying the evidence. **The death of 14 elephants was confirmed and a few more were suspected to have occurred**. It was found that the elephants had been poisoned at saltlicks and that not only tuskers, but females and calves had also been killed. Tusks were removed from the male elephant who succumbed to the poison. The team also noted very little animal presence in the reserve and said that they did not see a single tusker despite driving over 100 km a day inside the reserve. They also found evidence of mass hunting, known as *akhand shikar* going on in a rampant scale with bands of 100-200 local hunters invading the reserve. The forest staff appeared to be thoroughly unmotivated and demoralised, and that after last year's concerted attack on the forest infrastructure, many of the protection beat houses in the national park are yet to be re-occupied.

In its report to the NTCA, the team has entailed ten recommendations as 'immediate priority' and 25 others as 'regular priority'. These include the **setting up a wildlife crime intelligence gathering system, rewards to informers, a special fund of Rs 2 lakh per DFO every year for carrying out enforcement raids, filling up of vacant posts, increasing motivation of the staff and enlisting community support for conservation**. The reserve has taken an especially bad beating in the year following March 2009, when it was attacked by extremists, causing field staff to flee posts for months together.

Source: June 2, 2010, Bhubaneswar, *TNN*; June 3, 2010, New Delhi, Moushumi Basu, *The Pioneer*; July 12, 2010, Bhubaneswar, *The Indian Express*; July 29, 2010, New Delhi, *The Pioneer*; August 2, 2010, Bhubaneswar, *The Indian Express*

The full report can be read at: http://projecttiger.nic.in/whtsnew/Similipal%20Report_June%202010_FINAL2.pdf

Report from the field: Similipal

One of the finest tiger reserves earlier, Similipal is now besieged by problems, and virtually stands at death's door. Poaching is at its peak—as has been seen by the horrific spate of elephant deaths. Similipal remained unprotected for many months following an attack by leftwing extremists in March '09. It took a great deal of effort to convince the staff to get back to their posts,

and some camps were only occupied by March 2010. **There is a staff shortage of about 35 per cent, and at any given point a third are down with malaria. The staff is highly demoralised and demotivated.** New staff has been recruited. Some of these are women, and while it is a positive, progressive move, fact is we aren't doing either the women, or the park any favours by that 33 per cent reservation, not here. They have been posted in core area—there is simply no option as the field director has only the core under his jurisdiction. The women guards are unwilling to serve in such remote posts, which lack even basic facilities. They also cannot be posted in a *chowki* alone, which stresses the already short staff. **Also, the staff functions without weapons, which renders them ineffectual especially against large hunting groups.** Mass poaching has been a chronic problem in Similipal—elephant poaching has always been an issue, and the 'tradition' of *akhand shikar* is well-documented. The casual labour employed by the department for protection is substandard, untrained, underpaid and lacks commitment. The need to improve the protection mechanisms cannot be stressed enough. It is imperative that the **staff be given facilities—for instance a special risk allowance—so that they are motivated to work in the forest.**

The **root problem is that there is no unified command over Similipal Tiger Reserve. The field director has only the 'old' core area under him—not even the entire core critical tiger habitat,** while the Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) at Mayurbhanj commands the buffer, and other territorial ranges around. The DFOs report directly to the RCCF. There is little coordination between the two, and the management of the park suffers seriously compromising protection and monitoring. Most of the threats of Similipal emanate from the buffer, as villages are concentrated there. Both for protection and intelligence gathering and for building support for conservation from local communities through eco-development activities, **it is crucial that the entire reserve be brought under the control of the field director with immediate effect.** That this hampers protection is evident in the way the elephant poaching case has become a big mess, with lack of info sharing and other communication issues. It is learnt that the field director has written to the PCCF requesting for unified command in the interest of the park. He has requested that the government may move to make the RCCF the field director, if desired, for effective administration and protection of Similipal.

The problems of Similipal have not occurred happened overnight—not even the naxal attack, which may well have the proverbial last straw on the camel's

back. What is witnessed now is the snowball impact of years of indifference to protection and wildlife concerns.

One major achievement has been the shifting of the Jenabil village from the heart of the reserve. Old Jenabil is now a rich meadow with a perennial water source...restored to wildlife. A visit to the relocated site showed that the villagers have settled well—the children are going to school, there is a functional *anganwadi*, a mobile health clinic visits daily—and while the villagers are currently roughing it out in temporary shelters, they are upbeat as they are building their houses themselves. 61 families have been relocated under the new rehab package. There may be a few procedural hiccups, but as of now, the picture looks positive on this front.

At the time of going to press, the central funding has not been reached the park. It is learnt that the money from the finance ministry has not yet reached the NTCA.

Prerna Singh Bindra

No management focus in Satkosia

There appears to be little focus on tiger reserves in Orissa. Though Satkosia has been declared a tiger reserve in 2007, **no field director has yet been appointed for the reserve.** When attention of the state was directed to the fact, the CCF, Angul was given additional charge as field director of Satkosia. He has under him six territorial divisions, and one wildlife division—this is the 'Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary, which constitutes 795 sq km. The 170 sq km Baissipalli Wildlife also part of the reserve is under the administration of CF, Bhubaneswar circle. It gets worse, and even more convoluted: the DFOs of both parts of the reserve also are not 'exclusive', but in addition to the reserve have territorial divisions under them. **The result is there is no coordination between the various levels and divisions, little attention to the tiger reserve and complete lack of focus.** The knowledge and understanding of tiger and wildlife issues is *abysmal* at all levels to say the least. There is no monitoring of tigers. Though the staff mentioned the presence of a breeding tigress, there was little information on the same. Officials said—on record—that there was little they could do beyond noting the presence of tigers. There is simply no concept of monitoring tigers—even tigresses with cubs.

Though one toured the reserve for nearly three days, there was little indication of wildlife. There were no signs of elephants, ungulates, save for the odd hoof mark and a lone sighting of four cheetal. There is no baseline data for prey base. Even elephant signs were scant.

Across the Satkosia gorge, in the Baissipalli sanctuary the situation is even worse. The concerned DFO

informed that about 30 anti-poaching watchers have been removed due to lack of funds". They say it is not required because there are very few elephants and tigers in this part of the reserve, anyway. However, fishermen in the Satkosa gorge say that elephants regularly cross, and the very occasional tiger has been seen swimming across the gorge.

There is a PWD road from NH 42 (Cuttack-Sambalpur) to Tikarpada which terminates at the Satkosa gorge, inside the reserve. Traffic on the road is rarely regulated, and while it serves a useful purpose to cater to the local villages, it is used heavily by tourists and picnickers who whiz at high speed on the road. Traffic is heavy throughout the day and especially so from November to February. There is no reason why it should continue to remain with the PWD, and must be transferred to the forest department, and the traffic regulated. The central funds had not been received till August though the letter of intent has arrived in August and will be available shortly.

It must be mentioned that both Simlipal and Satkosa still have excellent habitat that can support good prey base and tiger, with sound protection, and urgent and appropriate management interventions.

Prerna Singh Bindra

Brutunga project threatens Satkosa

The day the elephant was proposed as the 'national heritage animal', the MoEF also gave clearance to a major irrigation project in Nayagarh district, which cuts through a vital elephant corridor and borders the Satkosa TR. The dam will submerge over 1,500 ha in the Mahanadi Elephant Reserve bordering the Baissipalli Wildlife Sanctuary, which is part of the Satkosa Tiger Reserve. Apart from the large reservoir, a 12 km long canal will be dug to link the Brutunga reservoir with the Kuanria reservoir, nine km from the town of Daspalla.

According to surveys carried out by Wild Orissa, every summer about 150 elephants migrate from the Mahanadi ER to forests that are part of the South Orissa (proposed) Elephant Reserve and return back to Mahanadi with the onset of the monsoon. Apart from providing the elephants with rich forage over a large area, this migration facilitates a vital genetic exchange between the central Orissa elephant population and the south Orissa elephant population. Brutunga valley, the only available pass for them to cross over into south Orissa, will be drowned by the reservoir and the canal. Apart from effectively islanding the central Orissa elephants, the implementation of the Brutunga project will lead to a severe escalation in human-elephant conflict in the region. The tiger too, is under threat from

this project. The forest forms an important 'sink' for the tigers of Satkosa. Not only do tigers from Satkosa spill over into these forests, this connectivity is also the only hope for the large ranging, low density population of tigers that still inhabits these unprotected forests. The Satkosa link might be their only escape from a genetic dead end.

Aditya Panda, Wild Orissa

CAMPA funds diverted for afforestation

Reports have come in from various states that CAMPA funds are being poured into plantations, afforestation even though the CAMPA guidelines clearly specify that funds should be used for wildlife protection, restoration and regeneration of degraded forests and for meeting the financial needs of protected areas.

Orissa was among the states which got the maximum money from CAMPA. Not only is this actively being put into afforestation and plantation, but ground vegetation and forest undergrowth has been cleared in various reserve forests to make way for plantations funded by CAMPA. This was brought to the notice of the MoEF by National Board of Wildlife member Biswajit Mohanty. If we were to consider the allocation to Satkosa Tiger reserve, the Satkosa Wildlife Division has received about Rs 83 lakhs for afforestation and infrastructure, for wildlife management the amount was Rs 6.7 lakh, though only 3.7 lakh was spent. There is an additional Rs 23 lakh provision for infrastructure and communications which includes everything from provision of wireless to making interpretation centre. Since central funding had not been received, adhoc provisions were made to make CAMPA funds available for payment to daily wagers.

In the Mahanadi Wildlife Division of Satkosa TR Rs 45,25,000 was provided for afforestation and reforestation as well as infrastructure activities, while that for wildlife management was barely 6.5 lakhs. Of this about 4.5 lakhs was utilised. In this division, 30 watchers were removed due to lack of funds. Here, money wasn't used from CAMPA to continue the protection staff, it was explained that there is no provision in CAMPA to give payment to daily wagers.

It is reported that Orissa had received Rs 131 crores (first installment of the total allocation of 231 crores) for the financial year 2009-10 towards Compensatory Afforestation and Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds from the Centre. From 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.”

A *TigerLink* report

Kuldiha under attack

Local villagers ransacked a forest rest house in the Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary, adjoining the Similipal Tiger Reserve on May 30. A complaint was lodged by watcher Abhi Singh who was injured in the attack at the Nilagiri police station. He said that around 150 armed people from ten nearby villages attacked the FRH 11.00 am, damaging equipment like VHF sets, solar chargers, furniture, etc.

Following the incident, DFO KK Swain conducted meetings in three gram panchayats in an effort to initiate dialogue with the agitators. The villagers' antagonism emanated from the closure of around 56 stone quarries in the region following a Supreme Court directive. They protested the restrictions imposed on hunting and collection of forest produce. There had been another such attack in July 2009.

Source: *Express News Service*, Balasore, May 31, 2010; June 20, 2010

One killed in firing by ranger

One person was killed near the Similipal Tiger Reserve when a range officer opened fire in self-defence while under attack from timber smugglers.

On August 14, a gang of timber smugglers *gheraoed* and started to beat and abuse the Range Officer, Bangiriposi, Ram Chandra Murmu demanding the release of two smugglers. The RO and his team had caught the two red handed while they were stealing timber from Similipal earlier. When Murmu refused to concede to the gang's demands, they started physically assaulting him. Following this, Murmu fired a blank round from his service revolver in order to disperse the mob. But this did not work, and the offenders continued to assault the ranger who was forced to fire a second round that inadvertently hit one Jagadish Giri (30) who succumbed in hospital.

A case under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (culpable homicide amounting to murder) and Section 25/27 of the Arms Act was registered against Murmu at the Bangiriposi police station on 15th August.

Tension built up in the region following the incident and the villagers staged a *rasta roko* on NH 6, the Kolkata -Mumbai highway. They demanded a cash compensation of Rs 50,000 for the next of kin of the victim and employment for the victim's brother in the forest department, besides immediate release of the two smugglers and arrest of Murmu under murder charges.

Source: A *TigerLink* report, inputs by *UNI*

Comment: *It is understood that the Government Order covering the weapon specifies that the revolver was allocated for self-protection, in which case he has acted within the parameters of the GO, and the case should not have been registered under Section 302.*

This incident is a glaring example of the lack of empowerment given to foresters to discharge their duty. The ranger used his service revolver in self-defence while on duty but has been charged with murder. He is currently absconding and making provisions for anticipatory bail. He will also be expected to fight the case at his own cost. Such victimisation for doing diligent duty serves as a major deterrent and demotivates foresters to take on smugglers and poachers, who are well-armed. Timber smuggling is a very serious problem in Similipal, and in most reserves—and the smugglers have the power of big, organised mafias behind them.

RAJASTHAN

Tigers shifted to Sariska, controversy follows

In a joint exercise, the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Rajasthan Forest Department and the Wildlife Institute of India shifted a fourth tiger to Sariska on 20 July. One week later on 28th July, a young 30-month-old female was brought in by air. The number of tigers in Sariska is now five and the translocation of the last two animals marks the completion of the first phase of the tiger reintroduction programme. According to Dr Rajesh Gopal, member secretary, NTCA, the tigers will be monitored for breeding success for two years and there shall be no more translocations in the meantime. If necessary, a male and female may be introduced every second year in future. The tigers have been radio collared and are being monitored closely.

There has been a 17-month moratorium since the last tiger was shifted in February 2009. It is understood that the delay was due to “a thorough scientific exercise that was necessary to ascertain genetic compatibility” after the first three tigers shifted to Sariska turned out to be siblings and also failed to breed. When, the officials claimed, the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) finally cleared two tigers for relocation after matching the DNA of the Ranthambhore tigers with the ones shifted to Sariska, the operation was resumed.

However, **it is doubtful that the tigers shifted were the ones whose DNA was cleared for relocation.** DNA analysis is done either from blood or scat samples. WII scientists have been involved in a radio-collaring exercise in Ranthambhore for more than

three years. Though it is mandatory to collect blood when a tiger is tranquilised for radio-collaring, no blood sample was sent to NCBS. So the DNA tests were done with scats and two samples were found suitable. However, it is unclear which tigers' scat was collected for DNA—nobody saw any tiger defecating while collecting the samples! There were about six tigers—four males and two females that frequent the area from where the tigers were airlifted. So the choice was more random, and convenient, rather than a scientific one based on the DNA samples.

Conservationists argue **that 'the wrong tigers' have been translocated, which will upset the 'tiger society' of Ranthambhore. Within 48 hours of receiving the NCBS report, without even trying to ascertain which individual was actually cleared by the DNA test, the officials picked up a male-T12. He was six-years-old, had an established territory and was one of the four dominant males of Ranthambhore.**

Besides, there were other males in the same area, who were 'floaters' without established territories. NTCA directive prohibited shifting settled, territorial tigers and allowed relocation of young floaters still on the lookout for territories.

On 28 July, days after shifting T12, officials sent a tigress to Sariska (T44) who has been witnessed—and photographed mating. If she is indeed pregnant, her cubs will be doomed in Sariska in the absence of their father. So will be the cubs of the tigress that paired with T12 days before he was removed from Ranthambhore.

Jay Mazoomdar writes in *Tehelka* that **scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India have also objected to the choice of animals. They claim that while the tigers were scanned genetically through DNA tests from their scats at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore, the actual selection of the individuals was done from camera-trapped images.** There are high chances that the scats and photographs might not be those of the same individual tigers. This could have been verified by collecting blood samples of the captured tigers, carrying out DNA tests on them and comparing the results with that of the earlier scat samples.

Source: July 21, 2010, Sariska, Neha Sinha, *Indian Express*; www.sanctuaryasia.com, July 30, 2010, Sariska, *The Hindu*; www.tigernet.nic.in, August 3, 2010, New Delhi, *The Pioneer*; www.tigernet.nic.in, Inputs from 'Some easy steps to kill tigers', Jay Mazoomdar, *Tehelka*

Conflict hits Ranthambhore

In a tragic series of events, three people have lost their lives to tiger attacks in the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve.

On July 3rd, a tiger killed one Ghamandi Saini when he went in to fell wood illegally in the Jhoomar Bawadi area inside the reserve. On August 13th, there was another death in Bhadlav forest closely followed by a fatal attack on 22-year-old Hemraj Gujjar. He was killed near the temple at Indala Dang in the reserve.

All these deaths have been in locations very far apart from each other, in various parts of the reserve, indicating that it was not one tiger. Forest officials said it would be difficult to pinpoint the individual tiger responsible for the attack since several different tigers used these areas. None of the bodies were eaten, but were abandoned, indicating that the tigers were not man-eaters.

Tiger Watch, an NGO based in Ranthambhore has stressed that it is the increasing disturbance in the park that has caused such acute conflict, which the park has not seen for years. As reported in the last *TigerLink*, there has been news of intense construction within the reserve, even in the national park area—earthmovers, excavators and dumpers were continuously at work even in Kachida valley, which is an excellent tiger habitat with breeding tigresses. It was this disturbance perhaps that caused the first human fatality of the year when March, when a tiger killed a horse owner—who tried to defend his horse which the tiger had attacked. This took place in Kachida valley, and the horse was being used to transport some construction material. Tiger Watch reports that there is additional disturbance due to the hordes of pilgrims which enter the temple daily—on foot, and even in canters. Increased illegal mining has also been reported from around the reserve.

Meanwhile, an amount of Rs 1 lakh would be paid to by the government as ex-gratia to the families of the victims.

Source: August 17, 2010, Jaipur and August 21, 2010, Rachna Singh, *TNN*, TigerWatch,

Ranger injured in tiger attack

Daulat Singh Shaktawat, a Range Officer in Ranthambhore was seriously injured in an attack by a tiger on 20th August, and had to be airlifted to Jaipur for treatment.

The incident was triggered by mob that reacted to a tiger killing a calf early that morning. Incensed, the villagers reportedly attacked the tiger with stones, rocks etc and managed to retrieve the (dead) calf. The forest department was informed, and arrived with the police in about two hours. By then about 1,500 villagers had

collected, and they targetted their fury on the forest department. In a futile attempt to calm the situation, the forest officials tried to tranquilise the tiger and two darts were fired. However, the tiger was hiding in a three-foot crop of millet and Daulat Singh tried to ascertain whether the dart had hit—on foot—and walked to nearly 15 feet away from the tiger, when the big cat attacked him. He was mauled severely, and was rushed to the Sawai Madhopur Hospital, which did not have even basic facilities to handle such an emergency. There was no electricity, leave alone a sterilised operation theatre. He had to be airlifted for emergency medical aid to Jaipur. He is reportedly out of danger but has tragically lost vision in one of his eyes.

Comment: *The key question is the strategy: Why was the decision taken to tranquilise the tiger? Who gave the order for the tranquilisation? Cattle grazing is a major issue in Ranthambhore—with thousands of cattle going into the reserve every monsoon. Tigers foraging out of the reserve and lifting cattle is also a routine occurrence. The management should have been prepared to handle this. Why wasn't the focus on mitigating the situation, rather than allowing for it to build up to such a mob-like scenario? Conciliation to diffuse the situation should have been the focus, not moving in an army of foresters and police, which only served to make matters worse. There is always a mob fury in cattle case incidents but it can be diffused to a large extent with dialogue, negotiation and provision for immediate compensation. Most NGOs have money for such ad-hoc purposes, and can play a key role in helping diffuse the hostility. Immediate compensation can be paid through an NGO, as government formalities take some time. As has been highlighted before, such a scheme has been successfully undertaken by WWF in collaboration with Corbett Foundation in the Corbett landscape.*

Why was RFO Daulat Singh's life risked—first by being allowed to approach so close to the tiger on foot, and then by him being carted off to an ill-equipped hospital miles away when the best facilities were on hand on the main road through which they passed?

Obama likely to visit Ranthambhore

During his visit to India in November, US President Barack Obama is likely to go on a safari to the Ranthambhore National Park with his wife Michelle. As is well-known, Obama's daughters Malia and Sasha are fascinated by tigers. They were excited about the India trip and the chance to spot tigers after US

ambassador Timothy Roemer's kids told them how they had encountered four tigers in Ranthambhore. Unfortunately, they are not accompanying the President on his visit.

Although the final itinerary of the American first couple is yet to be announced, sources have confirmed this news. Reportedly, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who may also accompany the couple, made this suggestion. She had visited Ranthambhore in March 2000 with her husband, the then US President Bill Clinton.

Source: Akhilesh Kumar Singh, *Times of India*, September 15, 2010, Jaipur

TAMIL NADU

Veerappan lair a sanctuary for tigers?

The Sathyamangalam forest, known as the place from where the notorious sandalwood smuggler Veerappan operated, has been proposed as a tiger reserve. In a letter to the Chief Minister Thiru Karunanidhi dated July 16, MEF Jairam Ramesh urged the CM to propose Sathyamangalam Wildlife Sanctuary as a tiger reserve as it is rich in wildlife with a sound population of tigers. Ramesh pointed out that Sathyamangalam wildlife Sanctuary is contiguous to Chamrajnagar-Mudumalai-Bandipur and has tremendous potential to hold a good source population of tigers. If it comes under Project Tiger, it would benefit from central assistance and get the necessary focus required to secure the area.

Mudumalai buffer zone mooted

Sparks flew at a meeting held at Ooty on 8th July to discuss the proposed declaration of a buffer zone around the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve. Convened by an ad-hoc Expert Committee that was created following strong protest by locals against the creation of a buffer zone, it was attended by concerned officials and residents of areas adjoining Mudumalai. Addressing the meeting, PCCF and head of the panel, R Sunderaraju said that the buffer zone would not exclude the rights of the villagers and ensure that forest dwellers co-exist harmoniously with the wild animals. Clarifying that the decisions of the forest department in matters relating to the buffer zone will not be unilateral, he said that such meetings are being convened to take the views of those concerned on board. He added that the villages in the vicinity may stand to benefit and enhance livelihood options as has been seen at the Kalakad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve.

Source: July 9, 2010, Ooty, *The Hindu*

UTTAR PRADESH

Crackdown on poachers in Dudhwa

In a crackdown, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve authorities have arrested no less than 40 people in the past six months mainly in timber smuggling cases, or with snares, metal traps, wires etc. Most of the cases have been diligently followed and the accused convicted, according to the park director, Sailesh Prasad. On August 14, they also arrested a poacher while he was attempting to escape to Nepal. The accused confessed to being involved in a tiger poaching case in 2008.

However, the reserve has been suffering from a severe resource crunch. Officials had to request for funds from NGOs and individuals for rations for watchers and trackers—who are the frontline staff and do foot patrols in the forest, vital for protection. They had not been paid for about eight months. The ex-army personnel, additionally deployed for protecting the tiger had not received their wages either, and most have fled the field. Dudhwa faced a huge flood in July-August, and though no animal casualty was reported, the park resources were severely stressed. With flooding, the park elephants couldn't forage, and their rations ran out too. Lack of funds compelled the forest department to send an SOS for funds for elephant rations. There is no money for fuel for patrolling, even for the director's jeep—they are running up tabs at the local station, or pitching in with personal funds.

Central funding had not reached the park till September since the state had failed to sign the tripartite agreement.

On September 15, UP signed the agreement and NTCA promptly released the money on the same day.

A TigerLink report, September 2010

Suhelwa devastated

The Suhelwa Wildlife Sanctuary, once celebrated for its tigers, is a picture of devastation today. The destruction is evident: rows of stumps, gutted vegetation, paucity of prey, grasslands degraded by cattle, constant traffic of people, silted water bodies, bone dry waterholes and the consistent, dull thud of the axe echoing in a silent forest. "Apathy and administrative weaknesses," admits a forest official, "have in recent years led to destruction of a magnitude that will finish the forest. And Suhelwa will be lost to the tiger..."

Suhelwa, a 127 km long, narrow strip of forest, is part of the Terai Arc Landscape, identified as one of the three most vital tiger habitats in India. Suhelwa, bordering Nepal, is a crucial link in the Terai. "Suhelwa cannot not be viewed in isolation," stresses Dr Bivash Pandav of WWF-International "It is contiguous to the

forests of Nepal and through Banke and Bardia national parks maintains connectivity to Dudhwa that goes all the way upto Rajaji National Park in Uttarakhand." This landscape is traversed across borders regularly by tigers, elephants and other wildlife. Recognising the significance of Suhelwa, the central government pushed for it to be declared as a tiger reserve but two years on, the state has taken little initiative. The indifference is evident with the Chief Wildlife Warden BK Patnaik shrugging off Suhelwa as a "narrow forest". He is also "unsure of the number of tigers and whether it (Suhelwa) can sustain tigers," thus contradicting his own department, which gives the 'official' number of tigers in the sanctuary as 25." The numbers seem inflated, with independent experts giving a conservative estimate of five to eight tigers in the sanctuary.

However, with no protection, the tigers are a sitting target. In July 2006, a tiger skin was seized in Tulsipur on the Indo-Nepal border near the sanctuary. Three leopard skins were also seized in the same month. Poaching of prey is common. The biotic pressure is immense, while ungulates are a rare sight, thousands of cattle roam the forest. Sand mining and quarrying goes on with impunity. The scale of illegal logging is massive—and the system of 'begar' prevails—under which casual forest labour is allowed to take wood out of the forest, instead of being paid wages. However, it is noted that wages are entered in the employment registers. The wood is sold commercially to the dozens of brick kilns that dot the landscape or are loaded in lorries for commercial markets well over a 100 km away."

While the sanctuary lies neglected, and protection nonexistent, forest roads—which only disturb wildlife—have been widened with NREGA funds. Admits a senior official, "While there is negligible support for wildlife, there is pressure to do work under NREGA from headquarters and political leaders. As it is the staff has little orientation towards wildlife, now their focus is on meeting NAREGA targets."

Even though a petition has been filed in the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee in 2004 by Niharika Singh, a conservationist based near the sanctuary, highlighting Suhelwa's plight, it has been of little avail. UP has barely five per cent of forest cover, and Suhelwa represents the last remaining tracts of *bhabar* forests in the country.

Source: Perna Singh Bindra, *The Pioneer*, July 29

Joint patrol in Dudhwa

In a unique operation, the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), a paramilitary border-guarding force, jointly patrol areas along the Nepal border once a month.

In Katarniaghat, which shares a 60 km border with Nepal, the SSB has set up 18 border outposts manned by about 700 personnel. Groups of 30 men in each of Katarniaghat's six ranges patrol the sanctuary area. The idea is to send a strong message that poaching and other illegal activities will not be tolerated and that the state is serious in dealing with the crime.

Source: DNA; June 7, 2010, www.tigernet.nic.in

Barasingha habitat swamped

Jhadi Taal, a critical refuge of the swamp deer, is under threat of submergence due to the changing course of river Sharda. About six decades ago, the river was 4.8 km from Jhaadi tal, but surveys indicate that it is now less than a kilometer away.

Spread over about 200 sq km, Jhadi Taal is a marshy grassland on the banks of the Sharda and is surrounded by the sal forests of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. It is home to an estimated 1,500 swamp deer and a study by the Wildlife Institute of India has suggested that this shifting of the river course presents a serious threat to the animals. High run-off and siltation rates have been observed in the river during the last 40 years. This has occurred primarily due to massive conversion of forests to agricultural land in the upper reaches of the river in Nepal during the 1960s and '70s and also because of river engineering works. These changes in land use have caused frequent and sudden changes in the river course.

Source: *Deccan Herald*, 24, March 2010

Revenue village in Dudhwa core

Surma, a forest, in the core area of Dudhwa National Park has now got the status of a 'Revenue Village' status from 'Forest Village' status despite being inside the core of a Protected Area. This was reportedly done under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

Ironically, The UP High Court, under the Wildlife Protection Act had issued orders to get the land vacated. The process of relocation had also begun with allotment of land to the tribals outside the reserve as compensation. But, on the pretext that the land provided outside was already occupied by other tribal families, The Forest Rights Act, 2006, was brought into the picture and 864 acres inside the Dudhwa National Park is now transferred into a 'Revenue Village'.

Source: February 15, 2010, Lucknow, Asish Tripathy, *The Times of India*

Comments: *It is strange how one arm of the government acts contrary to the other. The Allahbad High Court had issued an order of removal of villages from the Dudhwa, included those from Katarniaghat Sanctuary. Unfortunately, that order*

has not been implemented in over a decade, which could be due to lack of initiative of the forest department or apathy at district level or political pressure. Advantage must be taken of the Rs. 10 lakh and relocation initiated.

The legality of notifying Surma as revenue village may be in question if the area has been notified as core critical tiger habitat prior to 1st January 2007.

Fatal Conflict in Pilibhit

Pilibhit, and the adjoining Shahjahanpur forest division continues to be plagued by fatal man-tiger conflict—from May 3rd to August 26th, eight people were killed by a tiger in Deoria Range of Pilibhit Forest Division, and in Shahjahanpur forest division.

Forest officials are camping in different villages of Kishenpur and Shahjahanpur to allay the fear of the locals. Every effort is being made to trap the tiger. Camera traps have also been installed. A team of veterinarian and biologist from Wildlife Trust of India is camping there in an effort to tranquilise the tiger.

The families of the victims will get the Rs one lakh compensation when the formalities are over, though there is demand for more. Mithlesh Kumar, MP (Samajwadi Party) had demanded they be given Rs 10 lakh instead. People have taken to the streets—taking their vengeance out on the forest officials—and attempted to set fire to the forest vehicles.

Dr Rajesh Gopal, Member Secretary of NTCA who visited Pilibhit has urged for the tiger not to be labeled a man eater. In a meeting with the UP wildlife officials, who had strict orders from CM's office that no more killings will be tolerated, he had argued that there wasn't enough evidence to say that the same tiger killed all eight victims.

Source: Tiger kills man in Uttar Pradesh, IANS, 'Maneater of Pilibhit', Praveen Donthi, *Hindustan Times*, September 11, 2010

UTTARAKHAND

Dhoni bats for the tiger

Indian skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been chosen brand ambassador of Uttarakhand's Tiger Conservation Mission as part of NDTV-Aircel 'Save the Tiger' campaign.

He was also appointed Honourary Wildlife Warden of Corbett National Park, Uttarakhand CM Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank announced on September 5. He replaces noted conservationist Brijendra Singh.

During his hour-long meeting, Dhoni gave a signed memorandum to the CM urging him to take necessary

steps to ensure tiger conservation in Uttarakhand. The agenda included:

- Consolidate Greater Corbett Landscape – with the Ramnagar and Terai forest divisions under the field director's control.
- Notify and protect corridors along the Terai Arc to facilitate animal movement and minimise conflict.
- The Terai Arc landscape from Yamuna to Sharda should be managed as one conservation unit.
- Remove the Sundarkhal encroachment bordering Corbett.
- Ensure the relocation of the Khandgaon village and ammunition dump from Rajaji.
- Remove irrigation colony at Kalagarh and relocate Gujjars from within critical Corbett precincts.
- Set up a Special Tiger Protection Force

Pokhriyal told the cricketer about the government's efforts to conserve tigers and other wildlife in the state. He also assured Dhoni that the Special Tiger Protection Force would be made operational in six months.

Dhoni also spoke to the CM about removal of illegal encroachments in the Corbett-Rajaji corridor as well as in other crucial corridors in the Terai, to which the CM replied "that the state was doing a survey" but it was difficult to relocate villages from there."

Comment: *It must be pointed out that villages need not be displaced for consolidating corridors, but tiger and elephant concerns must be factored in any development plans in this landscape.*

Also, while a cricketer of Dhoni's stature will contribute significantly to draw attention to the issue, and serve well as an ambassador for the tiger's cause, his role as an Honorary Wildlife Warden seems a populist move. Ideally, the incumbent must be involved in wildlife concerns under his jurisdiction and be a watchdog, it is doubtful that Dhoni will have the time, however well-intended he may be.

Good tiger density in Corbett-Rajaji corridor

The importance of the Corbett–Rajaji corridor was highlighted in a recent study which showed that its usage by tigers has increased substantially since 2004 and now stands at about 44.5 per cent. This tract of forests showed excellent tiger occupancy. The density of tigers in the Kotri and Naudi range, part of the Lansdowne Forest Division is a healthy 5.49 per 100 sq km, thus highlighting the imperative to manage it on the lines of the adjoining Corbett Tiger Reserve. In fact, this density is far above that of some tiger reserves. The Lansdowne Forest Division connects the Rajaji–Corbett national parks and is critical for the long term survival for tigers and

elephants and tigers within north-western Terai Arc Landscape.

An attempt was also made to understand conflict issues given that these are not protected, but multiple-use, forests. It was found that human-carnivore conflict was substantial in the area and was more frequent in recent years. During 2005 -2008, the total loss of livestock due to tiger was recorded at 34. Though the number of animals killed by leopard was more, the magnitude of economic loss caused by tiger was higher given that the tiger consumed larger animals such as buffalo, which have higher market value. Most conflicts occurred inside the forests.

Gujjars staying inside the forests are keen to move out and rehabilitated along the line of those relocated from Rajaji. The relocation process must be taken up under the new rehab package given the high density of tigers occupying these two ranges.

Source: "An assessment of the Rajaji–Corbett corridor, Lansdowne Forest Division", by Manjari Malviya, Suniti Bhushan Datta, Abishek Harihar, Dr. K. Ramesh, supported by WII and Operation Eye of the Tiger

More fund for compensation

The Uttarakhand Forest Department has doubled its budgetary allocation from Rs 1.5 crores to Rs 3 crores for compensation towards wildlife depredation. Funds are allocated to provide immediate financial help to compensate loss of crop, cattle, or human life caused by wildlife. Effort would be made to pay the compensation within 15 days in cases of human and cattle deaths.

There has been an increase in incidents of human-wildlife conflict in the state and the increased compensation is aimed at addressing this. It is hoped that prompt compensation will help prevent retaliatory killings. Farmers across the state are known to place snares and crude electric fences to save their crops from wild boars, blue bulls and elephants.

Source: *The Pioneer; PA Update No. 85*

Tourism woes continue in Corbett

Even as uncontrolled and intrusive tourism in Corbett Tiger Reserve created a furore, with the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh stepping in to ask Uttarakhand to curb intrusive tourism (last issue of *TigerLink*), plans are afoot to open a new entry gate to Corbett. This is expected to put yet more pressure on the park. Deputy secretary (forest) Shusahant Patnayak said it is planned to open an entry gate from the Garhwal side of the park–Sindlikhal, for visitors. District Magistrate Pauri Dilip

Jawalkar said that they are in the process of developing an integrated Tourism development plan for the Garhwal district. It is learnt that infrastructure and allied facilities are being developed with the help of Asian Development Bank.

Source: www.governancenow.com, 15, September 2010

Comment: *It is reported that a multi-crore tourism project is coming up near Sindhikhal. Many resorts have already purchased land around the area, and conservationists fear a repeat of the Dhikuli-like situation where tourism infrastructure has blocked the Kosi river corridor. Politics has played its part in this move. The current gateway to the park is Ramnagar, which falls in Nainital district (Pauri). Garhwal has long demanded that there should be an entry point from Garhwal since larger part of the Corbett falls in this region.*

Corbett is being rapidly islanded with roads, expanding towns, tourism infrastructure. Land adjoining Kanda has also been purchased by big resort owners. Jamoon is another area which has been lost to tourism pressure. Once a pristine meadow, it has been destroyed since it was opened up for an angling resort. A number of resorts are now coming up here. Grasses and shrubs have been cleared destroying rich habitat. One of the resorts offers quadbiking, zorbing, rafting and other such activities causing huge disturbance.

Though the state had assured that “there will be no more resorts around the tiger reserve”, this appears to be little more than lip service.

Tiger found dead near Corbett

The carcass of a tiger was found in Ramnagar range, close to the Corbett National Park, on 19th August. Villagers spotted the body in Syat Van Panchayat of Ramnagar division. Official inform that the tiger might have died “while trying to cross the stream that was in full flow and collided with rocks midstream.” It appears to have been a five-year-old male tiger .

Source: August 19, 2010, ANI; Sify News; www.tigernet.nic.in

Flood in Uttarakhand

Incessant rain in the third week of September triggered floods in Uttarakhand causing a high death toll and immense losses. Corbett Tiger Reserve was also badly affected, and it is reported that a tiger and three elephants have been killed away in the floods. Reports coming in suggest that many resorts close the raging Ramganga

and Kosi rivers were destroyed. Damage to park infrastructure is also reported. Rajaji has also suffered losses due to floods and it is feared that two elephants were washed away by the flood.

WEST BENGAL

Tigress visits lodge

A tigress forayed into the Sajnekhali Tourist Lodge in the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, having scaled the lodge’s compound wall, scaring its occupants.

The lodge, a popular haunt for tourists, also houses a forest department office and had four tourists and a handful of forest staff inside when the tigress jumped into the compound twice in a span of 24 hours on 26th-27th June.

The tigress was tranquilised on 27th morning. The barrier around the lodge is nine feet high, tall enough to have kept the tigress out but a pile of rubble dumped near it because of some construction work seems to have aided the tigress in scaling the barrier.

Source: June 28, 2010, Gosaba, Monotosh Chakraborty, TNN

Tourism hub in the heart of Sundarbans

A three-storey luxury lodge for tourists, with spacious possibly air-conditioned rooms, an expansive lobby, spread over 15,000 sq ft in the heart of tiger territory in the Sunderbans. This might sound shocking to conservationists, but not the state tourism department, which has wrapped up about half the construction work, next to the forest department office at Sajnekhali, which saw tigers visiting twice in the last fortnight. What’s worse, the building is less than 10 feet from a sweet water pond that is frequented by tigers, fishing cats, cheetal, wild boar and sundry other animals. Apart from driving away the creatures that will obviously be forced to look for quieter pastures once tourists move in, the environmental impact of such a facility could be crippling for the mangrove forest, experts warn.

The signs of construction-induced damage are already seen. Tonnes of soft earth have been scooped up from an adjacent plot for the lodge although it is illegal to excavate forest land. It has left dozens of mangrove plantations in a precarious state with their roots hanging loose. Heaps of iron beams, wooden planks, bamboo poles and other construction material lie piled up at the site. Tonnes of nails are regularly dumped into the muddy ground around the building which could injure animals. Two storey’s of the building have already been built.

The tourism department also claims that no new construction is happening in the area and that the existing lodge was “merely being extended”.

“Our old lodge is in a deplorable state so we are redesigning it and adding an extra wing. The construction is happening within the tourism zone and not within the forest area,” said TVN Rao, managing director, West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation. The reality, however, was quite different. The “extension” is at least three times the size of the old lodge and should qualify as a new structure since it is not connected to the old one.

Sundarban Biosphere Reserve director Pradip Vyas confirmed that no new construction was permitted within a notified sanctuary. “As far as I know, the tourism department had sought permission to extend the existing facility and they have been allowed to do that. No new structure is being built,” said Vyas.

The construction contravenes forest laws—non forest activity in a forest requires permission from the centre under the Forest Conservation Act, and is also against NTCA guidelines. Construction was halted following reports in the media..

Source: “Forest Rules Flouted In Tiger Lair”, July 19, 2010 *The Times of India*,

Comment: *Though construction has been halted for the moment, it may be a temporary reprieve. Fact of the matter is, that permission for the ‘expansion’ was given by the field director, who it is learnt ‘gave it in good faith’. Is it ‘good faith’ to give permission when it is illegal and contravenes the Wildlife Protection Act? Besides, is he the competent authority to give permission. The permission can be given by the Chief Wildlife Warden with concurrence from the state government.*

How can the forest department pretend that they thought it was ‘redesign and extending’ the existing structure, when the construction was going on a few yards away from their office at Sajnekhali? Are we supposed to believe that they noticed it only after it was splashed in the media?

The tourism department has questioned why permission was given before—after all the forest department knew the lodge is in the core critical habitat, and in contravention of the law. “Why the protests now—when we have spent over Rs 50 lakhs on the same?” says a source from the tourism department.

Zoo deer to augment tiger menu?

Sixty spotted deer from Alipore zoo in Kolkata will be released in the Sundarbans to augment the prey

population. It is hoped that it will help bring down incidents of straying of tigers into human habitation, and lifting cattle.

The deer bred in captivity will, however, not be transferred to tiger territory directly. “They would first be kept for some time in an isolation centre near the Sundarbans. Then the animals would undergo a health check-up. If they are found to be fit, they would be released in the wild,” said the principal chief conservator of forests, Atanu Raha.

Besides, moving the deer from the zoo will help free some space in the increasingly congested zoo according to forest officers. They added that releasing the deer from the zoo in the wild would “infuse new material into the spotted deer’s genetic pool”. “A variety in the gene pool always helps. The deer will bring about diversity and add to the food supply of the tigers,” said a senior official of the state forest department.

Comment:

- Will the release of 60 deer, or 260 for that matter help build up the tiger’s vanishing larder? Not much especially when there are 400-plus cattle available per square kilometer in the forests around the national park.*
- So what is the real motive to periodically transfer ‘prey’ into Sundarbans? As you read above, the idea is to conveniently dump the surplus animals in the tiger reserve in the garb of a conservation effort. Deer populations from zoos carry huge risk of infection. Amazingly, another ‘benefit’ appears to be infusing variety in the deer’s genetic pool. From deer in the zoo?*
- Will the deer survive given that they are not acclimatised to the mangrove like conditions in Sundarbans which faces two high and low tides in a day.*
- Why such a bandaid’ solution to a deep rooted problem? There is a shortage of prey base—it is well known fact that there is a flourishing bush meat trade in Sundarbans. Why not stress on better protection, and augmenting chronic staff shortage etc instead of using Sundarbans as a dumping ground for surplus zoo deer.*

‘Indian’ tiger enters Bangladesh

A tiger, radio collared in the Indian Sunderbans, has reportedly crossed over into Bangladesh. Interestingly, forest officials are still receiving signals from the tiger’s collar and have located it somewhere in the middle of Talpatty Island in Bangladesh. The tiger had strayed

into Malmelia village in North 24 Parganas and was eventually trapped in Arbeshi on 21st May. It was then tranquillised and radio-collared before being released in the Katuajhuri forest of the Sunderbans.

Its signals revealed that while on the first two days it travelled only 6-7 kms, on the third day, it travelled more than double that distance.

About 60 per cent of the Sunderbans falls in Bangladesh. This incident yet again highlights that countries must work together towards tiger conservation.

Source: June 14, 2010, Kolkata, TNN

Sundarbans: Five tigers caught in four days

As many as five tigers have been captured in the Sunderbans in the four days between 20th and 23rd May.

Of these, three had 'strayed' into human habitation and two were captured for radio collaring. On 20th May, a tigress was trapped in Netidhopani for radio collaring. She was, however, found to be ill and was sent to Alipore Zoo hospital for treatment. On the 22nd, a second tiger was caught in the same area and fitted with a radio collar. On the same day, a young tigress strayed into Malmelia village. She was tranquilised and released in the Katuajhuri forests. On 23rd May villagers found a tiger in Jamespur after it killed cattle. It was trapped and released back in the forest. A second tiger was caught that evening at Shamshegunj.

Meanwhile, officials claim that the uneven distribution of prey base is to blame for increased straying. CWW SB Mondal says that while prey base hasn't decreased after Cyclone Aila, the reduction of Hetal mangroves (*Phoenix paludosa*), a favourite for tigers to seek cover in, and the uneven distribution of prey base are to blame for increased number of tigers straying post Aila.

Source: May 23, 2010 and June 10, 2010, Kolkata, TNN; www.sanctuaryasia.com

Comment: *Though lack of prey base is established as one of the major causes of tigers venturing into human habitation, there are other factors responsible. While Aila played havoc—and devastated the human inhabited areas, the sanctuary, with its mangrove cover was practically untouched. Aila it appears has merely become an excuse for low prey base and 'straying' tigers.*

The 'strategy' employed by the forest depart to counter tigers foraging into human habitation is to capture and then release the tigers. It worked well initially. A few years back, tigers venturing into villages were killed by frightened and enraged villagers. Capturing tigers, coupled with

strengthening relations with the local people helped achieve a reprieve, to the point that rather than kill the tiger, villagers would inform the forest department. But there seems to be case for 'overkill'.

In an article in Bengal Post, Jay Mazoomdaar writes that "between 1994 and 2002, tigers entered villages this side of the border (India) just 25 times, at an annual average of about three cases. But then, we panicked and started capturing any tiger spotted in and around habitations to dump them back where we thought they belonged or packed them to zoos. So the annual average of "tiger-straying" cases increased to seven in the next three years. The number of human casualties came down initially but as we continued to capture and shuffle the tigers around, the conflict only worsened. Removing an animal from its territory only allows the young of the species to fill in. During the capture, the animals confront menacing crowds and are often chased around. The traumatised animals are released in unfamiliar territory far away from the capture site. Now imagine stressed wild animals trying to home back, moving long distances through densely populated areas.

Could it be possible that the frequently displaced tigers of Sundarbans are getting increasingly disturbed? We do not yet know.

Lodges served demolition notice

The Government of West Bengal has served demolition notices to nine tourist lodges in the Sunderbans Biosphere Reserve. Arijit Mitra, BDO, Gosaba said that the structures were built violating building laws and would be pulled down in a fortnight. The lodges, located in Pakhiralaya and Dayapur do not have the required permits and were built in and around embankments.

The demolition of these structures will also help in reducing pollution and disturbance to the ecosystem. State Minister for Sunderbans Affairs, Kanti Ganguly said "Several illegal buildings, including houses and schools, have come up in different parts of the Sunderbans. We will serve show cause notices to the owners of these structures".

Law Officer of the State Pollution Control Board, Biswajit Mukherjee said, "While constructing any building in the Sundarbans, it is mandatory to get approval from the Costal Regulatory Management Authority. If the buildings have been built without its approval, they should be pulled down."

Source: IANS, www.sify.com, September 9, 2010

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Tigers sans borders

Borders are fences drawn by man, animals are free ranging and cannot be restricted to manmade boundaries or norms. Tiger habitats transcend borders across South-Asia viz. the Hukawng Valley Reserve in Myanmar which is contiguous to forest in India, and China, or the Terai which runs along the Himalayan low lands on both sides of India and Nepal, Manas and Buxa Tiger Reserves in India spill into tiger habitats in Bhutan and 60 per cent of Sundarbans falls in Bangladesh. Such a scenario applies in most tiger range countries where tiger habitats transcend borders. One example is the Jilin province of China and Primorsky in Russia that collectively forms the habitat of the rare Siberian tiger. It is imperative, therefore, that countries work in tandem to effectively manage cross-border habitats. There is a need for constant dialogue and exchange of information between the management of cross-border protected areas and tiger reserves under the umbrella of bilateral protocol.

Here are some of the efforts over the past few months over bilateral accords on wildlife conservation:

Indo-Nepal accord on wildlife conservation

India and Nepal have agreed to strengthen their respective National Action Plans under the Global Tiger Forum to implement conservation measures in a time bound manner. The resolution is an outcome of the fourth Nepal-India Consultative Meeting on Trans-Boundary Biodiversity Conservation that was held in early July.

According to the resolution, signed on 29th July, the two nations shall strengthen capacity building measures for wildlife protection personnel and strengthen implementation of projects for the conservation of rhinos, elephants and other endangered species. It also focuses on establishing a joint monitoring system and on standardising protocols in landscape level conservation, including restoring corridors, voluntary relocation of villages, etc.

Representing Nepal at the signing of the resolutions was Gopal Prasad Upadhyay, Director General, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Nepal. SP Yadav, DIG and Joint Director, NTCA, MoEF, represented India.

Source: July 31, 2010, New Delhi, Aarti Dhar, *The Hindu*, July 29, 2010, www.nepalnews.com

Transborder reserve for Siberian tiger

China and Russia have agreed to create the first cross border tiger conservation reserve for the rare Siberian tiger along the border, according to the WWF. The Jilin Province of China and neighbouring Primorsky Province of Russia agreed to collaborate formally in working towards the first transboundary Amur tiger protected area amidst celebrations for the second annual Amur Tiger Cultural Festival, held from 29th to 30th August, in the Chinese city of Hunchun.

The signed agreement, facilitated by WWF, will help wildlife authorities eventually establish a transboundary protected area in the provinces that are home to the world's largest big cat, of which only about 500 survive in the wild. The two sides will work together in establishing a tiger conservation protected area in both provinces. "A new transboundary protected area would provide a wider and healthier habitat for Amur tigers and other endangered species, such as the Far East leopard, musk deer and goral," said Yu Changchun, Director of Conservation Department of Jilin Forestry Department.

As part of the agreement, both the provinces will increase information sharing on Amur tiger and Far East leopard protection, work to adopt identical monitoring systems for tigers and their prey, conduct joint ecological surveys and develop plans to launch an anti-poaching campaign along the border.

Source: August 29, 2010, Hunchun, *WWF*

India urges China to control tiger trade

India and China agreed to cooperate in sharing intelligence on illegal trade in tiger parts between the countries. On 30th August, a delegation from the MoEF, NTCA and WCCB reached Beijing on a five-day visit to urge China to strengthen enforcement and curb illegal trade in tigers and other endangered species.

Chinese officials in the State Forestry Administration told their visiting Indian counterparts that they were open to exchanging actionable intelligence on wildlife crime. They also acknowledged that poaching and illegal trafficking were "the biggest threat" to wildlife conservation in the region.

The two countries have agreed to set up nodal officers to facilitate the sharing of real-time information, as well as initiate collaborative investigations into "the backward and forward linkages of wildlife crimes" and organised criminal syndicates operating in the region. Indian officials said the talks indicated real progress between the countries on an issue on which they have not always seen eye to eye. China in the past rejected

Indian concerns that much of the poaching in the country was derived from the demand for tiger parts in traditional Chinese medicine. They also discussed expanding collaboration in research, training and capacity-building during its five-day visit.

China also expressed strong interest in joining the Global Tiger Forum, an inter-government conservation effort led by India involving seven of the 14 tiger range countries.

Chinese officials also assured their Indian counterparts that they did not have immediate plans to lift the ban on domestic trade in tiger parts. Conservationists say lifting the ban would fuel the demand for poaching.

China has fewer than 20 wild tigers, but more than 5,000 animals breed in captivity on “tiger farms,” whose owners have called for legalising trade to meet the demand for tiger parts. There is a fear that lifting the ban will allow the sale of poached wild tiger parts under the guise of farmed tigers.

Source: ‘China to work with India on curbing tiger poaching’, Ananth Krishnan, September 3, *The Hindu*

Nations pledge to double tiger numbers

The world’s 13 ‘tiger range nations’ have pledged to get their act together to double the number of wild tigers by the year 2022.

A decision in this regard was taken by the nations at a recent meeting in Bali, Indonesia, along with the World Bank’s Global Tiger Initiative (GTI) to develop a concrete plan to increase tiger numbers. The plan is expected to serve as a road map for tiger conservation to be adopted by world leaders at the global summit on tigers this September in St Petersburg, Russia. Officials at the meet agreed to prepare a national action plan comprising a Global Tiger Recovery Programme for adoption at the summit. This blueprint would be backed by joint commitments to better conserve key tiger habitats across range countries and to step up enforcement to eradicate poaching and trafficking in tiger body parts.

Source: *NDTV, PTI*, July 18, 2010

Doubling wild tigers impractical: India

While most nations agreed for setting targets to double the tiger number in range countries by 2022 as a part of the Global Tiger Recovery Programme, India, felt that though the idea was catchy and had appeal, it was unrealistic, fraught with practical field problems and scientifically not achievable in the present day circumstances. India speaks from a position of strength. This argument is

drawn from nearly four decades of experience in tiger conservation. India has committed maximum resources to the tiger—more infact than all range countries put together. The World Bank has proposed more space for tigers to achieve the targeted numbers in the next ten years. But is that feasible in tiger range countries where land is a limiting factor? All range countries have burgeoning human and cattle population, and this will only mean escalating man-tiger conflict. Plus, how does one marry conservation goals with development in fast-growing economies?

India is central to tiger conservation since it has over half the world’s wild tigers, and around 32,000 sq km under Project Tiger as core tiger habitat. These encompass the six major landscapes within the country. The ecologically unsustainable land uses outside such source areas is a major bottleneck for the survival of the spill over tigers from core habitats. The result is increasing man-tiger conflict, and consequent retaliatory killings.

The need of the hour is to **streamline tiger concerns in land use around tiger habitats and to secure and expand the inviolate space (habitat) for tiger.** This, it was stressed, can be the best target for the future. A major challenge faced by India is to relocate approximately 48,000 households to secure inviolate habitat. This translates into a cost estimated at 1.2 billion USD over the next five years. Will the World Bank support this cause, not just in India, but all range countries which have the same dilemma?

Tiger numbers are important, it was felt, but they are prone to controversy and malpractice. It is therefore more prudent to focus on securing inviolate habitats instead of being fixated with numbers. There was also a general consensus that doubling tiger numbers may be appropriate as a global goal but was not feasible for India.

A Tigerlink Report

BANGLADESH

Tiger beaten to death

An ailing tiger was beaten to death by villagers at the Jorsing village in the Koyra upazilla, Kulna.

The tiger had entered the village from Sundarbans on the evening of 9th September and had taken shelter near a hatchery. Villagers discovered the animal the next morning and beat it to death. According to officials, the tiger was too sick and weak to defend itself.

The carcass was sent for autopsy prior to being skinned and buried in the Hodda Forest Camp.

Source: September 13, 2010, *The Daily Star*

CAMBODIA

Tiger extinct in Cambodia?

The endangered Indochinese tiger has not been spotted in Cambodia for the past three years, sparking fears that the species may have gone extinct here. A report from the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) also says that there is no evidence of breeding tiger populations existing in Cambodia. WCS Director, Mark Gately said “there is fear that there are no tigers left, but there could be up to 10 tigers in the eastern plains,” referring to an area spanning Ratanakkiri and Mondulakiri provinces in the northeast.

“Information across Cambodia isn’t complete, but the general consensus is that there isn’t a breeding population in Cambodia.” According to the report, the last confirmed tiger sighting was in a protected forest in Mondulakiri. Camera traps had captured two tigers in 2007. Since then, no photos or sightings have been reported despite camera traps being placed in other known tiger habitats, including the eastern plains, the Cardamom Mountains, Kulen Mountain in Siem Reap and Virachey National Park in Stung Treng and Ratanakkiri provinces. The last tiger pugmarks recorded were at the Lumphat Wildlife Sanctuary in 2009.

Omaliss Keo, Deputy Director of the Forestry Administration’s Department of Wildlife and Biodiversity, dismissed suggestions that the number could have fallen to zero. “We don’t accept this figure,” he said. “But it is hard to know how many tigers are in the wild.” He said that his department was working on creating more appropriate habitats for tigers to repopulate. “The government is trying to increase protected forests for the tiger,” he said, adding that officials were working on a Tiger Action Plan, which is due to be finished by the end of 2010 or early 2011.

Conservation efforts in Cambodia began quite late. By the late 1990s and early 2000s the first surveys were taken, and by then the numbers were already small.

Source: August 11, 2010, Cameron Wells, www.phnompenhpost.com

CHINA

Wild Siberian tigress found in China

On 25th February this year, a tiger cub was found trapped in a pile of firewood in the Wanda Mountains in China’s Heilongjiang Province, near the Sino-Russian border. It was the first tiger to be found in the area in a span of 20 years and it died less than two days after being discovered.

Raising fresh hopes, for the first time since that incident, pugmarks of a tiger were recently found in the same region when a cattle-raiser reported a mauled calf. “The pugmarks showed that it was an adult tigress, based on my long-term observation,” said Dong Hongyu, a senior researcher with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Heilongjiang, adding “I’m sure it is the one I have observed for a long time and it is the mother of the dead cub.”

It is the only wild tiger known to exist in the Wanda Mountains at present. Less than 20 Siberian tigers are known to be surviving in China.

Source: June 18, 2010, Harbin, www.xinhuanet.com, 4, March 2010, *The Guardian*

China to create nine conservation zones

China will create nine Siberian tiger conservation zones in its northeastern provinces of Jilin and Heilongjiang.

These areas are all near the Chinese borders with Russia and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). It is quoted that these areas have sufficient prey base for tigers and cover 38,000 sq kms.

Earlier distributed widely throughout northeastern China, wild Siberian tigers now number only 20 or so in the country due to fragmentation of forests and illegal hunting.

Source: May 30, 2010, Changchun, Zhang Xiang, www.xinhuanet.com

INDONESIA

Forest fires engulf Indonesia

The Indonesian government has failed to live up to its promise to reduce forest fires. In 2007, the government had announced a plan to cut forest fires by half across the nation. The 2009 State Environment Report shows however, that fires have actually risen by 59 per cent. Officials say land clearing was the primary cause of the fire increase in the tropical nation. Unlike temperate forest, rainforests rarely burn naturally. “Illegal land clearing with fires by local people in Kalimantan and Sumatra is still rampant,” Hedly Mukna, deputy assistant for forest and land management at the Environment Ministry told *The Jakarta Post*. The state of Kalimantan on the island of Borneo saw fires triple in some areas from 2008 to 2009. Haze blanketed much of the island last year during the ‘burning season’.

Such fires cause huge destruction to prime rainforests and tiger habitats.

Indonesia is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world behind China and the USA. 80 per cent of its 2.3 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions comes from rainforest and peatland destruction.

Source: 13, June 2010, Jeremy Hance, www.mongabay.com

Rent-a-tiger for \$110,000

Though heavily criticised, Indonesia seems intent on going ahead with the scheme that allows rich people to adopt captive tigers to “help curb poaching and saving tigers”. For a **\$110,000 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.

“People don’t understand that this is a realistic initiative,” said, Darori, the Director General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation. “Every day, there are people who request to adopt tigers—it’s a prestige thing. They will take good care of the tigers. It’s better than allowing them to be killed by poachers.”

Source: 7, July 2010, www.thejakartaglobe.com

Comment: *Will someone please explain how will putting captive tigers in small areas conserve wild tigers? Is this an exercise to save tigers or to make money?*

Indonesia has failed to tackle the real issues—according strict protection and conserving their habitat. Logging and deforestation continues to devastate tiger habitats at an unprecedented pace.

Tiger skulls seized in Sumatra

Police have arrested two men in Sumatra with six tiger skulls, five skins and bones. They were held on July 17 in Pekanbaru city of Riau province while in the process of picking up a package containing tiger parts. “The men are not the main culprits, they were merely picking up the package at someone’s behest,” said Trisunu Danis Woro of the province’s conservation agency. He went on to add that the police were still hunting for the culprits behind the poaching network. In June Indonesian police arrested a man who allegedly poisoned and skinned an endangered Sumatran tiger in a state-owned zoo.

Source: Jakarta, *AFP*, July 19, 2010,

MALAYSIA

Cub drugged, stuffed in baggage

A two-month old tiger cub was found drugged and concealed among stuffed tiger toys in a woman’s luggage at Bangkok’s Suvarnabhumi International Airport on August 22nd. The accused was attempting to board a flight to Iran when an x-ray scan of her baggage revealed something resembling a real cat. Officers from the Livestock Development Department and the National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation

Department inspected the bag and found the drugged cub, which is now under the care of a rescue center.

Investigators are now working to determine the cub’s origins and intended destination.

Source: August 27, 2010, www.mongabay.com;
TRAFFIC

MYANMAR

World’s largest tiger reserve under threat

The Hukaung Valley in Myanmar the largest tiger reserve in the world, is being destroyed by the replacement of large areas of forest by monoculture cash crops, according to a report by the Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG), the reserve. Yuzana, a company owned by U Htay Myint, a wealthy businessman linked to Myanmar’s ruling generals, is said to have taken over 800 sq km in the south of the reserve. The company is building a ‘green zone’ enclave, within the reserve, containing worker’s barracks, a factory and a supermarket, all surrounded by a two metre high concrete wall. There have also been clashes between the company and local villagers and 160 families have been forced to move out. The report goes on to say that the forest was subsequently destroyed by herbicides and bulldozers and excavators have left large swathes of flattened, denuded land, leaving behind only signposts of the tiger reserve. Deep irrigation canals have been dug and are bisecting all but one of the tiger corridors running through the reserve. Ah Nan, spokesperson for KDNG, said, “the destruction in Hukaung makes a mockery of the tiger reserve. Yuzana is doing whatever it likes with the aid of the generals and the silence of the conservationists.”

The isolated Hukaung Valley Tiger Reserve covers 8, 452 square miles and was hailed as the largest tiger reserve in the world with the potential to support several hundred tigers. Currently, conservationists estimate that as few as 50 tigers survive in the area. The reserve also shelters other endangered species like clouded leopards, Asian elephants, about 370 species of birds including the rufous-necked hornbill and almost 7,000 species of plants.

Source: August 4, 2010, *WCS*, August 28, 2010, Peter Popham, *The Independent*

NEPAL

Two-month ban on logging

After nearly 1,00,000 hectares of forest was lost in a matter of few months in the lowland areas of Nepal, officials have announced a two-month ban on logging in the country. These are mostly community owned forests in the terai belt. These forests were earlier given a

limited logging allowance, but following the over exploitation of this permit, logging has now been banned.

Approximately 25 per cent of Nepal is forested. The country is losing forests at the rate of 1.4 per cent per annum.

Source: Jeremy Hance, www.mongabay.com, June 23, 2010

Estimation pegs 155 tigers in Nepal

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation with support from WWF-Nepal and the National Trust for Nature Conservation carried out the biannual tiger estimation in Nepal for the year 2010. The estimation was carried out using the modern camera trap method between December 2009 and March 2010. The results have shown a rise in tiger numbers across Nepal from approx 121 to about 155 tigers. In Chitwan National Park the number has risen from around 91 to 125 tigers.

The average tiger density across Nepal is now thought to be 6.53 adult tigers per 100 sq km.

The findings were released on 29th July 2010.

Source: July 29, 2010, Press Release by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Government of Nepal, August 2, 2010, *WWF-Nepal*

Tiger skin seized

Wildlife Conservation Nepal, and NGO, and the Nepal Police seized a tiger skin from traders in Kathmandu on September 9. Four traders from the Bara district on the Indo-Nepal border were arrested in the case which WCN had been tracking for the past six months.

Source: Prasanna Yonzon, *Wildlife Conservation Nepal*

Leonardo DiCaprio roars for tigers

Wild tigers have found a new spokesperson in Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio. The acclaimed actor paid a short visit to the Bardia National Park to meet wildlife conservation officials and locals. On a three-day trip in May end, he went on patrols with guards, met a tiger attack victim and signed an agreement with WWF to lead 'Save Tigers Now', a campaign to increase awareness about threats to tigers and to raise funds for conservation."

Tigers are endangered and critical to some of the world's most important ecosystems," said Leonardo, who set up his Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation in 1998 to focus on climate change, water, disaster relief and preservation of the planet's biodiversity.

Source: July 13, 2010, Kathmandu, Indo-Asian News Service

South Asia unites for conservation

In a coordinated regional approach to combat wildlife trafficking and poaching, experts from South Asia have laid the foundation for a South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN). Seven member countries-Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka agreed to the structure, function and operational parameters for SAWEN which include ideas for developing multilateral activities based on strong interagency cooperation at a national level.

The first meeting of the group was convened on 20th May at Kathmandu. Aiming to help wildlife law enforcement agencies become better organised than the criminals, the Experts' Group agreed that an action oriented approach under the network should pursued without delay.

Over the next six months, Nepalese coordinators will assemble information and identify resources and expertise from member countries to develop joint operations, training programmes, communications and fundraising plans.

Over 50 participants, including CITES representatives, members from police, customs, INTERPOL, UN Office on Drugs and Crime and World Customs Organisation were present.

The Government of Bhutan has offered to host the next meeting of the group.

Source: May 20, 2010, Kathmandu, *Environment News Service*

NEW ZEALAND

Tiger parts seized at Auckland Airport

A Cambodian woman has been detained at Auckland airport after being caught smuggling a suspected tiger penis and gallbladder. She had arrived from Singapore on May 8th when a detector dog at the airport signaled prompting a full search by authorities who found a stocking tied around her waist and a plastic bag around her leg containing the body parts of the protected big cat.

The accused could be liable under the Biosecurity Act for a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or five years of imprisonment.

Source: 13, May 2010, *TVNZ, ONE News*

RUSSIA

Mysterious disease stalks Siberian tiger

A mysterious epidemic is driving Siberian tigers to the edge of extinction. The disease is apparently destroying the cats' ability to hunt. This comes as a major blow, especially after results from an annual survey conducted by the Wildlife Conservation Society along with several Russian organisations has shown a 40 percent drop in

the Amur tiger population from its average over the past 12 years. Nearly extinct half-a-century ago, the tigers rebounded when the government initiated stringent conservation measures. The disease has led to the last among four radio-collared tigers to be killed in a span of just ten months. A ten-year-old tigress, known to researchers of the Wildlife Conservation Society as Galya, was shot after she got too close to people following her inability to hunt. All the four tigers were known to have been in contact with a male suspected of carrying the disease. "We may be witnessing an epidemic in the Amur tiger population," said Dr Dale Miquelle, Director, Wildlife Conservation Society, Russia.

It is suspected that the disease is neurological and that is the reason why the tigers are showing strange changes in behaviour. Galya was found to have abandoned her litter of three-week old cubs and had entered the town of Terney in the Primorsky Province, which she refused to leave, prompting state authorities to declare her a 'conflict tiger' and have her shot.

Initial necropsy of her dead cubs revealed empty digestive tracts, which was termed as highly unusual. The tigress too weighed only 91 kg at the time of death, down from 140 kg at full health. Her death represents the end of an 11 year lineage of related 'study' tigers that the WCS had been observing using radio tracking. WCS's Siberian Tiger Project is now left with no radio collared tigers for the first time in eighteen years.

Source: June 20, 2010, *The Observer*, www.guardian.co.uk

Note: Dale Miquelle, Director, WCS Russia Program has clarified that, "The disease is a new development, I think, and it's role is far from clear at this point. The article is way over the top. But it has been a bit shocking to watch our study animals die off, in strange and unpredictable manners. However, the decline we have noticed is unlikely related to disease, and more to the usual factors."

Korean Pine protection to help save tigers

The Russian government has introduced measures to protect Korean Pine, a key species forming most of Amur tiger habitat in the Russian Far East and northeast China. Rising global demand for the tree has led to severe logging, much of it carried out illegally, in Russia's remaining temperate forests. Logging has been identified as a major threat that threatens the survival of the Amur Tiger.

To help regulate the logging, Russia has listed the Korean Pine in Appendix III of CITES. The listing means that exports of Korean Pine timber from Russia will need CITES permits, which will make it harder for the illegal trade to carry on.

The listing will benefit not only Amur tigers, but also

the local people whose livelihood depends on legitimate trade in Korean Pine nuts and timber. The nuts are also an important source of nutrition for tiger prey.

Source: July 29, 2010, Moscow, *WWF-Russia*

VIETNAM

Five new areas for tiger conservation

Vietnam will establish five conservation areas in its Central Highland provinces in a bid to preserve and boost the country's declining tiger population. The five areas include Dac Lac, Dac Nong, Bu Gia Map National Park in Binh Phuoc, Chu Mon Ray National Park in Kon Tum and Song Thanh in Quang Nam. This is a first step in a national programme designed together by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in cooperation with foreign experts.

Once the conservation areas are notified and functional it is expected that qualified staff and facilities will undertake protection, supervision and management work. Less than 50 wild tigers live in Vietnam and their population is in sharp decline.

Source: June 30, 2010, Hanoi, *21st Century Tiger*

Frozen tiger, leopard seized

Vietnam's Environmental Police have confiscated two frozen tigers and a frozen panther in the central province of Nghe An. Two people were arrested. "We also confiscated two sets of animal bones, suspected of being from tigers," an environmental police officer said

The police made several similar seizures last year in Vietnam. A World Wildlife Fund Malaysia conservationist earlier this year cited evidence that hunters from Thailand and Vietnam were also operating in Malaysia which is also struggling to conserve its wild tigers, and has targeted to increase wild tiger numbers to 1,000.

Source: June 24, 2010, *AFP*

WILDLIFE CRIME

The Countdown

This year till September 25, 38 tigers have died in India. Of these, 14 were seizures of skin and other tiger derivatives according to Tigernet, which is the Official Database of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. The WPSI figures show 40 tiger deaths, of which 23 are poaching and seizures. From this issue on, *TigerLink* will show records of both agencies.

Given below are details of the seizures post May 1st, (January 1 to April 30, 2010 were detailed in the last *TigerLink*).

Tiger, Mortality - 2010

Serial No	Date	Location	State	Mortality/Seizure	Name	Seizure Info	Other Info
1	19 May 2010	Tala Range, Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve	Madhya Pradesh	Mortality	Tiger		
2	31 May 2010	Urulikak, Valparai, Periyar Nagar	Tamil Nadu	Mortality	Tiger		
3	6 Jun 2010	Kisli range, Kanha Tiger Reserve	Madhya Pradesh	Mortality	Tiger		
4	5 Jul 2010	Pantnagar, Udham Singh Nagar	Uttarakhand	Mortality	Tiger		
5	10 Aug 2010	Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve	Madhya Pradesh	Mortality	Tiger		
6	18 Aug 2010	Tadoba	Maharashtra	Mortality	Tiger		
7	19 Aug 2010	Pawalgarh Range Ramnagar	Uttarakhand	Mortality	Tiger		
8	2 Sep 2010	Hongahalli Beat, Maddur Range, Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Cptt. No.30, Baragi Section	Karnataka	Mortality	Tiger		

Tiger, Seizure - 2010

Serial No	Date	Location	State	Mortality/Seizure	Name	Seizure Info	Other Info
1	5 May 2010	Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve	Maharashtra	Seizure		Tiger 5 Claws, Bones	
2	1 Jun 2010	Panhala, Kolhapur	Maharashtra	Seizure		Tiger Skin	
3	8 Jun 2010	Bilaspur Town	Chhattisgarh	Seizure		Tiger Skin	
4	20 Jun 2010	Guwahati	Assam	Seizure		Tiger Bones, Tiger skull	
5	21 Jun 2010	Pench Tiger Reserve	Madhya Pradesh	Seizure		Tiger Paws	
6	25 Jun 2010	Palar forest, Kollegal Division	Karnataka	Seizure		Tiger skin	
7	27 Jul 2010	Amravati	Maharashtra	Seizure		Tiger skin	
8	17 Sep 2010	Chennai airport	Tamil Nadu	Seizure			

Courtesy: Tigernet, The Official Database of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (<http://tigernet.nic.in/>)
 Statistics are shown May 1 onwards. For previous data please refer to last issue TigerLink or the concerned website.

- 1, May 2010: Five tiger claws and 20 pieces of tiger bones were seized in Brahmapuri division near Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. Eight people were arrested. (Source: WPSI)
- 1, June 2010: **A skin was seized in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, by Panhala police.** Four people, all residents of Kolhapur, were arrested. The skin bore bullet marks and is believed to be of an adult tiger. (Source: India PR Wire, 3, June 2010, New Delhi)
- 9, June 2010: **Two people were arrested in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh with a tiger skin.** Inquiries suggested that the tiger had been poached in Mandla forest circle of Madhya Pradesh (close to Kanha). (Source: IANS, www.indiaprwire.com, 10, June 2010, Raipur)
- 25, June 2010: **A tiger pelt was seized in the Palar forests near Gopinatham at the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border in Kollegal, Chamarajanagar district.** This region is adjoining BRT Wildlife Sanctuary. One person was arrested by the CID-Forest Cell. (Source: The Hindu, 26, July 2010, Bangalore)
- 20 June 2010: a particularly bad week, as customs officials seized—twice in a row—**tiger skulls,**

bones and 125 kgs of pangolin scales at Guwahati airport. As the consignment came from Dimapur in Nagaland, central wildlife agencies suspect that the tigers may have been poached in Kaziranga, which has high density of tigers. Dimapur is a very notorious area for drug, arms and the wildlife trade. While rhinos have long been the main target of poachers in Kaziranga it is feared that tiger poachers have also now moved in for the kill. **There were two more seizures on 16th and 17th June at the same airport in which a tiger skeleton had been seized.** The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau did preliminary investigation and intelligence work in this seizure, and advised the government to take entrust the case to the CBI for further investigation, aided by WCCB. It is learnt that the case may soon be transferred to CBI. (Source: IANS, 20, June 2010, Guwahati)

- 2, July 2010: A trader from Kerala and a 'siddha' practitioner from Pollachi were arrested in **Tirupur**

district, Tamil Nadu, with 40 kgs of sandalwood, antlers, horns, tiger teeth and claws. Three others were also arrested. (Source: The Hindu, 3, July 2010)

- July 20, 2010: **A tiger skin was seized from a self styled godman, Monu Singh Tak, in Latur, Maharashtra.** He was arrested by police while trying to sell the skin. for Rs 21, 000. (Source: ANI, 22, July 2010, Latur)
- 14, August 2010: **One tiger paw was seized by the forest department near Dudhwa Tiger Reserve.** One person was arrested. (Source: WPSI)

Customs officials seized **a tiger skin and skull that had come as a parcel from London at Chennai airport on 17th September.** It was addressed to a person in Chennai. WCCB sources confirm the news and said that investigations are on to trace the culprits.

Source: Times News Network, 19, September 2010, Chennai

TIGER MORTALITY FIGURES - 2010

Date	Place	State	Tiger skins	Tiger bones	Other body parts	Tiger poaching cases	Other tiger deaths	Remarks
1-May-10	Brahmapuri Division & Tadoba TR	Maharashtra		20 pieces of bones	5 claws			6 wire traps were also seized by FD with the assistance of WPSI. 8 arrested
19-May-10	Bandhavgarh TR	Madhya Pradesh					1 tigress	Hit by Vehicle
31-May-10	Anamalai TR	Tamil Nadu					1 tiger	10 year old male tiger found dead.
01-Jun-10	Kolhapur	Maharashtra	1 skin					Seized by police. 4 arrested
06-Jun-10	Kanha TR	Madhya Pradesh					1 cub	Found dead.
08-Jun-10	Bilaspur District	Chhattisgarh	1 skin					Seized by Forest Dept. 2 arrested.
16 & 17-Jun-10	Guwahati Airport			1 tiger skeleton (approx. 10.2kg)				320 kg of pangolin scales were also seized by Customs.
20-Jun-10	Guwahati Airport			1 tiger skeleton (approx. 9.75kg)				271 kg of pangolin scales were also seized by Customs.
20-Jun-10	Chhindwara South Division	Madhya Pradesh			4 paws			Seized by Forest Dept. 4 arrested.
25-Jun-10	Chamrajnagar Dist.	Karnataka	1 skin					Seized by CID Forest Cell of Karnataka police, 5 arrested.
02-Jul-10	Corbett TR	Uttarakhand					1 cub	Died due to injuries.
11-Jul-10	Bamra Forest Division	Orissa	1 skin					Seized by Forest dept. 1 arrested.
27-Jul-10	Amravati Dist.	Maharashtra	1 skin					Seized by police. 1 arrested.
8-Aug-10	Bandhavgarh TR	Madhya Pradesh					1 cub	Killed by an adult tiger.
14-Aug-10	Dudhwa TR	Uttar Pradesh			1 paw			Seized by forest dept. 1 arrested.
18-Aug-10	Tadoba Andhari TR	Maharashtra					1 tigress	Died due to disease.
19-Aug-10	Ramnagar Forest Division	Uttarakhand					1 tiger	Body found in semi-decomposed stage.
2-Sep-10	Bandipur TR	Karnataka					1 tiger	Found dead.
13-Sep-10	Lansdowne Forest Division	Uttarakhand					1 tigress	Found dead.
17-Sep-10	Chennai	Tamil Nadu	1 skin					Seized by Customs at airport.

Courtesy: Wildlife Protection Society of India

Statistics are shown May 1 onwards. For previous data please refer to last issue TigerLink or the concerned website.

Sansar Chand nailed

Fifteen years after being caught red handed for the illegal possession of a leopard skin, notorious wildlife criminal Sansar Chand was finally convicted and pronounced guilty by the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (Special Acts) Digvijay Singh on 21st August. He was found guilty under Sections 49 and 51 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and was awarded a sentence of six years' imprisonment on 25th August, besides being charged a fine of Rs 50,000. This is the fourth conviction for Chand, presently lodged in a Jaipur jail in connection with another offence.

“Despite various steps taken by governments across the globe, offences relating to wildlife are refusing to come down... such repeated offenders need to be dealt with iron hands” ACMM Singh said, adding that “the punishment to the offender should not only be commensurate with offences committed by him, but it should also act as a deterrent to others involved in similar offences.”

This comes as welcome news considering that Sansar Chand was discharged on March 10, 2010 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. Chand was discharged on the grounds of lack of evidence.

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.** *Tehelka* (Raman Kirpak, August 7) reports that so far Sansar Chand has been acquitted in 11 cases which involved tiger skins and bones, leopard, otter, leopard cat, fishing cat, wolf, snake, crocodile skins besides a host of other wildlife derivatives of critically endangered animals. The story also lists his considerable assets which include

residential and commercial property in Sadar bazaar, Karolbagh, Motia Khan and Azad market in Delhi. He employs Siddharth Luthra, who is rated as one of the 10 best criminal lawyers in India, to defend him

Chand 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: *PTI*, August 22, 2010, New Delhi; Smriti Singh, *TNN*, August 26, 2010, New Delhi, WPSI

Poacher caught fleeing to Nepal

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve authorities arrested a poacher on 14th August while he was attempting to escape into Nepal. The poacher, Dinesh, a resident of Lalpur Dhaka under Palia police station limits was arrested when he was found with the paw of a tiger. He confessed to have been involved in killing a young tiger in Dudhwa in 2008. Deputy Director, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, SK Pathak said that an FIR has been filed against Dinesh under relevant sections of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Source: *PTI*, August 14, 2010

Poacher gets 3 yrs in jail

Dariya Bawaria, a notorious poacher accused of killing a tiger was sentenced to three years rigorous imprisonment by a court in Madhya Pradesh on 28th July.

Bawariya, his wife Bhagwati, and seven others were booked after the seizure of one tiger skin, tiger bones, tiger paws, three cans of tiger fat, one hyena skin and eight spring traps from them in Bahoriband range in MP. All the accused were granted bail and subsequently jumped it. Dariya had also been arrested on 28th April 2008 from the Corbett Tiger Reserve with two traps and other poaching equipment.

Source: *The Hindu*, July 30, 2010

Twelve convicted for trading in tiger parts

An Allahabad court sentenced 12 people to three years in jail and a fine of Rs 10,000 each for their involvement in illegal trade of tiger parts. The accused belong to the Pardhi tribe of Madhya Pradesh and were apprehended from the house of Shabbir Hussain Qureshi, a wildlife trader, in Allahabad in December 2007 in a raid by the

Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force. Qureshi, his two sons and an accomplice were also arrested in that raid and are still under trial.

Source: IANS, May 25, 2010

FD fails to nail tiger poachers

Two villagers who had been arrested for killing two tiger cubs were released by a local court in Sawai Madhopur as forest officials failed to file a chargesheet within 60 days. 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, part of the Ranthmbhore Tiger Reserve

Ram Khiladi Gujjar and Mukesh Gujjar of Tadla Khet village were arrested on March 8, the day the cubs were found dead. "Forest officials are responsible for not filing the chargesheet despite having all the details. The forensic lab report had confirmed a case of poisoning; the goats' carcasses were found on the spot; and the shop from where the pesticide was identified," said Fateh Singh Rathore, Vice-Chairman, Tiger Watch, an NGO, in Ranthambhore. "This will send a wrong message to the villagers who may take such grievous crimes lightly," he added.

"We didn't file the chargesheet as third accused Narsi Gujjar is absconding," explained RS Shekhawat, Deputy Field Director, Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve.

Sources in legal circles point out that killing a tiger is a non-bailable offence. However, as per a Supreme Court verdict, if the chargesheet is not filed within the stipulated 60 or 90 days, as the case may be, the accused can be released on bail.

"The time period for filing the chargesheet varies from crime to crime. In this case, it was 60 days but the authorities mistook it for 90 days and delayed it" said a government counsel.

Source: Rachna Singh, *Times of India*, May 18, 2010

Pench watchers burn cub carcass

Three forest watchers and the chairman of an eco-development committee have been arrested for burning the carcass of a six-month-old tiger cub. They had chopped off its paws for use in *tantrik* rituals. The incident has been confirmed by the Chief Conservator of Forests, Chindwara Territorial Circle, G. Krishnamurthy. He added that the department has recovered some bones and part of the tiger skin from the burnt remains. He, however, said that the cub had died of natural causes.

Source: June 22, 2010, New Delhi, *The Pioneer*

India in Interpol

India has been elected for the post of secretary in the Wildlife Crime Working Group of the Interpol for the first time. Additional director, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Rina Mitra will represent the country. India will hold the position for a period of four years.

The group comprises 188 member countries of Interpol and meets annually to discuss issues regarding wildlife crime and identify emerging trends in the illegal trade of flora and fauna.

Source: *PTI*, September 20, 2010

Leopard slaughter continues

The Wildlife Protection Society of India reports that India has lost no less than 246 leopards till September 15, 2010,—more than a leopard a day. Of these about 134 are attributed to poaching, and seizures. The slaughter is mainly concentrated in Uttarakhand with 82 deaths reported from the state. About 35 are clear cases of poaching. The fatalities are rising at an alarming rate—the total deaths last year were 291. Leopards face the severest backlash due to increasing conflict. They are butchered and poisoned when they venture into human habitation, pushed by shrinking habitats and lack of prey base.

RESEARCH

Protecting source key to tiger survival: Study

A new study reveals that most of the world's last remaining tigers – long decimated by overhunting and habitat destruction and fragmentation—are concentrated in just six percent of their available habitat. **The study 'Bringing the Tiger Back from the Brink—The Six Percent Solution' identifies 42 'source sites' scattered across Asia. These have nearly 70 per cent of all remaining wild tigers and therefore must be top priority for the conservation and recovery of wild tigers across its range.** Strategies to save the tiger must focus first and foremost on protecting these sites.

There are fewer than 3,500 wild tigers in the world, of which approximately 1,000 are likely to be breeding females.

Though 1.5 million sq km of suitable habitat still remains across Asia, tigers are concentrated in small pockets, mainly protected areas. The authors emphasise

that conservation efforts must be concentrated on this ‘six-percent’ or 1,00,000 sq km, of tiger habitat. Incidentally, this six per cent represents less than 0.5 per cent of their historical range. The recent analysis identifies 42 “source sites,” meaning that these have concentrations of tigers with the potential to repopulate larger landscapes. Source sites were defined as those that can maintain 25 breeding tigresses, with the potential to contain double the number.

India has come up trumps—with the largest number of source sites at 18. However, populations are depressed within these source sites too, and only five in India maintain tiger populations close to eighty per cent of their estimated carrying capacity. Scientists believe that the recovery of populations in source sites alone can result in a 70 per cent increase in the world’s tiger population. Actively protecting these has shown that remarkable success in many reserves across India. The Malenad—Mysore tiger landscape currently has about 220 adult tigers, one of the greatest concentrations in the world, mainly due to intensive protection of its source areas ie Nagarahole National Park, where tiger numbers increased by 400 per cent after protection began in the early 1970s. It continues to maintain a high density for 30 years.

The tiger population is far below its potential in the eight source sites in Sumatra and six in Russian Far East. Tragically, no source site could be identified in Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, or Vietnam. Surveys in Bhutan and Myanmar have been too limited for their status to be assessed, but further investigations are a must.

Tiger abundance is strongly correlated with prey density and both depend on strict controls on hunting, surveillance, and monitoring, which typically is below par in most tiger habitats.

In the Russian Far East, traditionally a stronghold for tigers, annual monitoring detected a dramatic decline in tiger numbers over the last five years, which was associated with a decline in enforcement. Recent declines in tiger numbers in the once thriving source areas in Nepal were also associated with reduced emphasis on protection.

The authors calculate the total required annual cost of effectively managing source sites to be \$82 million which includes the cost of law enforcement, wildlife monitoring, community involvement, and other factors. More than half of these funds \$47 million, is already being committed by governments and, to a far lesser extent, international donors and NGOs.

However, **much of the total governmental financial commitment comes from and is spent in**

India. When India is excluded from the analysis, the average current commitment drops substantially.

There is currently a shortage of US \$ 35 million a year for all source sites.

While it is clear that the way forward is to protect source population through very strict enforcement; for wide-ranging, low-density species like the tiger, conservation planning must be at the landscape level. This will call for strict limits on habitat conversion and infrastructure development on tiger landscapes.

All of this calls for politically bold commitments by governments, supported by the general public and the international community, and sustained efforts over decades.

The study — published online by PLoS Biology — is authored by: Wildlife Conservation Society researchers Joe Walston, John Robinson, Elizabeth Bennett, John Goodrich, Melvin Gumal, Arlyne Johnson, Ullas Karanth, Dale Miquelle, Anak Pattanavibool, Colin Poole, Emma Stokes, Chanthavy Vongkhamheng, and Hariyo Wibisono; Urs Breitenmoser of the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group; Gustavo Fonseca of the Global Environment Facility (GEF); Luke Hunter and Alan Rabinowitz of Panthera; Nigel Leader-Williams of the University of Cambridge; Kathy MacKinnon of the World Bank; Dave Smith of the University of Minnesota; and Simon Stuart, Chair of the IUCN’s Species Survival Commission.

For a complete report please check: <http://www.plosbiology.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.1000485>

MEDIA

Conflict report inflammatory

Though in recent times there has been a marked increase in the column space devoted to conservation issues, and quality has improved considerably, there are major concerns arising out of misreporting or the quality of reporting. One issue, more often than not largely mishandled is man-animal conflict where one has repeatedly seen the use of terms like ‘killer on the rampage’ or ‘maneater on the prowl’ which only serves to ignite an already volatile situation. Such issues need to be handled very sensitively, keeping in mind the fear and rage of the affected people, the stress faced by officials who must deal with the situation and the larger picture—*why* the conflict. Reproduced below is an article which typifies, perhaps in an extreme manner, a badly handled copy of conflict around Ranthambhore:

'R'bhore shivers as man-eater roams town'

In the dark of the night, residents of Ranthambhore these days come across a sight that sends a chill down their spine. A man-eating tiger frequently ventures out of its hideout in the forests and stalks the fields and bylanes of the town, creating terror and panic among the people. The beast, labelled T-24 by the forest department, had mauled a marriage-lawn guard a few days ago and feasted on the body. Locals claim that the tiger now frequently forays into their homes, farms and the local hotels to taste fresh human blood. Over the past 15 days, the tiger has strayed into a local dairy, a food godown; ambled down the playgrounds of a school and come close to several locals, who now dread to walk the roads alone at night.

Laxmikant Mahawar, a resident of Patel Nagar, can't forget the fear he felt when he saw the behemoth inches from him. 'It was hiding in a godown, the eyes scanning the area for a fresh prey. I still remember those brightly burning eyes,' he says. Mahawar says people of Patel Nagar are so scared of the tiger now that do not come out of their homes after dark. Those who have to, come out of their home only after getting well-armed. The kids are scared too. 'My father has forbidden me to ride the bicycle,' says 10-year-old Vijendra, a resident of railway colony on the periphery of the forest.

Tourists aren't safe either. Earlier this week, T-24 spent a full week in Aman-e-Khas, a five-star resort in the middle of the town. 'The tiger entered into the premise of hotel and did not budge for almost a week. It is our good fortune that the hotel was empty as the tourist season had ended and no accident happened,' an employee of the hotel told DNA.

The forest department said such incidents are part of jungle life. RS Shekhawat, deputy director of Ranthambhore National Park, said the tiger's territory is very close to the town. 'It is normal for a tiger to stray into areas that are close to its habitat,' he said. 'T-24 spent 7 days in the hotel because it had killed a wild beast in the compound of the hotel and wanted to eat it completely,' clarified Shekhawat.

Source: August 7, 2010, DNA, Jaipur

Comment:

- a) *Ranthambhore is not a town—it is a Tiger Reserve-the town adjoining is Sawai Madhopur*
- b) *Aman Resort is not in the middle of the town, it adjoins the forest. People who set up resorts-and earn their business from being cheek by jowl to a tiger reserve may expect that wild animals who know no boundaries will stray. This was forest land till, human beings took over.*

c) *At the time this report was written there had been two incidents of a tiger killing a man in recent times in Ranthambhore, one of which was inside the tiger reserve. The reserve has seen huge disturbances recently with heavy construction. In this case the animal attacked the horse (being used to transport construction material) first, and when the owner tried to jump in to defend the horse, the tiger attacked the owner. Subsequently, there have been two more incidents of tigers killing and attacking humans.*

d) *Statements like "had mauled a marriage-lawn guard a few days ago and **feasted** on the body" and "now frequently marches into homes, farms, hotels taste fresh human blood " are misleading, irresponsible and inflammatory—giving a completely false picture.*

Besides making such inane comments why has the reporter not bothered to verify any fact or go into the matter that why tigers 'stray' into human habitation—the loss of habitat and the encroachment of people, agriculture, resorts and towns into forests which forces the tiger out?

This was sent as a letter to the editor, and a corrective piece was published soon thereafter.

Saving tigers is Cause Celeb

Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio will work to raise global awareness about India's dwindling number of tigers.

MEF Jairam Ramesh met DiCaprio and at a reception on 24th September in New York organised by the Coalition of Rainforest Nations. 'The actor met the minister and has expressed his interest to play a crucial role in sensitising the global community to the cause of the Indian tiger,' a senior environment ministry official told AFP in New Delhi adding that DiCaprio plans to come to India to be a part of conservation efforts.

Saving tigers appears to be a favourite cause of celebrities, with quite a few enlisted for the same, including Amitabh Bachchan, MS Dhoni and now, Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio.

Source: AFP, September 25, 2010

NTDV takes the tiger cause to CMs

The NDTV-Save the Tiger campaign, partnered with Aircel, entered a crucial phase with the campaign taking the tiger's cause to the Chief Minister's of some tiger

states. The NDTV team took the ‘Tiger Agenda’, spelling out immediate tiger conservation priorities of the concern states to the CM’s of Uttarakhand and Maharashtra.

Uttarakhand CM Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank assured that the Special Tiger Protection Force would be made operational in six months, and said that they were doing a survey to remove encroachments on the Corbett-Rajaji corridor. The Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan promised to notify the buffer for Melghat and Pench tiger reserves soon. (see ‘State’ for details).

Actor Amitabh Bachchan has been roped in as a campaign ambassador for the initiative while *Sanctuary Asia* is the knowledge partner.

BOOKS

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS • Edited by Perna Singh Bindra • Rupa

In *Voices in the Wilderness*, Perna Singh Bindra has put together an eclectic mix of essays from some of India’s best known wildlifewriters. The 22 chapters take the reader through the length and breadth of India from Point Calimere to the icy Himalayan mountain ranges and across a wide variety of habitats—from rain forests and mangroves to marine habitats and mass nesting beaches.

The writings, both fact and fiction, have a strong undertone of protection and do not portray wildlife ‘through the barrel of the gun’, as Perna herself outlines in her introductory chapter. *Voices in the Wilderness* comes at a time when India’s wildlife continues to face grave threats from both illegal hunting and destruction and fragmentation of habitat. Many of the essays in the book illustrate this important conservation conundrum and even present some realistic solutions which makes this book relevant from a conservation perspective. Let me quickly add that it is not, however, an undiluted conservation or natural history volume.

Authors include the late FW Champion, M Krishnan, Kailash Sankhala besides Ullas Karanth, Valmik Thapar, Bittu Sahgal, AJT Johnsingh, Peter Jackson, Tom Alter, Shekar Dattatri, Ranjit Lal, Bikram Grewal among others. The essays of most authors are peppered with some pulsating narratives on wildlife encounters and anecdotes that are rooted in their intense personal experiences of working up close with wildlife in varied habitats. The reader will enjoy the sheer diversity of species that the narrative vividly illustrates, and as Perna in her introduction puts it, ‘a celebration of our

wilds.’ The editor has, in this edition, attempted to bring the ‘voice of the voiceless’ which is well worth a read.

● **Extracted from a review by Praveen Bhargav, Seminar, September 2010**

BONES OF THE TIGER: Protecting the Maneating Tigers of Nepal • Hemanta Mishra

Bones of the Tiger is the quest of one man to explain the predicament of the beast he has sworn to save—the critically endangered Royal Bengal Tiger. Most books on the species come from India, this one takes us on a journey of tiger conservation in Nepal—from the days of the royal hunt to royal patronage which eventually led to the birth of the Chitwan National Park and onto the current conservation scenario in a political unstable climate. The book is exhaustive in its subject, right from a detailed, and interesting account of how India ‘lost’ the Smithsonian Tiger Ecology Project, one of the first and longest standing scientific study on tiger because of Indian bureaucracy suspicions about there being ‘hidden motives’. It gives an overview of the tiger conservation history and status across its range, of legends and the special place it occupies in Asian culture. The most interesting, and relevant, part is the author’s account of ‘saving the maneaters’ of Nepal, which echoes the complexities, and the dilemma of those dealing—especially on the ground—with carnivores like tigers amidst dense human populations and the fatal conflicts that arise therein. The author goes on to discuss the issue of farming tigers, which he reasons are conservation dead-ends. He ponders over the fate of the tiger... is the tiger doomed, merely counting its last days, or will it burn on, rule the forest into the next century? The author has no clear answers. Says Mishra, “the odds seem to be overwhelmingly stacked against the tiger. With growing human needs for food, fuel, and fodder; demands to expand roads, power plants, farmland and factories and an almost missionary zeal to catch up with the American standard of living, how can the tiger survive in the wilds of Asia including Siberia?”

TigerLink

LAND OF THE STRIPED STALKER: Wildlife of Madhya Pradesh • Text: Rajesh Gopal • Photographs • Rajesh Bedi

The book—a pictorial coffee table tribute to the wildlife of Madhya Pradesh—comes as a bit of a surprise penned as it is by the member secretary of National Tiger Conservation Authority, who is a known critic of negative impact of tourism in crucial tiger habitats. While at first glance the book appears to be a travel guide

detailed with information on tiger reserves, the book comes armed with an introductory warning: “While increasing number of visitors is a welcome sign for fostering tourism, there is cause for concern. We must not forget that these protected areas and core areas of tiger reserves are the breeding places of tigers and other wildlife and require complete tranquility. Thus it becomes an ecological imperative to foster low-key, ecologically sustainable tourism restricted to the fringes of reserves and protected areas.”

While informing about the rich natural wealth and wild heritage of Madhya Pradesh, the author also cautions about the threats to, and devastation and fragmentation of, natural habitats which has led to declines in wildlife populations and thereby, the ecological services. The book serves as an efficient guide to the visitor while at the same time appraising him of the issues and concern that stalk India’s wildlife, in the quest “that each visitor takes on the role of a naturalist.” The book has photographs of renowned wildlife filmmaker and photographer Rajesh Bedi.

TigerLink

FOREST OF TIGERS: People, Politics and Environment in the Sundarbans • by Annu Jalais

• **Routledge**

The book focuses attention on the people of the Sundarbans rather than on its charismatic tigers and threatened mangrove forests. Well-written and informative, it is accessible to a wide audience. The book provides an insight into the ways area residents perceive themselves in relation to the forest and how they ‘think with tigers.’ The author carried out the bulk of her field work in Garjontala, a section of Toofankali village on the island of Satjelia, about 130 km South of Kolkata. The 245-page book is an adaptation of the author’s doctoral thesis. Besides an introduction and conclusion, it is divided into six chapters that investigate the relationship between the village and the forest, the specific experiences and practices of prawn seed collectors, the understood parallels between tiger and human histories and behaviours, among other topics. The book includes a convenient glossary and an index, and is illustrated with several black and white photographs.

• **Extracted from a review by Julie Hughes, Seminar, September 2010**

SPRINT OF THE BLACKBUCK: Writings on Wildlife and Conservation in South India • Edited by S. Theodore Baskaran • Penguin Books

In publication for over 25 years now, the journal of the Madras Natural History Society. *Blackbuck* has carried

a wide range of articles – from reports of scientific studies and surveys, to the more lighthearted recollections of unusual encounters in the wild. Its contributors have been equally varied; they have included distinguished naturalists and writers as well as students and the occasional visitor to the society. Such a body of essays, reports and accounts written over a quarter century is a rich treasure from which to draw an anthology that traces, if largely anecdotally, the changes in the wild landscapes of southern India.

In the recently published *Sprint of the Blackbuck*, S. Theodore Baskaran attempts exactly this. This collection of twenty-eight pieces culled from previous issues of *Blackbuck* is an easy afternoon read (more a trot than a sprint), even for a person with little or no background to nature or conservation writing. Baskaran’s selections cover considerable ground in terms of the species and locations that appear in the essays, they offer a succinct overview of conservation issues and questions that arose over two decades ago but continue to be relevant, and they provide a good introduction to some of the better-known writers on these subjects.

• **Extracted from a review by Pavithra Sankaran, Seminar, Sept 2010**

FILMS

Lost Land of the Tiger • A BBC film

The *Lost Land of the Tiger* is a documentary series following a dramatic expedition searching for tigers hidden in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan.

An international team of big cat experts and wildlife filmmakers are given unique access to the jungles and mountains of Bhutan. The team members who ‘hunt’ for the elusive tigers in this difficult terrain include explorer Steve Backshall who is joined by sniffer dog Bruiser; wildlife cameraman Gordon Buchanan, camerawoman Justine Evans, scientist George McGavin, and the renowned big cat biologist Alan Rabinowitz.

This film for the first time catches on camera a ‘lost’ population of tigers in the mountains of Bhutan.

Their discovery has stunned experts, as the tigers are living at a higher altitude than any others known and appear to be successfully breeding. The film is a must-see for its remarkable footage and journey into the hidden land of the tiger.

Tiger Queen • Director & Cinematographer • S. Nallamuthu

The opening voiceover for *Tiger Queen*, a new documentary that chronicles a fascinating power struggle in the Ramthambhore national park encapsulates everything that is right and wrong with this 45-minute film. “Who will be the next ruler of Ranthambhore?” it

asks like a trailer for an action film, flashing shots of the old fort inside the park. “Fierce battle, dangerous liaisons and territorial war lies ahead.” This tone never waivers through the length of the film—its always dramatic and sometimes over the top. On the one hand it’s a refreshing tiger film, one full of insights and intriguing glimpses into their world. But it sometimes goes too far in attributing human motivations to the tigers. This feels too artificial, helped by clever editing that make particular standoffs more scripted than natural.

The visuals are topnotch throughout—the pace is fast with quick cuts and multiple close-ups and the film is always arresting. It was shot for over two years in Ranthambhore and Sariska.

Extracted from ‘All to human’ by Krish Raghav, *Mint*, September 25

Broken Tail’s Last Journey • Colin Stafford-Johnson:

Those involved with tiger conservation would remember the tragic death of a tiger—mowed down by Rajdhani—a super fast train connecting Delhi and Mumbai, near Darrah in Rajasthan in 2003. He was later identified as ‘Broken Tail’, a much photographed tiger from Ranthambhore.

Colin Stafford-Johnson film is a personal quest to discover the truth behind the disappearance of this tiger he first saw on May 15, 2002, chasing off a sloth bear when he walked directly up the dirt track towards the filmmaker...

Colin Stafford-Johnson, leads us on a search for the truth about the fate of the late tiger, and his obsession carries us on a journey that goes beyond Broken Tail to give an insight on what is happening to the world’s most iconic animals. Why did this young tiger leave Ranthambhore National Park, one of India’s best known tiger reserves? How could he possibly have survived in rural India for as long as he did? And what does his story tell us about the fate of the ‘last wild tigers’ on Earth?

NGOs

Frontline forest staff trained in Kanha

To strengthen tiger protection in the Kanha National Park, the MP Forest Department and International Fund for Animal Welfare-Wildlife Trust of India with support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service conducted the training for frontline department staff on ‘Wildlife Crime Prevention’ on 28th July.

Source: Wildlife Trust of India, 30, July 2010

Flood relief for forest wagers at Dudhwa

Located in the terai lowlands on the Indo-Nepal border, the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve has traditionally been prone to annual floods. These are necessary for the renewal of its unique grassland ecosystem that supports an important population of swamp deer.

However, over the past few years, the rising intensity of floods has begun to pose a serious threat to the reserve. Also, bridges and roads get damaged or blocked and the field staff becomes stranded with no access to essential commodities.

In the floods that hit the park in October last year, the staff had a tough time as their movements were restricted and they had limited or no rations in the period when they were cut off from the outside world.

This year heavy rainfall started in early July and increased the possibility of flooding. Heavy rains again lashed the area between July 18 and 20th and the local administration issued a flood alert. Parts of the Sathiana and South Sonaripur Ranges inside the tiger reserve were flooded in the rising water. As a precaution, WWF-India once again supplied essential flood relief for daily wage staff belonging to all ranges of Dudhwa National Park and Kishanpur and Katarniaghat wildlife sanctuaries.

The rations supplied were sufficient to keep them stocked throughout the flood period. The park’s patrolling elephants were also provided food rations by the organisation.

WWF-India staff from its field offices at Palia and Katarniaghat carried out the distribution.

Source: WWF-India, 11, August 2010

Impacts of airstrip, canals surveyed

The Landscape Monitoring Unit (LMU) of the Satpuda Foundation carried out rapid assessment of the airstrip coming up near the Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, close to National Highway 7 (*Refer ‘Pench flying into trouble’, TigerLink, Revived Volume 6, May 2010*). The Rs 4.56 crore project being implemented by the PWD near Suktara, just 12 kms from the Karmajhari gate, will be detrimental to the reserve’s wildlife.

Originally planned for Kanha Tiger Reserve in order to cater to the massive high-end ‘tiger tourism’ market, the project was shifted to Pench when its proponents anticipated objection at Kanha.

Only six kilometers from the buffer area of the reserve, the airstrip is intended for small and mid-sized passenger liners. This will cause immense disturbance to the reserve and its wildlife. Concerns are especially high because the reserve supports a healthy population of vultures- a species near extinction- that run the risk

of being killed by bird-hits. SF has taken up the matter with the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

Another threat that the LMU surveyed has been a network of canals that is fragmenting up the Satpuda landscape. The canal network, being constructed by the irrigation department, is cutting tiger corridors across central India. Important tiger source populations, including Pench, Tadoba-Andhari, Nagzira-Navegaon and Melghat are being fragmented by six such projects. (*Refer TigerLink, December 2009*). This in addition to the other projects including expansion of roads, railway lines, and mines.

The MoEF has been urged to intervene with suggested mitigation measures.

Source: *Satpuda Foundation*, 31, August 2010

International Course announced

The Satpuda Foundation, SGB Amravati University, Maharashtra Forest Department Wildlife Wing and Nature Conservation Society Amravati will hold a three-week long 'International Course in Conservation Biology and Wildlife Management' in Amravati, Maharashtra, from 2nd to 20th December 2010.

The course, targeting wildlife biologists, resource managers and environmental educators will introduce participants to various biodiversity conservation issues. They will also be trained in scientific reporting, proposal writing and the use of various field equipment and data collection software. A series of classroom lectures, seminars and workshops on various topics including biodiversity monitoring, wildlife management, animal ecology and behaviour, etc will follow. The participants will be expected to conduct research projects and gain hands-on experience after the course.

Eminent foreign and Indian instructors like Dr Rudy Rudran (USA), Dr YV Jhala (WII), Dr Bivash Pandav (WWF), Kishor Rithe (Satpuda Foundation), Dr GN Vankhede (SGB Amravati University) would teach the course.

SGB Amravati University will host the course with field assignments in two tiger reserves in central India.

Source: *Nature Conservation Society Amravati*

Orissa: More Protected Areas demanded

Wild Orissa, a Bhubaneswar based NGO, has pressed for the urgent declaration of more protected areas in the state.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, Wild Orissa has stated that only 4.2 per cent of the state's area currently falls under the protected area network. It has drawn his attention to the state's own vision document which envisages bringing at least 10 per cent of the state's area under this network by 2020.

The areas have been proposed keeping in mind important wildlife landscapes, crucial wildlife populations and increasing threats of habitat fragmentation. Most of these are crucial tiger habitats.

This issue was raised in Parliament by MP Ram Chandra Khuntia. In a question to MEF Jairam Ramesh on 9th August 2010 in the Rajya Sabha, Khuntia asked for details about steps being taken to notify the above areas as wildlife sanctuaries. In his reply the MEF stated that while Kapilas Reserved Forest is being considered for declaration as a wildlife sanctuary and that there "is no proposal" to declare the remaining areas.

However, Orissa's State Board of Wildlife had recommended all the areas to be brought under the Protected Area network in the 1980s. Kondakamberu and Chitrakonda had been proposed as wildlife sanctuaries as early as 1975-76 because they harboured one of the last populations of Asiatic Wild Buffaloes.

The wild buffaloes of Kondakamberu-Chitrakonda are thought to have fled to adjoining forests of Andhra Pradesh due to the submergence of their habitat in the Upper Kolab and Balimela irrigation projects. No survey has been carried out to establish their status since then. These forests too are now threatened with submergence due to the Polavaram reservoir proposed in Andhra Pradesh.

Source: Monalisa Bhujabal, Aditya Panda, *Wild Orissa*

Sniffer dogs on patrol

Five sniffer dogs trained in detecting illegal wildlife products such as big cat skins, bones, bear bile, etc joined the ranks of the Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand forest departments on 29th July.

The dogs and their ten handlers have completed a rigorous nine-month training programme at the Dog Training Centre, 23rd Battalion of the Special Armed Forces, Bhopal.

The procurement of the dogs and their training was funded and facilitated by TRAFFIC-India.

Source: TRAFFIC India, 29, July 2010

Dudhwa field staff receives support

As a gesture of appreciation for the hazardous duty performed under difficult conditions by frontline forest staff, the Katerniaghat Foundation distributed umbrellas, caps and flashlights to 50 field staff in Nishangarha range of the Katerniaghata Wildlife Sanctuary on 16th and 17th April.

Source: *Katerniaghat Foundation Newsletter 'Kat's Eye'*, July 2010

ABOUT RANTHAMBHORE FOUNDATION

The Ranthambhore Foundation has made a tremendous mark in the field of wildlife conservation. Most of its activities have been centred around the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve of Rajasthan, though in recent years it has played a central role in impacting tiger conservation policy. Its various activities particularly in Sawai Madhopur and around the reserve include education and awareness programmes, livelihood concerns. Motivating local people towards tiger conservation. In its new agenda, it has been proposed to institute awards for communities living around the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve for their pro-conservation initiatives.

The awards shall be divided into three categories; village level, school level and for students.

Villages extending maximum support to the management of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve by activities like growing fodder and fuel trees, developing community grasslands, reducing the number of unproductive village cattle and replacing them with hybrid cattle, reducing grazing, participating in RF rallies and assist in controlling poaching shall be awarded. There will be three awards in this category, ranging from cash along with a citation based on the decision of an eminent panel of judges.

Similarly, schools which carry out exemplary work by participating in functions to raise awareness and educating children about conservation shall be awarded with a citation and awards ranging from Rs 5000 to Rs 10,000.

Students will get annual scholarships ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 based on their performance in painting, debate, essay competitions and active participation in conservation rallies organised by the Foundation during Wildlife Week.

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