From the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

Fateh Singh Rathore left for heavenly abode living many of us dumb founded. I lost a great friend and perhaps the most knowledgeable person who could speak the language of tiger. Ranthambhore National Park was his love and he knew every plant, bird, animal, stream, water-body and the friend and foe of the park living around. I give him full credit for bringing Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve globally famous. I am sure tigers will also be indebted to him as he could make them the most popular and talked about species in the world.

We have lost two stalwarts of conservation in Billy and Fateh in just over one year. These losses are irreparable and the conservation community will always remember them.

In the meantime, lot of things have happened in the tiger front. The NTCA is trying to push forward its relocation programme but Government of India has drastically cut the budget. The Ministry of Environment and Forests demarcated ‘Go’ and ‘No Go’ areas in the forests; many of the ‘No Go’ areas which would be strictly off limits for mining are tiger bearing forests or are part of its corridor. But the PMO does not recognise this, and there is pressure to let-go even these ‘No-Go’ areas. The Home Minister has joined the fray and has also pressed for easing up of ‘No-Go’ areas. In this situation, it will difficult to protect these forests from the ravages of coal mining.

I have been reiterating that give at least two percent India’s landmass for tiger and its ecosystem. If India’s 98 per cent of land cannot make it a superpower or take the GDP growth to 12 per cent, I am sure two per cent will not make any difference. But it will save the tiger and its ecosystem.

We have been blaming State Governments for not supporting the cause of tiger but is it not a fact that the Government of India has also shown its bias by extending support to only one fifth of the notified Tiger Reserves? Compare the fund support given to Sariska in last three years with that given to other tiger reserves like Palamu, Valmiki, Buxa, Simlipal etc., where the habitats are still intact and little effort can bring them into their glorious past. If tiger has to be saved in the country then every reserve has to be given equal attention.

India will announce the tiger estimation by the end of March. We are talking of bringing refinement in the estimation process. Stage one was practiced in 2006 and now we have reached stage three. But even in the estimation exercise, there seems to be a bias—there are tiger reserves where not even a single camera was laid. How can we reach a national estimation figure when the exercise has not been done in many parks? Two among these parks are Similipal and Palamu and one would like to know how tigers were estimated here?

People associated with the exercise inform that the local field staff have been trained to carry out the exercise which is being tabulated in WII. How reliable will this information be when there is practically no staff or even if there are, they are poorly informed and trained and physically unfit to carry out the exercise effectively due to old age.

I have been involved with tiger conservation for over four and half decades. With the experience I have gained, I would like to make a plea that we must try to save the tigers wherever there is chance. The concept of source and sink population was in place even when Project Tiger was launched in 1973. It is my considered opinion that with proper scientific support and sincere managerial input, many of the sink population can be brought back to a viable one.

P.K. Sen
Editorial

As each TigerLink drew to a close, Fatji’s (Fateh Singh Rathore) calls would get more frequent. When was the issue out? Had we covered (the latest crisis!) from Ranthambhore? What did the editorial—and the director’s note-say? Was it strong, delivering the requisite punch? As I write now, I miss Fatji. Apologies, Fatji is sorely missed, always. But it is the tiger who is the worst loser, who has lost their staunch champion. For us, he was a tiger among men, for the tiger, he was one among them.

Last year we lost Billy (Arjan Singh), this year, Fatji passed away. Two stalwarts gone...

To move on to species they lived for: What ails the wild tiger?

We know the answer, we know the cure.

We also know that the tiger’s last, and only, hope is India.

But we refuse to take the tough call that will stem its rapid decline. Inspite of the backslapping and self-congratulations, somewhere, we are failing the tiger.

For the sake of simplicity, let’s divide the problem into two broad heads: One category is the larger picture, the tiger, in context of the ‘society’—for want of another word—it lives in. These issues are seemingly insurmountable, the ones those overwhelm you in their enormity. Where is the room for wild tigers in India, with her rapidly increasing population (1.3 billion, 50,000 added annually), and her thirst for growth and a consumerist lifestyle? How do you counter the incessant threat of highways, coal mines, power projects and expanding human habitation in tiger habitats and corridors? How do you convince politicians hungry for votes, and corporates greedy for money that the highway cuts into a crucial tiger corridor or that the coal mine sits on prime tiger real estate?

While we, doggedly, try, try and try to keep the bulldozers away, there are other issues that demand urgent attention. These, perhaps, are more workable. Poaching is the single biggest reason for rapid population declines, indeed local extinctions. Yet, what have we done to curb this slaughter? Sure, we cannot overnight convince China that tiger penis soup isn’t the magic mantra for manhood, but what has India done to control the supply? Why isn’t there sufficient, well-trained and equipped frontline staff to take on poachers? Why don’t we strengthen our Wildlife Crime Bureau along the lines of the agency to control narcotics smuggling?

Mismanagement, or is some cases, no management is another concern. I was part of an exercise to assess tiger reserves. Of the eight surveyed, only one reserve had a dedicated field director and deputy director—the rest divided time between commercial forestry and conserving tigers. Incidentally, only two of the reserves had any protection strategy in place, and functional on the ground. There must be an honest, exhaustive assessment of what ails our tiger reserves, and the all-important next step to act on the concerned issues.

Why is crucial tiger habitat—deemed to be inviolate, being pillaged not by outside agencies but by the forest department themselves? The Bhanwar deh waterhole, a prime tiger nursery, in Berda in Ranthambhore was destroyed for an anicut. This is just one among the other such construction (or destruction) in Ranthambhore, and reserves across the country, where civil works reach a peak when the financial year comes to a close.

Tiger reserves are meant to serve tigers, not officers or people.

Conflict: That is killing not just the tiger, but also tolerance for the cat, is one of the most complex issues. Yet we can put in place simple mechanisms to ease the suffering. Like speedy, fair compensation for loss of cattle, and life. Have rapid response teams in place, depots to meet the local need for fuel and fodder.

The failure of the state governments to come on board on tiger conservation has been repeatedly stressed. Very true, but the centre cannot be absolved of responsibility either. The push for coal mining and highways into tiger habitat is mainly from the centre, with the PMO pressing for mining to be allowed into the recently-demarcated ‘no-go’ areas. The budget for the National Tiger Conservation Authority, which funds protection initiatives on the ground, was been cut by a fourth. The next economic superpower, India, does not have enough money for her tigers.

Meanwhile, the worst onslaught is brewing: by changing laws and policies, we are striking at the very foundation on which our glorious (but all-too-short) conservation history is based. The Forest Rights Act weakened the Wildlife Protection Act and largely stripped away the sanctity of Protected Areas. Its impact on wild habitats has been discussed in detail in previous issues (look for it also under ‘Focus’), but a new set of recommendations for FRA rules by the very influential National Advisory Council will be disastrous for wild habitats as they open up ‘rights’ in PAs even further.

India announces her tiger estimates shortly. But reports from the field indicate that the exercise was not a thorough one—in some cases cameras didn’t work. In others, cameras have not even been set up. Why are we rushing then to announce numbers at a grand tiger mela? Indications are that tiger numbers have increased, but the relevance of numbers diminishes when we consider that a chunk of it is tiny, fragmented populations with little genetic viability. Corridors connecting these populations are crucial to their survival.

To end on a positive note, the tiger reserves we assessed fall in India’s red corridor impacted by left-wing extremism. Most, like Nagarjunasagar, Valmiki and Similipal were previously written off. But here, far from the spotlight, lie India’s untapped treasures. They have tremendous potential. Let’s put in our best efforts to raise these—and other such-reserves.

Prerna Singh Bindra
GOOD NEWS

Increase in tiger numbers?
The much-awaited results of the second all India tiger estimates for the country is to be announced in March-end, and indications are that a slight rise in numbers may be expected.

Comment: Most cameras laid in the field to estimate tigers for the ongoing all India census did not work till monsoon and even after monsoon only about half of the cameras were operational. In some reserves, cameras have not even been set up. Given the situation, how will results be declared in March-end as scheduled.

Eight more tiger reserves
Minister of State (Independent Charge) Environment and Forests (MEF) Jairam Ramesh said on November 12th that India will soon have eight new tiger reserves added to the 39 already in existence. These include Sathyamangalam in Tamil Nadu, BR Hills in Karnataka, Suheilwa and Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh, Sunabeda in Orissa, Ratapani in Madhya Pradesh and Navegaon-Nagzira and Bor in Maharashtra. These reserves are expected to come up in about six to eight months.


Comment: Good news, as we said, but on one hand the government announces new reserves, and the other the onslaught on the existing reserves continues i.e. highway through Pench, mines around Tadoba, submergence by dams etc. Also, some of these reserves like Sunabeda and Pilibhit have been having the nod from state governments for years—eight in the case of Pilibhit. Fact is, the centre may have announced its intention, but it is the states who must, but are reluctant to declare new TRs. We also need to assess the status of the newly declared tiger reserves. What is the criteria on what they were declared? Were field assessments done? It is witnessed that in most cases they are tiger reserves only in name, without the requisite protection or wildlife management.

Mukandara Hills to be declared TR
NTCA has given in-principle approval for declaring Mukandara Hills National Park in Rajasthan which includes Darrah, Jwahar Sagar and Chambal Wildlife sanctuaries to be declared as a tiger reserve. This is aimed to function as the satellite core of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve.

Source: NTCA

Enhanced pay package for TR staff
In a letter addressed to the Chief Wildlife Wardens of all tiger range states, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) Member Secretary Dr Rajesh Gopal has directed an approval to “double the existing rates of project allowance for the existing categories of employees working in tiger reserves.” The enhanced package is applicable from September 1st, 2008.

Source: Letter No. 15-3/2010-NTCA from Dr Rajesh Gopal to CWs, Dated 27th October

Comment: When Project Tiger was created, there was provision of special pay at all levels for the staff of reserve areas, which was enhanced in the 9th plan scheme of Project Tiger. Most of the states did not implement it, even though the Government of India was bearing the entire cost. How can we ensure that the enhanced package will be given to the staff this time? The other related issue is the urgent need to address the payment of the daily wagers who form the bulk of the frontline staff. Wages are not paid for months in most reserves due to delay in receiving funds, mainly due to non-implementation of NTCA directive to expedite the functioning of Tiger Conservation Foundation and the state governments practice of delaying release of funds.

NTCA strengthened
The Union Cabinet on January 13 approved the creation of four posts in the rank of Inspector General of Forests for the regional offices and headquarters of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. In conjunction with the recent decision to set up three regional offices of the NTCA in Nagpur, Guwahati and Bangalore, this is expected to give a boost to India’s tiger conservation efforts. Welcoming the decision, the MEF Jairam Ramesh said: “This is a great step forward. There was a crying need for decentralisation so that we can enhance the monitoring of our conservation efforts and improve the quality and timeliness of support we give the field directors of our 39 tiger reserves across the country. There is no doubt that this will strengthen the capacity of the NTCA to deliver on its mandate, and provide new teeth to our tiger conservation efforts.”
CAMPA funds for relocation from TRs

In letters addressed to all senior forest and wildlife authorities and field directors of tiger reserves, the NTCA has directed that money from CAMPA funds may be utilised by states for the relocation and rehabilitation of communities residing inside protected areas. The directive comes from decisions arrived at from a meeting of all PCCFs of states/UTs at New Delhi held on March 3rd, and state that “the use of NPV money towards rehabilitation of people from protected areas can be allowed after approval of same by the competent authority as per the detailed Annual Plan of Operation.” At a meeting organised by NTCA, the MEF Jairam Ramesh said that a meeting had been organised in early April to review the spending of CAMPA funds. He reiterated again that CAMPA must be for tiger conservation and regeneration of degraded tiger habitats or forests around TRs.

Source: NTCA

Comment: The CAMPA guidelines are clear that the funds are to be used to promote conservation, protection, regeneration and management of existing forests; Conservation, protection and management of wildlife and its habitat within and outside protected areas, including the consolidation of protected areas; Research, training and capacity-building; Environmental services including provision of goods such as non-timber forest produce, fuel, fodder and water and compensatory afforestation. However the states prefer to pour CAMPA money into plantation projects which have little conservation value—and a dubious history of corruption. In fact there are media reports (from Orissa, which is one of the largest beneficiary of CAMPA funds) of how wildlife areas are being destroyed to make way for CAMPA-funded plantations.

Using CAMPA funds for relocation is a sensible solution especially in light of the shrinking of funds to NTCA.

PM ordains; but separate wildlife dept delayed

Ten months after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh gave the go ahead for separate forest and wildlife departments, there has been little progress. The PM had instructed MEF Jairam Ramesh to form a separate department for wildlife & forests in the 5th meeting of the NBWL on March 18, 2010. Ramesh had promised
to have the “architecture” of the new department in place by September, but this seems to be caught in bureaucratic red tape. According to ministry sources, the new department is unlikely to be formed anytime soon. Clearly, the Prime Minister’s sense of urgency has been insufficient to prod the bureaucracy into action.

According to a senior official in the Ministry, a note detailing the proposal has been circulated to the Ministries of Finance, Law and Personnel for their inputs. He added, “we are waiting for the response from the various Ministries to whom the proposal has been forwarded for comments. Based on their response, further steps will be taken. In any case, the bifurcation is not going to happen soon”.

Source: Rajesh Singh, Pioneer; November 8, 2010, New Delhi

Comment: It must be verified how much time it was taken by the MoEF to forward it to the finance department. It is learnt that the MoEF inordinately delayed the process as well. As before, there is division within the ranks who prefer to let things continue, and are therefore delaying the process in the ministry.

Jairam supports translocation

Though the translocation process came under a lot of criticism following ST1’s (the first tiger to be translocated to Sariska) death, MEF Jairam Ramesh came out in strong support of the tiger revival project in Sariska on 16th November following the tiger’s death. Ramesh admitted that there was failure of “governance and administration” in the reserve. “I admit that there has been a failure of governance and administration, and I take full responsibility for that. But to say that the relocation programme is not working is wrong,” he said. He asserted that the best scientists of the country were working on the tiger relocation programme.

Four tigers survive in Sariska now and have so far failed to mate and reproduce. One more male tiger was relocated to Sariska on February 25.


Comment: The criticism was not against relocation per se, which is important for restocking of tiger population in the face of local extinction. It was pointed out that relocation is not advisable unless the causes of extinction are addressed. The tigers were translocated, though none of the causes of extinction, identified by various agencies, addressed. The tragic fallout is there for all to see.

Jairam objects to mining around Sariska

MEF Jairam Ramesh strongly objected to 40 mining leases that the government of Rajasthan granted around Sariska and has written thrice to CM Ashok Gehlot asking to stop all mining operations. The Rajasthan government has granted 40 new mining leases in the Aravalli Hills near the Sariska Tiger Reserve, seriously threatening the reserve. The leases are in defiance of a February 2010 Supreme Court order that had asked for all mining leases to be considered as fresh applications and not as renewals. Only three mines in the Aravalli range in Udaipur have shut down operations heeding to the Supreme Court’s order dated 9th February. In all, there are around 100 mines in the region with 32 operating illegally near the reserve.

In his repeated letters to the chief minister, Ramesh has asked for the immediate cancellation of all mining leases issued recently in the Aravallis, mainly around the Sariska Tiger Reserve. Stressing that wanton excavations near Sariska was like “betraying Indira Gandhi” who had launched Project Tiger in 1973, the minister said that it is best that “the state takes action now”.


Comment: The mining issues around Sariska go back to the time before it gained the status of a tiger reserve in 1978-79. The Supreme Court acted on a PIL and directed the Rajasthan government to demarcate and notify the tiger reserve and submit the same to court. Mining was a contentious issue even then and the GOI used to clear each and every case of mining. In 2001, the GOI decided to transfer the entire authority of deciding on mining cases to the state, thus shifting their responsibility on the Rajasthan government.
Eco-sensitive zones for PAs, finally

In a bid to prevent ecological damage caused due to developmental activities around National Parks and Sanctuaries, the Environment Ministry has come out with new guidelines to create eco-sensitive zones which will work as ‘shock absorbers’ for the protected areas.

The new eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) guidelines, declared by the Ministry on February 9, would also ensure that these areas are treated as transition zones from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection. “The basic aim is to regulate certain activities around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to minimise the negative impacts of such activities on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas,” the Ministry said in its new guidelines. The MoEF has asked all states to constitute a committee comprising the wildlife warden, an ecologist and a revenue department official of the area concerned to suggest the requirement of an eco-sensitive zone and its extent.

The panel could also suggest the best methods to manage such zones and broad-based thematic activities to be included in the master plan for the areas, which have been classified as prohibited, restricted with safeguards and permissible. The guidelines said activities including commercial mining, setting of saw mills and industries causing pollution, commercial use of firewood, major hydropower projects are prohibited in such areas. It also prohibits tourism activities like flying over protected areas in an aircraft or hot air balloon and discharge of effluents and solid waste in natural water bodies or terrestrial areas.

Felling of trees, drastic change in agriculture systems and commercial use of natural water resources, including groundwater harvesting and setting up of hotels and resorts are the activities regulated in the areas. Activities permitted in the areas include ongoing agriculture and horticulture practices by local communities, rainwater harvesting, organic farming, adoption of green technology and use of renewable energy sources.

No funds for the tiger

For the year 2011-2012, the National Tiger Conservation Authority got a mere Rs 150 crores, as against the expected 700 crores, a cut by about 25 per cent. With the current budget, the relocation of villages from the core critical habitats will be majorly hit and it will be a miracle if basic vitals like protection, habitat and crisis management are covered. The budget has been on a steady decline: 194 crores in 2010-11 as against Rs 204 crore that they received in the financial year 2009-2010. There is a pressing need for Rs 5,000 crores for the current (running) and next planning period i.e. from 2010-11 to 2017. For 2011-2012, the NTCA had asked for Rs 1,100 crore, which is a must if they were to make a headway to shift villages out of core critical tiger habitat. The Planning Commission had reportedly agreed to grant Rs 700 crores.

The cut has come as a major blow to the relocation process, and conservation. There are 762 villages with about 48,000 families inside core areas. Many villages have come forward and are eager to shift out as they struggle with a difficult life within the forest, and seek new opportunities, and a life, in the mainstream.

Sources said MEF Jairam Ramesh has been engaging with the Planning Commission and the finance ministry to see if he can up the budget but all hints are that the ministry itself will not see any substantial gains in its resources in the coming fiscal.

Observing that many PAs have already undergone tremendous development in close vicinity of their boundaries and some are actually located in an urban set-up, the MoEF notes that the width of the ESZ will have to be kept flexible and PA-specific. “The width of the Eco-sensitive Zone and type of regulations will differ from protected area to protected area. However, as a general principle the width of eco-sensitive zone could go up to 10 km around a protected area as provided in the Wildlife Conservation Strategy-2002,” it said.

**Source:** ‘MoEF frames guidelines for eco-zones around national parks’, PTI, Feb 16, 2011

**Comment:** The Eco-sensitive Zone notification has been pending since over five years. The National Board for Wildlife took a decision on March 17, 2005, on delineation of eco-sensitive zones. The Supreme Court on December 4, 2006 took note of the order and directed the states and union territories to send proposals of eco-sensitive zones to the ministry, but few, if any state acted on the same. Most states are unwilling to create eco-sensitive zones as this restricts big-ticket projects like mining, power projects etc. Given the current pressures of mining, highways, coal etc in and around tiger reserves and corridors the importance of notifying such zones cannot be stressed enough.

**NTCA board a figurehead?**

After their last meeting on January 2010, the NTCA board met after a long gap of nearly 14 months on March 1. All decisions which were to be taken in consultation with various committees formed by the NTCA, were taken on an ad-hoc basis. The involvement of the board in key decision has been minimal. It has been suggested that the board’s counsel must be taken on board for important issues which have a long term impact on conservation i.e the selection of new tiger reserves, formation of key committees like those for the management effectiveness evaluation of tiger reserves, tiger monitoring protocol etc.

A list of key actions and review of certain matters was also suggested, some of which are listed below:

- Funds released for relocation from core critical habitats have only been partially utilised, and require an urgent review.
- It is understood that the Special Tiger Protection Force for which 50 crores was allocated is yet to be formed in most TRs. A status report across states?
- Should our complete focus be on the few tiger reserves—about seven or eight—which have source populations? There is no second opinion that these are priority areas, and concentrated conservation efforts here are crucial. At the same time, other reserves which currently have few tigers/sink populations, but excellent habitat and a potential to hold more tigers must also be given adequate attention and focus.

- The tiger translocation protocol requirement is not only scientific, but also has administrative and management aspects which must be given due consideration.

- An update of the any action taken on the special drive initiated by the centre for reserves in a ‘precarious’ position i.e. Similipal, Nagarjunasagar Srisailam, Valmiki, Palamu, Indravati

- Progress of states in notification of buffer areas, Tiger Conservation Plans, Tiger Conservation Foundation etc

- Most states reported that the cameras laid for estimation did not function. Even though replaced post-monsoon, the cameras were not fully operational. In some states like Orissa and Jharkhand, cameras have not even been set up. Surprising, then, that the estimation figures will be ready for release at the international meet in March-end.

**Hope for wild tigers rests on India**

The NTCA organised a meeting of a select group of conservationists and scientists with the MEF Jairam Ramesh on March 7th to discuss core policy matters concerning tiger conservation. Speaking at the meeting acclaimed wildlife biologist Dr George Schaller said that the future of the tiger depended on India. “I have hope that India can and will do something to save the world’s last tigers. He stressed the need for a strong guard force, strict on the ground protection, conserving habitats, transborder vigilance and cooperation to check illegal trade, and marking priority sites for relocation. He added that it took political willpower to put in the legislation and policy in place to protect tigers. He emphasized the need for sound, rigorous, and modern scientific methods to inform and evaluate tiger conservation strategies, a point reiterated by Dr. Alan Rabinowitz, president and CEO, Panthera. Speaking on the current crisis, Dr Rabinowitz said that “tigers are in the ICU, terminal
disease: stage IV. Tragedy is, we know the cure, we know how to save the tiger, but lack the political will to do so.” “I believe that there are no more 2,500 wild tigers in the world, confined to just one per cent of their historic range. India is the last bastion where we have the best minds, best landscapes, best habitats—it is the best place to demonstrate a turnaround of the tiger’s sinking fortunes. He called for more transparency and international scrutiny to critically evaluate remaining source populations so as to employ best practices in these priority sites. He added that key areas must be conserved and developed as model sites.

The MEF Jairam Ramesh said that the international community can play a key role in facilitating cooperation between countries that shared tiger habitat with India i.e. Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and especially Mayanmar which has Hukawng Valley Tiger reserve contiguous to Namdapha in Arunachal.

Jairam said that it was almost a task impossible to get cooperation from states in tiger conservation as state priorities were different, centred on growth, and the only way forward was giving the states a larger stake through fiscal incentives.

The participants deliberated at length on various issues of tiger conservation and arrived at the following points for future work

1. Securing trans-boundary cooperation on issues of poaching and trade in other tiger range countries like Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar with guidance from international experts and in collaboration with NGOs.
2. To determine and finalise a strategy for protection of tiger populations outside Tiger Reserves.
3. Gap-evaluation of the 39 Tiger Reserves as per scientific norms of space requirements.
4. Analyse the feasibility of utilising CAMPA funds toward tiger conservation and regeneration of degraded habitat especially outside TRs so as to effectively ‘extend’ tiger habitat
5. Evaluate and review the formation and functioning of Tiger Conservation Foundations on a state-wise basis.
6. Create a knowledge pool of international and national scientists and experts at Wildlife Institute of India for improving and implementing cutting-edge science for tiger conservation.

The meeting was attended by Dr George Schaller, Dr Alan Rabinowitz, Joe Smith, (Director, Tiger Program, Panthera), Dr Ullas Karanth, PK Sen, Valmik Thapar, Bittu Sahgal, Belinda Wright, Ravi Singh, Raghu Chandawat, Prema Singh Bindra, and field directors and officers across tiger states.

Source: A TigerLink report with inputs from PIB

International Tiger Meet in March

The National Tiger Conservation Authority is organising an international tiger conference on March 28 and 29. The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh is expected to attend the inauguration. Also present will be the MEF Jairam Ramesh, DG & Special Secretary (forests), Member Secretary (NTCA). The new all India census figures will be released at the meeting. The Management Effectiveness reports of reserves, a film and a book on Project Tiger will also be released.

All field directors and senior wildlife officials from states, national and international experts, scientists, conservationists, prominent politicians, industrialists and media persons are expected to attend the conference. India will show case its best practices, and there will be presentations on green infrastructure, role of media, the corporate sector in tiger conservation, etc.

With CM’s of ‘tiger states’ expected at the meeting, there will be special focus on working with the states, and impressing upon them the urgent priorities regarding tiger conservation.

The Global Tiger Initiative will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Global Tiger Forum for monitoring of implementation of the Global Tiger Recovery Programmes in all the 13 tiger range countries. All tiger ranges states will also present the progress made in the execution of the National Tiger Recovery Programme.

The conference would be organised as joint event of the MoEF through the National Tiger Conservation Authority, Global Tiger Forum in collaboration with the Global Tiger Initiative.

A TigerLink Report

Management effectiveness of TRs

At a meeting organised by NTCA and the Wildlife Institute of India on the ongoing Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) Process on February 18 & 19, it was decided not to rank the reserves as done previously but to grade them from A to D category. It was also decided to have a special category for reserves in the ‘red corridor’ as management and protection in reserves impacted by Left-wing extremism was practically difficult and ineffectual. New reserves,
i.e. those declared after 2000 would also be placed in a separate category given that it takes time to follow the practices as well as orientation as demanded in a tiger reserve. Reserves in the north-east were placed in a special category. Also, Panna and Sariska where tigers had gone locally extinct, and tigers were translocated to rebuild the population were to be a category on its own.

Some of the best practices will be showcased so that these can be followed by other reserves. It was suggested that when a new tiger reserve is declared there should be some training and orientation process on the various guidelines, statutory procedures and practices, tiger monitoring, wildlife modules etc.

**International Tiger Advisory Group formed**

Some of the most credible names in tiger conservation have gotten together as a sort of ‘shadow cabinet’ for the tiger. This group will assist tiger range countries by making available the best knowledge and practices in tiger conservation. iTAG will be chaired by the legendary Dr George Schaller, with Dr Alan Rabinowitz as its International Coordinator. It has on board ten senior tiger scientists and conservationists, and will also invite a panel of experts and conservationists as Associates.

The group will work across tiger range countries and will assist in providing a framework and protocol for evaluating tiger reserves, best practices for tiger research, monitoring and conservation in TRCs, a protocol for translocation and reintroduction of wild tigers, recommend declaration of new tiger reserves, protected landscapes and corridors and facilitate international coordination between tiger countries and trans-border interventions. The group will provide advice on mitigation of human-tiger conflict, training protocols for forest staff and others involved in tiger conservation, legislation and international treaties relating to tigers, impact of development projects in tiger landscapes and in determining the value of Ecosystem Services of tiger habitats. iTAG will put its advice in the public domain and will work to support—and in cooperation with—all governments of tiger range countries to do right by the tiger.

**River linking in Panna gets green go-ahead**

India first river-interlinking project on Ken and Betwa rivers in Central India has received ‘in-principle’ approval of the Environment ministry. In the Rs 10,000-crore project water from river Ken in Uttar Pradesh will be diverted into river Betwa in MP, requiring huge tracts of forestland from Panna Tiger Reserve. Conservationists have opposed the project as a large part of forest area in and around Panna will be submerged. While acknowledging the environmental impact, the ministry recently approved the Terms of Reference, also called in-principle approval, for doing preparatory work for constructing a dam on river Ken near village Daudhan and a 231 km long canal to transfer water in Barwa Sagar reservoir. Water from reservoir will be diverted into Betwa river. The dam site is inside Panna, which now has relocated tigers after the local extinction of the big cat.

The Environment Appraisal Committee (EAC) made it mandatory to seek approval of the National Board for Wildlife before public hearing for acquiring land at the project site is conducted. The project has been pending with EAC for close to four years as it refused approval to pre-construction activity because it was in the tiger reserve.

If approved, the project will take nine years to complete.

**Source:** ‘Ken, Betwa inch closer’, Chetan Chauhan, _The Hindustan Times_, January 10, 2010

**Comment:** There are various issues here. We will not go into the feasibility or otherwise of river-linking as it is beyond the scope of the journal. It is shocking, however, that the project has got in-principal approval inside Panna Tiger Reserve from the MoEF. In December 2009, speaking at a conference for Wildlife Conservation for journalists, MEF Jairam Ramesh had sharply criticised this project, and expressed his shock saying that, “it is unthinkable in a tiger reserve.” He added that “we are not going to simply compromise ecology security in the name of development. There are many such projects and we are not going to do anything that minimises our biodiversity.” Ironically, the same ministry has granted clearance to the river-linking in the reserve. The project, the construction it entails and the ancillary development will be a death knell for the tiger reserve.

Another irony: First the tigers in Panna go extinct, as an apathetic management and state looked on, then, to ‘right’ its wrongs the state goes on an overdrive to relocate tigers into Panna—and huge amounts of money are spent on the exercise, the management ensures diligent monitoring and
protection of the relocated tigers, and then they push the river-linking which will destroy the tigers’ habitat.

Though the project is yet to come up before the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife for approval, there is undue pressure on the board to give the nod when the environment clearance is given. It is witnessed that most proponents start work, investing huge amounts even before getting mandatory approval.

Tigers get an official anthem

The tiger has got an official anthem, ‘Tiger se jeena seekho’ which is sung and composed by Bollywood singer, composer and lyricist Abhishek Ray. He has sung it together with popular singer Kavita Krishnamurthy. The anthems will go on air on radio and television and will also be put up on the NTCA website. There are two anthems both almost 30 seconds long, with an English and Hindi punch line with each and have an underlying theme of how tigers mean forest and water...“that if the tiger goes, he will not go alone. You may soon follow.’

Source: Gaurav Sharma, TNN, October 22, 2010

TCF not operational

One of the major, and persistent, problems observed in most tiger reserves is the huge delay in funds. This was expected to be solved by Tiger Conservation Foundations (TCF) that would directly transfer funds from the centre to the reserve. Though Tiger Conservation foundations have been set up in some states, they have still not achieved this objective. Most, if not all, TCFs are not yet operational and months after the centre has released funds, it is yet to reach the parks. It has also been seen that there are delays at every stage—sending of the Annual Plan of Operation (APO) from the state to the centre, the centre releasing the funds to the state (they can do so only when the finance ministry gives the funds) and most importantly from the state to the reserve.

The objective of the TCF is to facilitate and support management of reserves with direct financial aid to the reserve, as well as the involvement of NGOs and communities in conservation. However, just the mere act of setting up the Foundation will not achieve this objective. The state must accept the procedures laid down and give authority to implement it.

NTCA for enforcing Sec 144 CrPC

In view of increasing cases of man-tiger conflict, NTCA member secretary Rajesh Gopal has suggested restricting the movement of people by imposing Section 144 CrPC (Imposition of section 144 prohibits people from assembling armed with weapons. It is used to prevent hostile crowds from developing into riot like situations) during conflict situations where mob-like situations develop which worsens matters. The suggestion came in the wake of increasing cases of tigers straying, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra where both tigers and people have been killed in the fatal encounters.

Source: Hindustan Times, December 7th, 2010, Pioneer, December 7th, 2010

FOCUS: Forest Rights Act

Forest Rights...and wildlife wrongs

One of the issues that remained dominant in the past months was the controversy—and the chaos—surrounding the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006. The Act essentially seeks to confer rights on tribals and forest dwellers over lands they have lived in, the forest resources they use and give ownership to forest dwellers and tribes residing within forests, including protected areas. This law effectively took away the power of government departments to settle rights and greatly empowered the gram sabha.

A committee set up jointly by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) in mid-2010 to review its implementation concluded that the implementation of the FRA has been poor and has reached only a fraction of its intended beneficiaries.

Top forest officials slammed the report. VK Bahuguna, president of the Indian Forest Services (IFS) Association, sent a memorandum to the environment ministry stating that “opposing illegal allotment of forest land by forest officials should not be construed as an impediment in the implementation of the Act.” Dr PJ Dilip Kumar, DG & Special Secretary, Forests also said that the recommendation in the report of doing away with the clause “prior occupation as stipulated in the FRA (three generations’ continued occupation, defined as 75 years”) will open a flood gate to parcelling out unbroken forest land for private use, defeating the very purpose of the FRA. It may be noted that this restriction of previous occupation does not apply to scheduled tribes.
The report has invited other critical comments some of which include:

- The report suggests that *pattas* have been given to claimants without knowing which, where and how much land is under individual’s possession. Imagine how much chaos it will create when overlapping allotment is done.
- It says that there is inadequate trained staff and infrastructure and that hasty decisions have been made by committees at state, district or sub-divisional level by ignoring the grama sabha, which is the most important instrument of implementation of the Act.
- The report of the committee has also advised MoTA to issue circulars and guidelines. A late wake-up call, considering it’s been over three years since the Act was promulgated.
- The report doesn’t address the issues of encroachment after the notified date, bogus claim etc. and how to deal with them.
- The report states that the forest department is evicting people on one hand and allowing encroachment on the other. This problem is arising because genuine claimants and lands under their possession has not been identified.
- There are several grey areas that have not been addressed by the Act/report. For example, it is seen that tribals and forest dwellers who have been compensated for diversion of forestland for any development purpose i.e. mining, hydroelectric power etc, usually occupy or encroach on some other forest area. Will they be then compensated again under the Forest Rights Act?

The root of the problem is that the Act was promulgated in haste—without giving a serious thought on effective implementation—to gain political leverage. One lacuna that handicaps effective implementation is the lack of authentic records both of claimants and land area. In fact, at a meeting in the PMO in 2005, when the Act was in the process of being formed, it was stressed that the claimants and the land area they are using should be properly recorded. With no attention paid to this exercise, it has resulted in false claims, encroachments, rightful claims not being fulfilled—and complete chaos including encouraging corruption among the lower functionaries.

What we need to question is, will the granting of a mere piece of paper that certifies land ownership give the tribals dignity and raise their quality of life? Will the land for which they get right over give them sustainable livelihood? What after these rights have been granted? Unless there is follow-up with focused programmes of health, education, skill development and ensuring that rural and tribal development funds reach the scheduled tribes and forest dwellers, will the lot of the communities improve? Without this broader approach the expectations raised among the people that mere recognition of rights will lead to economic prosperity, will be belied, resulting in a sense of renewed frustration and deprivation, at the cost of massive ecological degradation.

The Act is deemed effective only from the date the rules were passed in parliament ie. Jan 1, 2008. Critical Tiger Habitats (CTHs) have been notified much before January 1, 2008, and have legal sanctity under the Wildlife Protect Act. In a meeting on March 4 under the chairmanship of MEF Jairam Ramesh it was resolved that no new CTHs will be notified without following the procedures laid down in the FRA. The same procedures, as laid down by FRA, will be followed for Critical Wildlife Habitats, though none has been notified as yet.

### FRA and tiger habitats

The impact of the Act has been devastating on tiger habitats. Just one of the few examples is Katarniaaghat (part of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve) Wildlife sanctuary—prime tiger habitat which also hosts other highly endangered animals ie elephant, rhino, gharial, Gangetic dolphin etc.

In anticipation of the Act, the villagers began demanding blanket regularisation, even of encroachments, and there were violent clashes with the forest department staff, who were attacked, abducted and severely injured. Forest facilities were burnt and destroyed, and a leopard brutally killed. It was reported that this was at the instigation of local politicians and the timber mafia who were disgruntled with a strict crackdown by the department. Currently too, field reports indicate that thousands of cattle graze in the sanctuary and timber smuggling goes on with impunity under the cloak of the FRA.

Another productive tiger habitat, Kawal WLS in Andhra was devastated. Hundreds of acres of forest was hacked and cleared for cultivation. Thousands of trees were axed and over 600 acres of prime forest ploughed at 10 different locations within the sanctuary the day FRA came into force.

*The Hindustan Times* reported on March 16th (‘NAC fixes roles of green & tribal ministries on FRA’,...
Chetan Chauhan) that the National Advisory Council headed by UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi recommended key changes in the Forest Rights Act rules which essentially say that “policy directive on wildlife habitats is not the domain of the environment ministry. The environment ministry is responsible for administrative task of determining wildlife habitat, framing of policy and procedure is the responsibility of the tribal affairs ministry. The changes include more access to minor forest produce, right of tribal to decide whose rights should be recognised, field evidence to claim right instead of documentary evidence and allowing gram sabhas to identify the forest areas for identification of community rights. The council has also recommended scrapping of a clause in the existing rules that allowed only primitive ways of carrying away minor forest produce such as carrying them on head or handcarts or a bicycle. It is pertinent to point here, that the MoEF is working on redefining ‘bamboo’ as grass under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 as against its present classification of ‘tree’, which essentially means timber, and puts restrictions on its use. If redefined, it will be classified as minor forest produce, and its harvesting by communities will be freely allowed. The devastation to tiger and elephant habitats cannot be emphasized enough.

Allowing any mode of transportation for Minor Forest Produce is a potential minefield, it might mean free flow of vehicles in and out of PAs, which in turn will lead to a demand for better, and more network of roads etc. Rarely is the harvesting of MFP collection traditional except maybe some honey collection, a few fruits and tubers for self-collection-and that most of it serves a burgeoning local and global market for ‘herbal’ and other forest products. Opening this up even further will accelerate commercial activity within protected areas.

Does the NAC which gave the recommendations on the FRA rules have any representation from the wildlife sector, given the far-reaching impacts on tiger and wildlife habitat, of the FRA.

Comment: “God save the tiger and its habitat!” Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which has limited existent in the states and has no presence in the forest areas, is now going to decide the fate of wildlife and its habitat.

A TigerLink report

FOCUS: CONFLICT

The barbaric shooting of the tiger in Sundarkhal near Corbett and the public display and jubilation over the ‘trophy’ thereafter, accentuates as nothing else does the gravity of man-tiger conflict in the country.

Conflict—the lethal face-off between Homo sapiens and Panthera tigris is a no-win situation, taking a toll on both man and beast. We are seeing fatal face-offs all across tiger habitats be it in Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Maharashtra or Uttarakhand. Ranthambhore saw no less than three deaths in about two months—conservationists believe that the immense disturbance by incessant construction activity and movement of people and cattle in its core area disturbed the tigers. In UP, the situation is worse. The seriousness of the problem can be gauged from the fact that from April 2010 to January 2011 a staggering 39 incidents of man-animal conflict have been reported from Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur and Katarniaghat with 17 persons being killed and 22 injured in attacks by tiger and leopard.

There is an increase in conflict incidents in Kaziranga (Assam) as well. According to studies, Kaziranga boasts perhaps the highest density of tigers in the world with about 32 tigers per 100 sq km. But given that villages fringe the park and corridors are increasingly being blocked by highways, resorts and human habitation, conflict has escalated in the past few years. Orang National Park in Assam has also witnessed a sharp upturn in conflict, with a tiger tragically being shot by the police after it entered a village.

This is the reality not just in India, but in tiger habitats across all range countries. Conflict is rooted in habitat loss and fragmentation: Shrinking, patchwork forests push tiger into human dominated landscapes, and into deadly confrontation. Core tiger habitats must be sacrosanct—and not crisscrossed and cut with highways and irrigation colonies—so that tigers can breed. Tiger reserves must have buffers, not mines and power plants around them; tiger corridors must be notified and accorded some protection.

As Mahesh Rangrajan wrote in The Asian Age (January, 2011): “Large mammals have little standing room or shelter in a sub-continent where they have been crowded out not only by the sheer weight of human numbers but also by the cumulative impact of our ways of living. Rice paddies and wheat fields, and now mined moonscapes and highways, obliterate or bisect habitats.”

The impact of conflict goes beyond the immediate loss of life and livelihood (in the case of cattle killing). It leads to loss of support for the tiger and fuels poaching. It is critical to give speedy, fair compensation. It is essential to work in tandem with local communities and
NGOs to help mitigate conflict and ensure that communities get some benefit flow from TRs ie livelihood, incentive structure etc

As the news items below indicate the situation is becoming worse by the day, and only reflects how woefully unequipped we are to deal with it. There is a desperate urgency to take the gravity of the situation on board and develop a sound policy and strategy to deal with conflict.

Tiger caught, taken to Lucknow Zoo

As was seen in October issue of TigerLink, from May 3rd to August 26th, eight people were killed by a tiger in Deoria Range of Pilibhit and Shahjahanpur forest division. The tiger, a male and presumed to be a sub-adult, was tranquillised, caught and taken to the Lucknow Zoo on the evening of October 15th by PP Singh, DFO, Shahjahanpur Forest Division, other forest authorities and staff and a team from Wildlife Trust of India. The effort to capture the tiger had been ongoing for nearly two months. The operations began in the afternoon, as the tiger stayed hidden in an isolated patch of Prosopis juliflora vegetation in Nagla Hira Singh village, Farrukhabad Forest Division. It was darted thrice, even as a huge crowd gathered around the animal’s refuge, stoning and beating it. Several people were injured and one was severely mauled.

Known to have wandered off Pilibhit Forest Division near the Indo-Nepal border, the tiger took its first human victim on May 4th. Overtime, it moved south through Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, South Kheri, Hardoi and Farrukhabad Forest Divisions. Till August 26th, it had killed eight people. However, experts do not consider the tiger an obligate man-eater. “It is extremely unfortunate that eight people lost their lives. Yet, the tiger was not exclusively attacking humans but was also predating on wild prey. Moreover, the human victims were killed within forested areas,” said a senior forest official.

Following the fatal conflict in Pilibhit, and the adjoining Shahjahanpur forest division, the NTCA wrote to the state pointing out that “there have been several instances of man-tiger conflict in the state during the recent past. This has become almost a recurring feature at some places since the last two years, on account of tigers straying out from source areas to other landscapes having varied land uses.”

It maybe remembered here that the Barbanki-Faizabad case of 2008-2009 where a tigress had presumably strayed from Pilibhit about 200 km towards Barbanki and Faizabad, and was later shot by a private hunter, hired for the job. The forest department came under a lot of criticism for the handling of this incident. The state has also dragged its feet in declaring Pilibhit as a tiger reserve for years.

It is believed that three persons have been killed by a tigress within the first two weeks of January in the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary—two of whom had gone to collect fuelwood in the forest, while the third was killed in sugarcane fields about 50 metres away from the reserve. A woman was killed by a tiger on March 12th. The killing may have been done by more than one tiger.

Three teams have been constituted for tracking the big cat. Another team has been formed for providing security to the villagers and giving them information on tiger movement. Pugmark Impression Pads are being set up at places likely to be frequented by the big cats including water holes for tracking the tiger.

Reports from the field suggest that there are thousands of cattle grazing and timber smuggling and fuel wood collection goes on with impunity. Two leopard cubs were also killed by villagers in a field adjoining the reserve.

Source: Katarniaghat Foundation, The Pioneer, TNN

Tiger shot dead by police

A tiger was shot dead by police on November 23 after it killed a woman and attacked a sub-inspector at Nagabandha in Morigaon district in Assam. The tiger, believed to have strayed out of the Orang National Park, was first sighted at Kandhulimari village on November 17 creating panic among villagers. A team of forest officials and a veterinarian equipped with tranquilliser gun was on its trail to trap and capture it. However, the tiger could not be located. DFO, Nagaon Forest Division, Aftab Ahmed told The Hindu that on 23rd morning the tiger killed a woman, Nagabandha village, following which a huge crowd gathered near a paddy field where the tiger was taking shelter. A mob-like frenzy developed and people starting stoning, poking and beating the tiger. The tiger struck back, policeman rushed to the spot and the tiger attacked again—this time a policeman, and was shot dead.

Source: Aryanak, WTI, “Royal Bengal tiger shot dead after it killed two”, Sushanta Talukdar, The Hindu, November 24
Ranthambhore tiger moves to Bharatpur

A sub-adult male tiger strayed into Uttar Pradesh’s Mathura district causing much panic in the area. Though spotted two to three times near Beri village, about 9 km away from the national highway, it eluded officials. The tiger is believed to have sought refuge in the Mathura refinery just off the highway. An angry mob came out with sticks and batons agitating the big cat.

The tiger is believed to have eventually reached Bharatpur, where it made a kill. Camera traps were set up near the carcass and the photographs revealed it to be T7, a tiger from Ranthambhore—the same one which had strayed into a village and attacked a ranger—again after it panicked when surrounded by hundreds of people.

Source: Neha Lalchandani & Anindo Dey, TNN, Oct 6, 2010, No trace of R'bore tiger in Mathura, October 6, 2010, Anindo Dey & Neha Lalchandani, Jaipur/New Delhi

Tigress kills one in Bandhavgarh

One person was killed in Tala village by a tigress. The tigress had killed a cow in the village on the night of December 24th. The next day, she came with her cubs and remained around the ‘kill’ until next morning. The villagers intimated the park management. According to reports, elephants were used for driving the tigress and the cubs back to the forest. In the process the tigress’s cubs got separated. The chaos, and the consequent trauma panicked the tigress, who attacked a man who had come too close to her. He died on the way to hospital. Villagers informed that this tigress is known for venturing into the village repeatedly since 2006 but she never hurt anyone before the Dec 25th incident.

Reports from the field suggest that tigers that live in this part of Tala Range have been coming into the village for over two decades—much before tourism structures came up here. The tigers occasionally kill cows close to the village and may drag the kill to a field nearby and eat the kill before returning to the forest, they almost always go back into the reserve.

Though there are occasional cattle kills, human fatalities are rare. Villagers usually leave the tiger alone and occasionally, about once in five years, a tragedy might occur, where a human is killed. In this case, villagers feel that the elephants disturbed the tigress and her cubs that were resting in the field and in the commotion of trying to herd the tigers out of the field one of the villagers was attacked and killed.

CONFLICT IN CORBETT

Five people killed. One tiger shot, another fatally wounded, third tranquilised.

November 12: A woman from Sundarkhal village killed by a tiger in the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR).

November 18: Tiger claims second victim in the Rannnagar Forest Division.

December 29: A high-level meeting held to finalise the agenda for celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of Corbett.

December 29: The victim, a woman of Sunderkhal, had gone to the forest for collecting fodder when she was attacked and killed by a tiger near Sarapduli range.

Forest officers believe that the ‘man-killing tiger is a tigress. All victims have been killed inside the reserve.

December 30: A 1,000-strong group of angry villagers from Sunderkhal locks the main gate to the CTR’s Dhangari zone, gheraos officers and demanded that the tiger be killed. The same day the Chief Wildlife Warden issues orders to shoot the “man-eating tiger”. Two hunters dispatched to do the job.


January 10: The fourth attack victim was discovered on Jan 11 morning near the park’s Garajia chowki. The woman’s body is uneaten but beside her, is a half-eaten sambar—the tiger’s kill. It is presumed that the woman was attacked as the tigress defended her kill. The tigress is on her kill when she is shot after dusk. It is learnt that the bullet hit her twice. The carcass is not found. There is a grievously wounded tiger in the vicinity and a search operation to find it starts.

January 17, 2011: MEF Jairam Ramesh writes to the Chief Minister, Uttarakhand expressing concern at the human deaths. He explains that according to the NTCA Member Secretary who had visited the area to take stock of the situation, the women of Sundarkhal frequent the forest for collection of curry leaf, fodder and fuel, and succumb to lethal encounters with resident tigers. According to camera trap records and the staff, there
are two tigers and two tigresses in the area. He points out that this is a recurring problem and stresses the urgent need for a long lasting solution. He urged the CM for the relocation of the 342 families of Sundarkhal and the adjoining village of Devichaud with 100 per cent central assistance under the scheme of Project Tiger. He also urges that as advised earlier, areas of Lansdowne, Ramnagar be included as Corbett’s buffer to facilitate active management with central support to reduce man-animal conflict.

Jan 26, 2011: A man killed by tiger near Sundarkhal village. Villagers agitate, halt traffic on NH 121, gherao, pelt stones and beat up forest department staff (and elephants), two staff members are sent in ambulance and are critical.

January 27, 2 am: A tiger (found near the carcass) is shot dead, with more than 30 bullets pumped into him. The villagers celebrate, a victory procession is taken out with drums etc and the ‘hunter’ who shot the tiger, hailed.

The tiger killed is a young male about 6-7 years old. The ‘maneater’ was believed to be a female. The Corbett authorities who had earlier claimed that the maneater was a tigress, explained on January 28 that “the tiger shot by forest officials was a “rare specimen with female characteristics”. Corbett park warden UC Tiwari was quoted in The Times of India saying that “with deformity in both its hind claws, the pug marks of the tiger made them look like that of a tigress. It was a tiger with female characteristics.”

Jan 29: MEF Jairam Ramesh has sought a report on the incident, reports Hindustan Times (Jan 29, Chetan Chauhan). Ramesh has asked NCTA member secretary Rajesh Gopal to conduct an inquiry and submit a report after experts said that the authorities had not followed protocol when killing the tiger. The newspaper also quoted BJP Rajya Sabha member Tarun Vijay, who “called 342 families as encroachers on land for tigers, which the state government had failed to vacate. The Corbett incident was not about man-animal conflict but human selfishness and greed in conflict with peace-loving and solitude-seeking tigers.”

The victims were from poor families and disadvantaged. We could not have allowed it to continue,” Srikanth Chondola told HT, claiming that the NCTA guidelines for fully followed. “Section 11 of the Wildlife Protection Act gives power to the Chief Wildlife Warden to declare an animal a beast (?) and destroy it,” Chandola said.

Protest against killing, parading tiger

Though the locals demanded the death of the tiger, there is a significant section of local people who are protest against the killing and the way the animal was paraded. On February 2nd wildlife activists and local guides’ association wore black ribbons to mark their protest. There was also a procession to show support tiger conservation. The Bagh Bachao Samiti, Ramnagar along with other wildlife organisations and local villagers organised a protest at Ramnagar. A memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister was handed over to the authorities.

“The incidents of man-animal conflict have increased in Corbett National Park. Had the forest officials worked as a link between locals and wildlife in the area (for sensitising people), they would not have demanded shooting down of the tiger,” the memorandum said.

The organisations also protested against the way the dead tiger was paraded atop an elephant.

This is not the first time such an incident has occurred. Precisely 23 months before, on February 11, 2009, in roughly the same place a woman entered the reserve and unwittingly went too close to a tiger, who hit out. She was killed, (but not eaten) and the tiger was condemned to a life in captivity—another ‘solution’ offered—but with apologies to well-meaning conservationists who root for ‘tranquilising, capturing and putting the tiger in a zoo,’ that is not an answer, either. If our moral fibre revolts against killing a wild tiger, isn’t it as repugnant to condemn it to life behind bars? A tiger behind bars is a conservation dead end.

In this instance, most killings took place close to Sundarkhal, established in the 1970s by the then Chief Minister ND Tiwari, is an encroachment on forestland. Sundarkhal, along with a number of tourist resorts blocks a vital tiger and elephant corridor that leads to the Kosi river and the Ramnagar forests beyond—an issue that the state has failed to address for political vested interests. Fragmenting habitats, eroding corridors and immense human disturbance are a perfect mix for fueling conflict.

Another pertinent point: Most if not all, mortalities are inside the forest, when villagers go in to collect fuelwood and fodder. This dependence on forests is attributed to poverty. We need to get the real picture and assess this dependence by an economical-sociological survey. Then, serious attempts must be made to reduce this dependence.
through provision of piped gas or LPGs and meet the need of villagers of fuel and fodder through conveniently placed government outlets. There has to be constant dialogue with villagers and increased vigilance to ensure that they do not enter the forest. The frequently used paths of the tiger are known, foliage and cover can be increased here, along with ensuring that there is minimal disturbance, to give the tiger undisturbed passage. But most important of all, a permanent solution must be sought. The issue of tourism resorts blocking Kosi river corridor must be addressed, and illegal construction, encroachments removed. Reports from the field indicate that the villagers from Sundarkhal are willing to relocate it is vested interests, a few, mainly outsiders, who have business interests tied up there who are stirring up trouble.

**Update:** Another man is killed on March 12 near Sundarkhal by a tiger. Is it that the authorities shot the wrong tiger? Or is it the fact that there is more than one tiger here, and given the dense population, such tragedies are bound to occur.

**Prerna Singh Bindra, Inputs from:** NTCA, PTI. *The Pioneer*, Jay Mazoomdaar, ‘Prevention is the only cure for conflict’ *The Indian Post*, ‘Was the wrong tiger killed in Kumaon?’ Neha Shukla, TNN, Jan 29, 2011; Ramesh orders inquiry into Uttarakhand tiger killing, Chetan Chauhan, *The Hindustan Times*, January 29, 2011, “Protest against killing, parading tiger carcass”, *The Times of India*, Feb 4, 2011

**Declaring big cats as man-eaters**

Following the increasing fatal conflict, NTCA sent detailed advisories to all tiger states on declaring tigers as man-eaters. NTCA suggested that the crisis spots/districts in the state be identified and advised putting in place three ‘Rapid Response Units’ in such spots to readily address the problem for capturing the animal to avoid lethal encounters.

**The advisory also gave guidelines for control measures at the crisis spot. This include:**

- Deployment of tracking squads comprising of frontline staff and experienced local trackers to plot the movement of the carnivore.
- Putting in place at least two “Rapid Response Units” in such spots to readily address the problem for capturing the animal to avoid lethal encounters.
- The “Rapid Response Team” should be equipped with a field van/mini-truck with built in rails for accommodating a trap cage equipments, attendants and staff—both for tiger and leopard, a tranquilisation kit with drugs for chemical immobilisation, radio collars with receiver and antenna, mobile phones, wireless handsets, GPS sets, long-ranging night vision, digital camera, tents, ropes, nets.
- Use of camera traps/impressions traps was advised to ascertain the identity of the carnivore. Deployment of Elephant Squad and watch teams for patrolling the affected village area; Involving the EDC/Panchayat, interface with the affected villages, preventing people from trespassing the affected area, alert local people for taking necessary precautions.
- Constituting an advisory committee comprising of field staff, experienced trackers, NGOs for ascertaining its sex, age, physical deformity and other related parameters.
- To ensure law and order was and prevent a mob like situation that hampers tranquilizing/capturing the animal and may injure people and staff, it was advised that district authorities impose Section 144 of the CrPC. It was also stressed that **all efforts should be made for live trapping of the aberrant animal while fixing its identity, either through trap cages or using chemical immobilization, before deciding on its elimination.**

Other preventive measures included:

- Preparing a Tiger Conservation Plan for mainstreaming wildlife concerns in the tiger landscape amongst various sectors operating in the area.
- Ensuring active, ecologically sustainable, integrated development for the benefit of local people living in the area.
- Keeping track of cattle depredation by carnivores, ensuring timely compensation to affected people, while considering the option of opening fuel wood depots to local people.
- Monitoring movement of wild carnivores near human habitations
- Alerting/sensitising local people appropriately, including safe disposal of livestock carcass and other garbage to prevent habitation of wild carnivores like leopards from frequenting and subsequently becoming resident in the area.

**Source:** NTCA
**FOCUS: TOURISM**

As has been seen in the previous issues of *TigerLink*, mismanaged and intrusive tourism around tiger reserves has continued to be a worry.

Given below are some issues/studies related on the issue:

**Domestic mkt drives growth in ‘wild’ tourism**

A new paper ‘Nature-based tourism in Indian protected areas: New challenges for park management’ published in *Conservation Letters* reveals that domestic market is driving the exponential growth of nature-based tourism in India, underscoring again the concerns of impact of tourism in wilderness areas. The findings are particularly significant given the ongoing heated debate about the benefits and cost to conservation and local communities especially in context of tiger reserves where the bulk of tourism is concentrated.

Authors Dr. Krithi K. Karanth and Dr. Ruth DeFries surveyed ten PAs—all tiger reserves—and found that the average growth rate was 14.9 per cent from 2002 to 2008 and that 80 per cent of the tourists were from India. The parks surveyed include Ranthambhore, Sariska, Kanha, Pench, Periyar, Mudumalai, Bandipur, Nagarhole, Bhadra and Dandeli-Anshi.

The authors interviewed 91 per cent of tourist facilities around these reserves and found that about 72 per cent of tourism facilities ie resorts were constructed in the past decade and 85 per cent are within five km of the reserve boundaries.

The survey also revealed that benefits to communities were negligible, with local employment in these facilities being marginal.

Besides the overriding concerns of disturbance to wildlife within PAs and blocking of corridors, the study also revealed other impacts, including the fact that most tourism facilities depend on local resources, particularly fuel and water. Almost 100 per cent of all wood is purchased locally, while underground borewells supply water. In some places like Ranthambhore, Kanha and Pench—all dry areas, resorts have swimming pools and fountains, further impacting ground water levels. Tourism is also changing land use around many of these PAs.

The study also examined the dynamics between park management and the tourism industry, ‘tiger-shows’ as practiced in some reserves, religious tourism and the consequent disturbance.

Similar to other PAs worldwide, tourism revenue in India has rarely been directed towards improving conservation efforts or supporting local people. The authors stress that sharing benefits with local people and building support among private enterprises for conservation initiatives is a must to sustain tourism. In a few PAs, the significant tourism-related revenues may supplement management efforts but generally revenues are not a large source for conservation funds. The direct economic opportunities available to local people from tourism are marginal in all the PAs.

To the need of the hour is enforcement and establishment of clear guidelines to govern tourists, vehicles, resources and changing land use around PAs. A key challenge, the authors explain, is managing PAs under pressure from mining, roads and local human activities ie fuelwood and forest product collection, grazing, and hunting. Nature-based tourism, they say, adds another dimension to these existing challenges.

**Source:** ‘Nature-based tourism in Indian protected areas: New challenges for park management,’ Krithi K Karanth & Ruth DeFries. Conservation Letters- DOI: 10.1111/j.1755-263X.2010.00154.x,

**MP roots for tourism in core, NTCA objects**

Madhya Pradesh’s forest department seems to share a cosy relationship with resort owners and tour operators. When the High Court asked the NTCA and the MP forest department to respond to a public interest litigation filed by an NGO Prayatna on 8th September seeking an immediate stay on tourism in core forest areas, CWW HS Pabla, though on tour, promptly swung into action. He emailed some of the state’s top tourism players on September 14th, warning them of the PIL and urging them to join hands ‘to protect’ their interests. His mail reads, “This is to let you know that a PIL (WP no. 12352/2010 – Ajay Dube Vs NTCA and Others) has been
filed in the high court of MP Jabalpur, which, among other things, seeks a ban on tourism in the core zones of tiger reserves. The applicant has also prayed for an immediate stay. Although the government of MP will oppose this application, lodge owners, travel operators, guides etc may also like to implead themselves as affected parties if you want to be sure that this PIL doesn’t succeed. As the case may have serious consequences for you people, kindly take whatever steps you think will be appropriate to protect your interests. As I am travelling and do not have the mail IDs of all of you, kindly inform others who will be affected by this case.”

Not surprising, then, that when the PIL subsequently came up for court hearing when around a dozen interventions were submitted. Among the interveners were a slew of hotel associations from Bandhavgarh, Kanha and Pench, and a few NGOs. The state’s Tiger Project Guides Association also approached the High Court on 22nd October as affected party. When asked about the email, Pabla said, “It is my responsibility as the state government’s representative to communicate the matter to all stakeholders.”

While the NTCA told the court that core critical forest areas were “required to be kept as inviolate for the purpose of tiger conservation, without affecting the rights of Scheduled Tribes or such forest dwellers”, in his reply, Pabla claimed that he (as Chief Wildlife Warden) was the supreme authority on such decisions in the state, and that tourism aided the protection of forests and wildlife.

The affidavit filed by NTCA in the MP High Court on 9th December quotes Section 38 (V) 4(i) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 that says that core or critical tiger habitat areas of national parks and sanctuaries are “required to be kept as inviolate for the purposes of tiger conservation”. Only management interventions can be allowed by the state government. In such areas if tourism activities are taking place, they are required to be phased out to the buffer areas.

Tourism in Sariska’s core
Meanwhile, in Rajasthan, the state is set to open up tourism in the heart of Sariska Tiger Reserve. On one hand, the forest department is attempting to relocate residents from Kankwari village in the core area of Sariska National Park to create an inviolate habitat for tigers and at the same time it is renovating the Kankwari fort in the village for tourism. Forest officers in the field are tight-lipped, and PCCF RN Mehrotra, who oversaw the relocation project refused to comment. But CWW HM Bhatia admits that the renovation was funded by the state’s tourism department. “Our policy is to promote eco-tourism,” he explains, “We will not allow people to stay inside forests, but we will work out an arrangement keeping the safety of tourists and the security of wild animals in mind.”

The medieval fort of Kankwari, where Aurangzeb is said to have imprisoned his brother Dara Shikoh is located deep inside the Sariska reserve.

Source: ‘You may like to make sure that PIL does not succeed’ Ankur Paliwal, Down to Earth, January 15, 2011 issue, Crouching tourists, Hidden Tiger, Jay Mazoomdaar, Open, November 26, Indian Express, December 11, 2010

Night safari at Corbett?
The February 21, 2011 issue of Outlook magazine carried a full page ad by Skoda Yeti Right of Way Expedition in association with National Geographic Channel. Titled ‘Yeti faces off with a tigress at 8 metres’ the ad goes on to state that “The abundance of wildlife in Corbett was evident during the night safari......”. The buffer area as well as the adjoining forests around Corbett are equally good habitat and have a sizeable tiger and elephant population. Was the ‘expedition’ inside the CTR? If so, it is completely illegal, and an explicit view/response from the NTCA and the Uttarakhand state government is called for. Even if it wasn’t inside the reserve, the very fact that a night safari in CTR finds place in a national campaign is deplorable.

Capitalising on conflict
We are all aware of ‘tiger mania’, the utter madness and mayhem that prevails in most reserves to see a
tiger: rules are flouted, tigers are chased, crowded... But the height of insensitivity is witnessed in an ad of ‘Corbetts Wilds’ on the web http://www.jimcorbettnationalpark.com/corbett_zone.asp which capitilises on the fact that they are located bang on the spot where the tiger killed a woman. Here goes the ad: “If you want to spend your weekend at Corbett National Park and also wants to enjoy your evenings as well, you can book your cottage at Corbett Wild Dhikul on the bank of Kosi River (nearby to place, where an tiger attacked & killed a women on 12 Nov-2010) & go for full day Wildlife safaris.!

I am unsure what the tour operators had in mind when posting this highly insensitive tripe—most likely, and from the language used, they see it as a lure: This is what it seems to imply: “The tiger comes here, bang where we are, hence you have guaranteed sighting. Don’t worry, you of course will be safely inside the resort!” The insensitivity to both the victim, and the tiger forced to come into human habitation as the corridor is blocked by resorts and encroachments-is shameful and deplorable: Ed

Committee formed for wildlife tourism

With tourism in tiger and other critical wildlife habitats becoming a burning issue, the Ministry of Environment and Forests constituted a seven member committee under the chairmanship of retired tourism Secretary Sujit Banerjee. It is expected to firm up the guidelines for forest and wildlife eco-tourism in the context of advisories issued by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Wildlife Protection Act and the Forest Conservation Act. It will also assess the studies conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism to assess the impact of tourism on wildlife and habitats, as well the surveys on lodges and resorts around tiger reserves.

The committee will make an appraisal of ecological issues, tourist visitation and suggest measures for carrying capacity of reserves. It will also give recommendations for regulating tourism in ecologically sensitive non-forest areas in and around tiger reserves. The committee is expected to submit its final report within 45 days. Other members of the committee are NBWL members Divyabhanusinh Chavda, AJT Johnsingh and Bittu Sahgal, Retd PCCF, Karnataka RM Ray and Director in the Ministry of Tourism Prabhakar Dubey. Rajesh Gopal, Additional PCCF and Member Secretary, NTCA, will be the member-convener of the committee.

Source: MoEF

FOCUS: ROADS

Roads to Disaster

The issue of highways and roads into tiger reserves and other Protected Areas, and the consequent disturbance is one of increasing concern—as discussed in the last issue (‘Death on Road’, TigerLink October, 2010).

New roads, as well as widening and expansion of existing roads in tiger reserves has been in the news. The expansion of NH 7, which cuts into the Kanha-Pench corridor and circumvents critical tiger habitat, into a six-lane highway (see TigerLink May, 2010 & October, 2010) continued to be a bone of contention between the MoEF and the Ministry of Surface Transport. So much so that road expansion in PAs led to a face-off between the two respective ministers-Jairam Ramesh and Kamal Nath and had the latter push for doing away with forest regulations in building and expansion of roads and highways in forest and protected areas. This was resisted by the MoEF (details below).

The impact of roads on PAs was also discussed in the Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife meeting on January 24th. A background paper on linear intrusions ie roads, pipelines, canals, transmission lines and their impact on wildlife and habitats was presented by T Shankar Raman (Nature Conservation Foundation).

The paper details the impact of roads beyond the obvious loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitat and road kills. It cites roads as conduits to invasive species, landslides and soil erosion, loss of canopy, change in animal behaviour etc.

To illustrate the high density of roads in PAs, Raman gave the example of four tiger reserves in Karnataka, where a GIS analysis done by conservationist Sanjay Gubbi showed road density of around one km of forest road per square km of forest. This network of roads increases in tourism zones. For example the tourism zone in Bandipur Tiger Reserve has a high road density 2.25 km of road per square km of forest, with distance between one road and another less than 50 mts in some places. In Bandipur, estimates suggest that direct road-related habitat loss and degradation covers as much as 80 sq km, which is about 10 per cent of the total park area. In other words, each km of road directly and detrimentally affects at least 10 ha of habitat

There is clearing of 30 – 40 m on either side of these roads as ‘viewlines’ for wildlife so loss of habitat is even
greater. Such clearings and the consequent disturbance also mean high weed invasion and tree deaths. A study also found that tree death is 250 per cent higher along roads than forest interior.

Ramesh, Nath head for clash over highways

MEF Jairam Ramesh and Surface Transport Minister Kamal Nath are at loggerheads again regarding the issue of expansion of highways passing through protected areas. The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) wants to avoid regulatory committees—the Forest Advisory Committee and the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife—to avoid delays in getting the MoEF’s approvals for diverting forest land while seeking to expand highways. Rejecting the proposal, Ramesh said that it is not acceptable and that there cannot be a change in rule for only one sector. Most of the highways in protected areas are two-laned and the NHAI wants to expand them to four to eight lanes. In its last two meetings, the NBWL refused to approve a few of these projects citing adverse impact on wildlife.

The MoEF says such a blanket exemption is not possible under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The ministry is of the view that allowing expansion through a wildlife area should be last option.

Incidentally, in a cabinet reshuffle a new Roads & Surface Transport Minister CP Joshi has taken over from Kamalnath.

Source: Chetan Chauhan, The Hindustan Times, November 3, 2010

NBWL rejects NH-6

The Standing Committee of National Board of Wild Life headed by MEF Jairam Ramesh, on October 13, 2010 rejected the proposal of National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to divert 85 hectares forest land for four-laning in the 85 km stretch which cuts through the north-south corridor between Nagzira Sanctuary and Navegaon National Park. The issue came up before the Standing Committee too late, only after much damage had already been done, and a PIL filed by the Wildlife Trust of India. On May 6, 2008, the NHAI had submitted a proposal for diversion of 85 hectare forest land in Gondia and Bhandara divisions for the purpose. The user agency was given permission to widen the road by the Forest Department of Maharashtra without even considering the importance of this wildlife corridor.

A report by the MoEF office in Bhopal revealed that Navegaon National Park is situated merely 700 meters at one point of the road, a fact knowingly suppressed by the concerned Deputy Conservator of Forests when the application for environmental clearance was made and eventually granted by the Ministry thereafter.

The density of vegetation where road widening has been done by NHAI is 0.4 to 1.0. More than 10,000 trees have been felled inspite of the Supreme Court of India’s directive that any land, irrespective of its legal status, having “forests” as per the dictionary definition will require clearance under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The report also pointed out irregularities in the process of determination of Right of Way.

Loss of tree cover and foliage and the construction has caused immense disturbance to a crucial corridor and may have broken the fragile corridor connecting one of the most productive tiger landscapes in the country.

Post the committee’s rejection of the proposal a meeting was called by the NTCA in which concerned authorities including those of NHAI were present. The NHAI presented the mitigative measures planned but it is learnt that the NTCA found them grossly inadequate and opined that they “will not serve the purpose of providing passage to carnivores ie tigers and leopard”. It is stressed that the number of passes (one for every seven or eight km ) is not enough, and that these are mere extensions of existing box culverts, and if they constructed below the existing road level, then they will not serve the purpose of wildlife crossing. It was also pointed out that writing off certain stretches as not important from wildlife point of view had no basis.

The four-laning of NH 6 in Chhattisgarh has broken the corridor and the only connectivity between Kanha and Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserves, and therefore the central Indian landscape with the eastern ghats landscape. Tiger presence here has been well-documented. The widening was done without any mitigative measures. The same NH 6 also cuts through wildlife corridors of the Similipal Tiger Reserve.

Comment: Why was the environmental clearance, which was obtained on fictitious grounds by providing wrong information regarding its location from a PA not withdrawn by the MoEF ? Nor does the Ministry seem to be too keen on initiating action against the officers responsible for this debacle.
Such is the state of affairs that even in spite of these blatant irregularities, reports are that NHAI has started collecting toll for the highway in this stretch. Incidentally, the forest clearance for the project is yet to be given.

Another worry is the precedent it sets—NHAI making roads without approvals at other places and then seek post-facto approval at a later date.

Road through Valmiki TR

The Valmiki Nagar-Bagha State Highway, which passes through Valmiki Tiger Reserve was repaired, and widened—almost to double its breadth without the required permission from the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife as mandated. Around 17km of the 28km-long Valmikinagar-Madanpur road passes through the reserve. Though Valmiki officials had tried to stop the construction, the district administration had paid scant attention, in fact provoked the local people against the forest department as ‘obstructing development’ though the wisdom of the need to widen a road which serves just four villages is questionable. After intervention from a member of the National Board of Wildlife and the NTCA, the work has been stopped, but 15km of the stretch passing through the VTR had already been widened. The road is largely used by tractors and trucks of sugarcane. Worryingly, this highway cuts through the Madanpur range on the western part of the reserve. Coupled with other factors such as canal, expanding human habitation and encroachments, the connectivity of this part is almost lost to eastern Valmiki, which further on connects to SohagiBarwa Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh. Efforts must be made to restore this connectivity. Another road from Gaunaha to Bhikhna Thori—of which approximately about eight km lies inside the sanctuary is also being widened, without mandatory permission.

In a report on the issue in The Telegraph (Wider road threat to reserve animals, NTCA seeks clarification on illegal work, Sanjeev Kumar Verma, Feb 8) the state road construction department minister Nand Kishore Yadav is quoted as saying that, “he will look into the matter and would ensure that rules are adhered to at any cost.”

Prerna Singh Bindra

Andhra Pradesh

Tigers with cubs in camera trap, next to road

A tigress with her three cubs was captured in a camera trap in Mannanoor range in Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve. The camera also captured varied other wildlife like leopard, mouse deer, honey badger etc.

The problem is that this is very close to the Mannanoor-Dornal road—just about two km as the crow flies—which leads to the Shiva Temple at Srisailam. A large number of vehicles—over a thousand a day—ply on the road which runs through prime habitat in NSTR.

Though traffic is banned at night (9 pm to 6 am) and speed breakers have been created to slow down vehicles, there is a constant pressure to remove both in order to facilitate speedy VIP movement. There is also a proposal to widen the road into a four-lane highway. This must immediately be shelved, especially in light of concrete evidence on the presence of breeding tigers in such close proximity. Of course, the management must be extra cautious and constant monitoring of the tigers is an essential.

A TigerLink Report

Cement plant expansion near NSTR approved

The Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife approved the expansion of the capacity of a cement plant by M/s Parashakti Cements Ltd. The cement plant is just six km from the Nagarjunasagar-Srisailam Tiger Reserve. One of the members of the standing committee objected that this factory was within six km of critical tiger habitat, and the fact that the proposal included expanding its limestone mining operations, about the same distance from NSTR. It is worth noting that limestone mining is usually strip-mining which is very damaging. The cement plant is barely two km from the river Krishna, and the worry is the impact on the water downstream—the mining and factory wastes, slurry, metal and pollutants the water will carry—with thousands of people dependent on the river for drinking water and irrigation purposes.

A TigerLink Report

Diamond mining in NSTR?

Environmentalists have slammed the Andhra Pradesh government for granting reconnaissance
permits to South African diamond trading major De Beers Private Limited and UK-based Rio Tinto for prospecting mining of diamonds and other precious stones in the Mahaboobnagar and Nalgonda districts. De Beers has been given 6,000 sq km of land in Mahaboobnagar district, covering the Nallamala forest area, and Rio Tinto bagged the prospecting license for Nalgonda district covering 8,000 sq km. Both are in the Telangana region, which is witnessing a movement for separate statehood. Besides displacing the local Chenchu tribals, diamond mining would have an adverse environmental impact on the Nagajunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve.

According to K Kavitha of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) that is spearheading the separate state movement, the government has violated all norms in granting permission for diamonds prospecting. “We demand cancellation of the contracts. The government has ignored the fact that the entire area falls under tribal sub plan area and the tiger reserve is part of the region,” she said. The mining area is said to be about ten km from NSTR.

However, state Minister of Environment and Forests, P Ramachandra Reddy, has defended the prospecting license granted to De Beers saying that it has been done after meticulously following the procedures and forest rules “as per the prior approval of the Union Government” under Section 5 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957. “According to our information, 90 per cent of the area allotted is revenue land and not reserve forest land. There are doubts only about the remaining 10 per cent land,” the minister said. Apart from diamonds, De Beers has also been granted permit to conduct survey for copper ore, lead, zinc and other precious metals.

Source: “Andhra Pradesh nod to foreign firms for diamond mining sparks row”, Khalleej Times, Nov 19, 2010

Comment: It is learnt that the forest department and the tiger reserve officials were not informed or consulted about this decision by the state government.

Forest Stations to curb poaching

In a move to keep a check on smugglers and poachers, the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department has proposed to set up ‘Forest Stations’ on the lines of police stations in all wildlife circles, sanctuaries and key reserved forests. A senior forest official said that this was critical to counter poachers and timber smugglers who were well-organised and equipped. The forest department has also been pressing for weapons to help them strengthen protection strategy. The government has agreed to provide weapons to forest staff in all areas except those adjoining the naxal-affected districts of Chhattisgarh.

Source: Deccan Chronicle, November 29, 2010; Protected Area Update No, 89

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Management plan under scrutiny

The state government has proposed a draft Tiger Management Plan for Pakke and Namdapha Tiger Reserves. It was presented before the committee constituted by the NTCA for a critical analysis of the plan. The members of the committee suggested modifications in some recommendations and the state government is now required to resubmit the plan in three months.

ASSAM

Tiger shot dead by police

A tiger was shot dead by police on November 23 after it killed a woman and attacked a sub-inspector at Nagabandha in Morigaon district in Assam. (Details under ‘Conflict’)

Kaziranga loses three tigers in November

The Kaziranga Tiger Reserve has lost five tigers in 2010, with three dying in the month of November. On 10th November the staff of Laudubi camp of the Kohora range found a dead tiger, which appeared to have died of old age. On the next day, 11th November, patrolling staff at the Gerakati camp recovered the carcass of an adult tiger. It appeared that the tiger had died of severe injuries during a fight with a wild buffalo. On November 19th, the carcass of a tigress was found in the Agaratoli range of the park. Authorities are yet to ascertain the cause of death.

Source: Sushanta Talukdar, The Hindu, November 21, 2010

Two guards killed in Kaziranga

On January 23, Bharat Gogoi, who had been working as a guard at the park since 1999 died after a buffalo...
attack near Amkathoni forest camp under Bagori range. Foresters fired at the animal but failed to save their colleague. Two weeks later on February 6th, a young forest guard Nitul Dutta lost his life to a charging rhinoceros near Mohkhuti forest camp under Agoratoli range. Forest officials remembered the victim as a brave and efficient colleague.

**Source:** The Times of India, January 23, February 6, 2011

### Dead tiger in Orang, poisoning suspected

A tigress, estimated to be around five-years-old, was found dead in the Orang National Park. It bore no sign of physical injury. The post mortem report indicates poisoning. The Orang National Park has a history of tigers being poisoned. The park’s small size, immense anthropogenic pressure and limited prey base has resulted in increased cattle lifting by its tigers. Over fifteen tigers have died in the park over the past five years.

MEF Jairam Ramesh has sought a report on the matter.

**Source:** Samudra Gupta Kashyap, Indian Express, Guwahati, December 28, 2010; Hindustan Times, New Delhi, December 29, 2010

### Running out of space: Tigers in Kaziranga

A high density of tigers within a limited habitat is causing increasing mortality among tigers in Kaziranga due to prey stress and infighting, according to a report by Aryanak Tiger Research and Conservation Initiative.

With a density of around 34 tigers per 100 sq km and the reserve pressed by human habitation, highways, tourism resorts etc, the forest bordering the reserve is very disturbed, leaving no suitable habitat for the spillover populations to colonise.

The situation in Kaziranga looks grim. Conservation Biologist Dr Feroze Ahmed fears higher mortality in the coming years, “as subadult tigers are unable to establish their home range and venture out of the park. There is hardly any habitat around the park that has good prey base.” There is also fear of accelerating man-tiger conflict. Ahmed stressed that it was important that “we ensure that forest areas near Kaziranga also get attention and focus from both the state government and the NTCA so that it can support spillover population from Kaziranga.”

**Source:** Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 10, Nov 2010

**Comment:** The Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong have been proactively pursuing inclusion of Karbi Anglong as an extension of the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve. This must be taken up seriously at the level of the Assam government and the NTCA.

### Kaziranga: Changing land-use pattern a worry

It is learnt that plots acquired to set up ‘farms’ near Kaziranga have allegedly been transformed into resorts without going through the due legal process, prompting the state government to issue notices to the resort owners. Technically called “change in land use”, it refers to any “transformation” brought about on a plot apart from the expressed purpose it was acquired for. “Most owners have converted farmland into hotels and other things without going through the necessary procedure,” the official said.

The action was prompted after the Kaziranga Biodiversity Conservation Committee’s report, which looked into the impact of development on the park. The committee wanted to ascertain if necessary permission’s had been taken before setting up resorts. The idea is to ensure that corridors are not blocked and the area around the park unduly exploited due to unrestricted tourism. The committee also suggested a no-objection certificate for any new construction involving change in land use from the office of director Kaziranga National Park.

Given the problem of constrained habitat for spillover tigers, the initiative to rationalise landuse around Kaziranga is welcome. However, it is constrained, points out an official, by the fact of lack of legislation to stop the change of land use.

**Source:** ‘Alert on use of park land: Govt seeks report on change in plots around Kaziranga,’ Roopak Goswami, The Telegraph, March 9, 2011

### Eco-sensitive zone for Kaziranga

The authorities of Kaziranga National Park have taken the initiative to declaration an eco-sensitive zone for the park. Assam’s Chief wildlife warden Suresh Chand said that the eco-sensitive zone will be notified by June. This will help restrict or prohibit activities which are not conducive for the park in the future. It will also ensure that it does not fall prey to “pressures” like economic activities, land use change and road development around it. Officials also explain that there is false propaganda that there will be a blanket ban. “Development activities need to be regulated with safeguards so that there is minimal negative impact on the park,” explained a source.
Interestingly, a joint paper by UNESCO — United Nations Foundation on Opportunities and Challenges for Kaziranga National Park over the Next Fifty Years — a few years back had warned about the future threats to the park. It said the “continued survival of Kaziranga National Park over the next century and consolidation of the conservation successes achieved in the last 100 years will depend to a large extent on what happens beyond the park’s boundaries and also on ensuring that management options elsewhere, in the river and in the surrounding landscape, do not undermine the ecology and integrity of the park.”

Source: ‘Eco-sensitive tag for Kaziranga- Move to regulate activities harmful for park’, Roopak Goswami, The Telegraph, March, 11

Tourism lobby protests Kaziranga as TR

The tourism and hotel industry has protested against Kaziranga National Park being declared a tiger reserve. “We are opposed to the government’s decision to make Kaziranga a tiger reserve in the greater interest of people living in the park’s vicinity as it will have a direct impact on their lives and livelihood,” said the president of the Kaziranga Jeep Safari Association, Punen Gogoi who added that the government should take steps for the rhino’s protection and conservation. “We also welcomed the government’s initiative to conserve tigers under Project Tiger, but we never supported the move to turn Kaziranga into a tiger reserve as the subsequent restrictions would severely affect tourism and other businesses,” Mr Gogoi said.

The park’s authorities clarified that it was a “misconception in the minds of the people due to lack of awareness”. Park director Surajit Dutta said the fears were unfounded and that and the people living in the vicinity and engaged in tourism sector need not worry about losing their land or job on Kaziranga being declared a tiger reserve.

Comment: The protests against declaring Kaziranga a tiger reserve appear to stem from ignorance from lack of proper information decimation or instigated by vested political interests. There must be an intense effort to have a dialogue with the local people to rid of unnecessary misconceptions. Kaziranga is one of the best managed parks which has to a large extent enjoyed the support of the local people in part due to the pride that people of Assam have in the rhino. Tourism will not be stopped, only regulated for wildlife areas, and if under the aegis of Project Tiger, there will be more focus on socio-economic development of communities around the tiger reserve, and also more focus on mitigation of man-animal conflict, which is an issue of increasing concern around KNP.

Source: ‘Project Tiger under threat in Kaziranga’, February 16, 2011, Press Trust of India

WWF volunteers abducted in Manas

In a shocking incident a group of about 20 militants abducted six WWF-India volunteers at gunpoint in Assam on February 7. The abductions took place in Labanyapur area of Ultapani reserve forest, which is under the Manas Tiger Reserve, close to the India-Bhutan border.

Four forest staff who accompanied the volunteers were freed by the militants.

The suspect group is believed to be the anti-talks faction of the NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland), which has a strong presence in Ultapani and adjoining areas.

Security forces said the abduction could be a retaliation against the anti-insurgency combing operation in the area, which is about 60 km from Kokrajhar, the headquarters of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

Sources said the abductors refused to talk till the combing operation was withdrawn. An intensive search operation was launched in the area. The Sashastra Seema Bal, which mans the India-Bhutan border, the BSF and the Bhutan government have been alerted, officials said.

Intense negotiations and efforts were done to secure the release of the volunteers. Three girls who were among the six WWF volunteers were released two days after being taken hostage. On February 17, the NDFB finally released the rest of the WWF volunteers from captivity at Balajan-Tiniali area under Kokrajhar Police Station.

Source: ‘Bodo rebels in Assam kidnap six WWF workers,’ Simang Daimary & Naresh Mitra, The Times of India, Feb 8, 2011; WWF

Manas no longer in danger?

A World Heritage Committee comprising a Unesco-IUCN monitoring mission seemed ‘impressed’ with the
progress made by the Manas National Park. The team visited Manas between 25-29th January and held consultations with a wide cross-section of people and authorities.

The World Heritage Committee had said, “the presence of viable populations of all major species and a clear upward trend of these populations are the key elements of the desired state of conservation and for the removal of the site from the ‘List of World Heritage in Danger’.” The team held discussions with the state forest department and thereafter, meetings with the MoEF in New Delhi. It will finalise its report, which shall be submitted to the World Heritage Committee in March in order to be considered for the 35th committee meeting scheduled at Manama, Bahrain from June 19th-29th. A number of other issues such as encroachment, regular funding and expansion of area would have to be taken into consideration before the removal of the “danger” tag could be considered.

Source: Roopak Goswami, The Telegraph, Guwahati, January 30, 2011, ENS

BIHAR

Central team demands better vigil in Valmiki

Protection gaps in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve have come to the fore during a visit of the NTCA’s Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) team in the last week of December. “Protection needs to be strengthened at Valmiki. One of the major drawbacks on this front is there is no operational anti-poaching camp inside the reserve,” MEE team member Prerna Singh Bindra, who visited the reserve, told The Telegraph. She said steps should be taken to have adequate number of anti-poaching camps so that round-the-clock vigil could be maintained inside the reserve. “The fundamental problem here is that the state has not yet declared the core critical tiger habitat. Bihar is the only state not to have done so. It reflects the lack of focus of the state on Valmiki,” she said. She was also shocked at the withholding of NTCA funds to the reserve by the state government even four months after receiving it. “Crucial work gets delayed and frontline employees like tiger trackers and others do not get paid for months. This is simply not done,” she said.

The MEE team also expressed concern over shortage of manpower. Against a sanctioned strength of 77 forest guards, VTR has only 40 and there are 15 foresters against the sanctioned strength of 22. Against the sanctioned strength of 10 range officers and three ACFs, the reserve has only seven range officers and two ACFs.

Reacting to the MEE teams’ observations, Bihar CWW Mithilesh Kumar said “We are working on a proposal. If approved, it will lead to setting up of more anti-poaching camps inside the reserve.” On the delay in funds transfer, Kumar said it was due to the Assembly elections. He added the department was aware of the shortage of employees at the reserve and had taken steps to address the issue.

Bindra said that the state government should pay more attention to the reserve because it is the easternmost limit of the Shivalik-Gangetic landscape (the Terai arc) that has been recognised as a crucial tiger landscape. The reserve is also contiguous with the Chitwan National Park and Parsa Wildlife Sanctuary in Nepal. Even though VTR has tremendous potential, the tiger-prey density is low.

She was, however, was all praise for the state government for putting an effective check on mining in the Pandai river that flows near the boundary of the reserve.


CHHATTISGARH

Three TRs...but where are the tigers?

The loss of tigers in Sariska, and the steady decline, and eventual extinction of tigers in Panna caused a public outcry forcing the government to, eventually, sit up and take notice. Elsewhere, far from Delhi and the eye of the media and the centre, tigers are slipping into an abyss unnoticed. Chhattisgarh has three tiger reserves, atleast in name. All three-Udanti-Sitanadi and Achanakmar, are a tragic parody of the term ‘tiger reserve.’ The parks are anything but.

One of the biggest failures of the department and the state is the fact that they have failed the state animal, the Asiatic Wild Buffalo, which has now whittled down to a mere eight in Udanti, and about 15 to 20 in Indravati.

Though the state has ensured all statutory requirements in terms of declaration of core and buffer, foundation of a Tiger Steering Committee etc, this has little meaning if mere formalities are adhered to, without any action on the ground. The state has failed to provide for an enabling mechanism. Tiger reserves seem to be nowhere in the priority of the state-or even within the
forest department. According to the staff, and media reports, there is a deep wedge between the wildlife and territorial department—with the latter getting preferential treatment—negatively impacted the management of Protected Areas. The management structure is also not conducive, with no dedicated field directors or deputy directors.

Indravati

Left wing extremism has paralysed the reserve. There is a complete lack of administrative control with no presence of the park officials in the core since 2005. In 2003, after the field director was attacked and beaten up, the headquarter of the directorate was shifted to Jagdalpur, which is about three hours away. After 2005, there has ceased to be any movement of the forest staff inside. Even before the park was lost to naxals, there appears to have been little active management and protection in Indravati, even for the critically endangered wild buffalo.

Another issue is that the buffer is not in control of the Field Director. It was felt that strengthening the protection in the buffer and building relations with the people in the buffer will contribute to make the habitat in the core safer.

A visit to the reserve showed that thousands of trees have been girdled on both sides of the roads (50 to 80 meters each side) in the buffer. This was being done for a ‘clear view’ for security reasons, by the Special Police Officers.

With negligible movement of staff inside the reserve, no authentic information on population status of tigers or other wildlife is available. The presence of tigers—though low—is indicated by direct sighting, other signs and mainly cattle kill information by the villagers.

The good news is: there are still wild buffaloes in Indravati. A visit inside the core threw up fresh hoof marks of two wild buffaloes and also the presence of prey base (though the density appears to be low).

In Indravati, the fact of insurgency largely excuses the pathetic state of affairs, with the administration having virtually no control over the reserve. But how does one blame the steady downfall of one of our finest forests like Achanakmar which has good connectivity with the Kanha-Pench landscape. Achanakmar has a well-mapped protection strategy on paper, but on the ground, protection is nonexistent. There is no systematic monitoring or patrolling. Functional protection camps are conspicuous in their absence, while cattle camps flourish even in the heart of the reserve, putting huge grazing pressure. Currently the habitat supports a decent prey base but there has been a dramatic decline of late. According to information from local NGOs, poaching of game continues with impunity.

There is here is no exclusive field director for Achanakmar—the post is held by the CCF, Bilaspur, and the DFO (also based at Bilaspur) attached also has territorial duties.

The Bilaspur-Amarkantak national highway cuts through the reserve bisecting it into two. While heavy traffic has been banned at night, there is no restriction on speed, and vehicles whiz through, honking and using loud sirens. People use the park for roadside picnics, leaving their garbage behind. Roadkills are frequent, largely not followed-up, or even registered. As has been stressed. The road allows easy access to timber smuggling and poaching for game, which has been observed here. The highway was supposed to be shut in 2008, and a viable alternate road made operational but nothing has come of it yet.

Achanakmar has made speedy progress in relocating villages, with six relocated within the two years since it has become a reserve. However, both the teams appointed for assessing the progress and shortfalls in relocation as well as the management evaluation team, noted some concerns in the process.

Researchers from Wildlife Trust of India currently involved in enumerating tigers for WII report that the prey density appears to be very low, and tiger occupancy is on the decline.

Udanti-Sitanadi has a peculiar administrative arrangement which strongly impacts the functioning, or more aptly the non-functioning of the reserve. The superintendent of both Udanti and Sitanadi sanctuaries supervise the fieldwork, under administrative control of DFOs, who do not report to the Field Director. The buffers are almost out of bounds of the park management. The Field Director of the Udanti-Sitanadi Tiger Reserve is stationed at Raipur, atleast four hours away from the field. There is little or no involvement of the top management. The DFO Dhamtri, under whose management Sitanadi is, has not graced the sanctuary with his presence even once in his tenure. Though earlier totally accessible, in the past two years or so the park has come under the influence of naxals, restricting staff movement and protection/management activity.

The need for a dedicated field director and deputy directors, in this context cannot be emphasised enough.
Are there tigers in Udanti-Sitanadi? Doubtful. As per information from the staff doubtful, some of whom do not report any signs for 4-5 years. However, there is tiger presence here, and it is reported that the bulk of tiger occupancy in the Udanti-Sitanadai-Sunabeda landscape is in the Sunabeda WLS.

**Prerna Singh Bindra**

**Campaign: Goa a ‘Tiger State’**

Environmentalist Rajendra Kerkar reported finding pugmarks of a tigress and her cub in the catchment area of the Anjunem dam in Sattari. The claim was supported by local residents.

Goa had recorded the presence of five tigers in the last wildlife census. In April 2010, the Wildlife Institute of India confirmed the presence of tigers in Goa with camera-trapped images. Tiger presence is also recorded in Mhadei and Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary. With reports of tigresses with cubs coming in, it is clear that tigers in Goa are not merely transient animals, but a resident population. *(Refer “Tigers in Beach Paradise,” TigerLink, May 2010, Revived Volume 6).*

Forest officials who have consistently denied the presence of tigers in Goa, reportedly under pressure of the mining lobby since the presence of tigers and declaration of tiger reserves would hinder mining prospects, have now had to eat crow and have officially confirmed the presence of tigers in the state.

Goa’s forests are contiguous to Karnataka’s Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve and have connectivity with Sahyadri TR in Maharashtra. Bittu Sahgal, editor *Sanctuary Asia* urged MEF Jairam Ramesh to take steps to establish an interstate Mhadei Tiger Reserve on the trijunction of Maharashtra-Goa-Karnataka. He argues that along with the Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve, this region could become an important source population of tigers. Eminent wildlife biologist Dr AJT Johnsingh, while conducting a study in the Sahyadri confirms the presence of tigers in Mhadei and Molem. He expressed his concern on the weakened prey base due to rampant poaching in Goa and Karnataka. Mining, deforestation and growing settlements are the biggest threats to this global biodiversity hotspot. Johnsingh has conveyed his concerns and recommended to the state government that 755 sq km in the region be protected as tiger landscape.

**Source:** John Edwards, IBNS, Panaji, January 25, 2011; PTI, CNN-IBN, Panaji, January 25, 2011; Paul Fernandes, *Times of India*, Panaji, December 22, 2010 with inputs from TigerLink

**JHARKHAND**

**NTCA team aghast at Palamu apathy**

The NTCA’s MEE team visiting Jharkhand’s Palamu Tiger Reserve has castigated the state for its stark mismanagement and apathy towards the reserve. Senior officials, including Field Director Paritosh Upadhyay, cited delays in sanctioning funds as the primary reason for all problems. The team, however, was unconvinced. “Despite the problems and the hue and cry over financial delays the lack of sincere attempts to conserve tigers in this region were highly evident,” opined RL Singh, retired PCCF of Uttar Pradesh and chairman of the committee. He also said they had visited villages in the core areas, and found that there had been no effort on the part of the forest department on relocation. Shockingly, the villagers were unaware of the provisions and relocation package.

There are only three villages left falling within the core of the reserve, though 23 villages are to be relocated by the irrigation department in case the Kutku dam gates are allowed to be closed. The dam has been built but the sluice gates have not been closed because the irrigation department of Bihar did not comply with terms and conditions laid by the Directorate of Project Tiger by MoEF. If the gates are closed without complying the conditions then nearly 28,000 hectares of core critical tiger habitat will be submerged and the submerged villages encroach in the forest further devastating the tiger reserve.

The team was also appalled at the level of state indifference. Staff shortage is acute with about 90 per cent of the posts empty. Out of 95 posts in the reserve, only 19 are occupied. Employees had not been paid for months. With such severe staff shortage combined with the other problems including insurgency that plague the reserve, there is little hope for the tiger in Palamu.

It is learnt that the staff has not received their wages even at the time of going to press, in February.

**Source:** ASRP Mukesh, *The Telegraph*, Ranchi, October 22, 2010

**A TigerLink Report**

**Update:** Acting on the information from the MEE team and field reports, NTCA board member PK Sen (who was earlier director, Palamu) took the initiative and personally met with the Principal Secretary (Forest) of
Jharkhand, to appraise him of urgent concerns regarding Palamu. Sen brought to the notice of the Principal Secretary that NTCA funds had not been released even though February was almost over. Other issues raised were non-payment of wages to daily wage workers, urgent need for recruitment of frontline staff and proper management structure, and posting of trained personnel at the managerial level. The Principal Secretary assured Sen that funds would be released within the week (last week of February), and that they will try to ensure that funds are quickly vetted by the planning and finance departments to avoid such delays in the future. Though there was no commitment on recruitment, it was assured that it would be seriously considered. Efforts will also be made to make the Tiger Conservation Foundation operational as per the guidelines of the GOI.

The end of Saranda

The MEF Jairam Ramesh on February 9 gave forest clearance to SAIL for mining iron ore from Chiria, Saranda forest in Jharkhand, overturning the recommendation of his Forest Advisory Committee. Ramesh said that one of the factors behind the approval for the project was that “Chiria is essential for the future of SAIL.” Ramesh said that while deciding to accord approval, the Ministry also considered facts like Prime Minister Manmohan Singh writing a letter to the Chief Minister of Jharkhand in August 2007 for renewal of leases in SAIL’s favour “in the broader national interest”.

With yet another mine, Saranda, already decimated by mines, will be devastated and further fragmented. Saranda, the finest and the largest sal forest in Asia, has been massively pillaged by existing mines in many parts such as, Gua, Kiriburu, Chiria or Noamundi. Saranda forms the core of Singhbhum Elephant Reserve and was once a rich tiger habitat. Though the numbers have dwindled drastically, there is still the odd tiger in the forest. Saranda has rich biodiversity and is home to many endangered wild animals including elephants, leopards, sloth bears etc

Over the next 50 years, around 40 per cent of iron ore requirement of the SAIL will be met from Chiria mines. “SAIL has a Rs 18,000 crore IPO on the anvil, 50 per cent whose proceeds will accrue to the Government of India. Thus an early decision has to be taken without waiting for perfect information,” the minister added. Senior steel ministry and SAIL officials had held discussions with Ramesh several times seeking forest clearance for mining iron ore from Chiria. “There have been two occasions when FAC has recommended rejection and I have exercised my own judgment and overturned the FAC recommendation - the first being POSCO and the second being the present Chiria case,” he said. “The FAC will continue to focus single-mindedly on forest-related, biodiversity-related issues and concerns, while as minister I will have to necessarily to take a broader view,” the minister added.

The approval for Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), was given with 13 specific conditions. Given the ecological sensitivity of the Saranda forest area, the MoEF will assume direct responsibility and set up a multidisciplinary expert group for monitoring.

Comment: One of the reasons of giving SAIL the green go-ahead was that it has a good track record of corporate social responsibility. But the MoEF failed to take into account that SAIL has a dubious past of working in Meghahatuburu iron ore mines in Saranda, where they violated all the conditions resulting in silting up of Keona river which is lifeline of Saranda forests and the forest dwellers living downstream.

It is well-known, in fact admitted by the minister, that the ministry simply does not have the monitoring mechanism so how will compliance of conditions imposed be ensured?

Multidisciplinary groups simply means yet another committee headed by a bureaucrat and human activist members with little or no sensitivity to wildlife, so how will that address the wildlife concerns?

The mines will devastate the elephant corridor aggravating human-elephant conflict.

Highways deplete forests in Hazaribagh

More than 80,000 trees, most of them ancient and indigenous, are being felled along the 135km Ranchi-Hazaribagh stretch of NH-33. The move has irked environmentalists and prompted Hazaribagh based convener of INTACH, Bulu Imam, to seek central intervention. According to well placed sources in the forest department, some 3,00,000 sal trees on the 40km Hazaribagh-Barhi stretch are also facing the axe, as are 2,00,000 trees for the four-laning of another 300 km from Govindpur to Sahebganj. In addition, for the Ranch-Patratu-Ramgarh (62kms) stretch close to 12,000 trees will be felled.

While the PCCF CR Sahay says that the department is compiling a report on this, the National Highways
Authority of India (NHAI) says it will pay for ‘afforestation’ activities. Imam has countered this point by arguing that even if afforestation is carried out successfully it cannot replace old-growth forests and the ecological balance of the region with rich forests, like the ones between Hazaribagh and Bagoder, will be wrecked.

Source: ASRP Mukesh, The Telegraph, Ranchi, December 6, 2010

KARNATAKA

Tiger protection force may be delayed

The NTCA’s much awaited Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) is getting delayed due to a funds crunch in Karnataka. By mid-2011, around 50 STPF members are expected to be deployed in Bandipur and Nagarhole tiger reserves. Weapon training for the recruited officers is supposed to follow but funds from the Centre are still awaited for the purpose of purchasing weapons for the STPF. At present, 44 guards and 14 foresters are undergoing the nine month long training program to join the STPF.

Source: Deccan Chronicle, Bangalore, January 4, 2011

BRT Tiger Reserve declared, locals upset

The BRT Wildlife Sanctuary has been notified as a tiger reserve with effect from 24th January (the in-principle approval from the centre was given in September 2010) and has an area of 574.82 sq km of which the Core Critical Tiger Habitat is 373 sq km. It is currently home to about 35 tigers.

The move has upset the 1,000 Soliga tribal families living in the 18 hamlets in the proposed core critical tiger habitat. In November 2010, the Soliga tribals of the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Sanctuary wrote a bitter letter to Jairam Ramesh, the Minister for Environment and Forests, asking to be poisoned first before turning the Sanctuary into a Tiger Reserve. Their worry stems from the fact of their impending relocation.

The Soligas say that the state government has declared it a tiger reserve without discussing the proposal with them. They have suggested that BRT not be turned into a tiger reserve but could be the first experiment of community management (A Community Based Tiger Conservation Area).


Comment: It is essential to quote here the example of Sariska where civil activists collectively pushed for people’s participation in the management of Sariska. A sincere attempt was made to bring the villagers into confidence in the adjoining areas, with local, reputed NGOs and social activists playing a leading role. It evidently failed. A CBI probe into the extinction of the tiger in Sariska stated the involvement of villagers in the poaching. Can we then trust that the tiger will survive in BRT with people’s participation?

Kudremukh for Tiger Reserve

In a note to the NTCA, Dr. Ullas Karanth, conservation scientist of Wildlife Conservation Society, proposed that Kudremukh National Park be taken under the aegis of Project Tiger. He based his proposal on the following arguments:

- Rigorous surveys by Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS) and WCS-India provide the evidence of a breeding population of tigers in the Kudremukh region. Kudremukh is contiguous with Someshwara Wildlife Sanctuary in the north and Agumbe and Charmadi Reserved Forests, which together form a contiguous block of approximately 1,000 sq km of prime tropical evergreen forest habitat which have the potential to support more than 30 adult tigers.

- The intact evergreen shola forests of Kudremukh provide a unique opportunity to conserve a breeding population of tigers, which in turn will help to conserve this unique biome, home to several highly threatened fauna such as lion-tailed macaque, leopard, wild dog, great hornbill, king cobra, Malabar civet, flying squirrel, shield tail snake, forest cane turtle, Travancore turtle, to name just a few.

- The park receives an annual average rainfall of approximately 7,000 mm, thus playing a critical hydrological role in the region.

- The National Park has 1,299 households living in 90 hamlets. The remoteness of the enclaves, lack of non-agricultural forms of livelihood and basic amenities, coupled with crop depredation and livestock predation have made life very difficult for the residents. Presently, there is a mounting pressure on the government from the villagers, their elected representatives and the local NGOs demanding the government to release funds for a speedy rehabilitation programme. In recent years, naxalites
have been using the sanctuary, which has compounded the problems of the villagers who have intensified their demand for relocation. Declaring it a TR would help facilitate the process of relocation.

- **There is an urgent critical need to create tiger reserves in the central part of Western Ghats in Karnataka** and link it to Bhadra Tiger Reserve to the East.

  The MEF Jairam Ramesh took up the issue and urged the Chief Minister of Karnataka BS Yeddyurappa to declare Kudremukh a tiger reserve. “This area, with its unique type of evergreen forests and high altitude grasslands, is biologically significant, located amidst other good tiger areas in the Malnad-Mysore tiger landscape,” he said. Ramesh also stressed that this would aid in protecting the park from future mining threats. “Though all major operations by the company stand legally terminated as of December 2005, “some of the machinery and infrastructure reportedly still remain within the terminated lease area, which needs removal,” the Minister has said in his letter dated February 8. This is particularly significant given that KIOCL, the mining PSU continues to float new proposals for mining within Kudremukh. The state forest department say that tigers have reclaimed the abandoned mining area. This was confirmed during the census conducted by the forest department, in which eight direct sightings of tigers were also recorded.

  It may be remembered that the Supreme Court, in 2002, based on a petition filed by Wildlife First, ordered the stoppage of mining in the eco-sensitive rain forests of Kudremukh in the Western Ghats and directed that all mining activities will cease on 31st December, 2005. However, eight years after the Judgment and five years after the time period to wind up mining expired, the KIOCL continues to be in possession of the lapsed lease area within the limits of the Kudremukh National Park and is using every tactic possible to reopen the mines. The area is also under a threat from ill-conceived mega-irrigation project to redirect west-flowing River Nethravathi.

  A **TigerLink report**

  **State bans trekking in PAs, hikes tourism fees**

  The Karnataka Forest Department has decided to hike entry and safari fees for tourists in the state’s Protected Areas by five times. Importantly, along with the fee hike, trekking has been banned in reserves.

  Revenue from tourism is now expected to double from its last annual figure of Rs 7 crores. The revenue will go into the Tiger Conservation Foundations and into providing better tourist amenities.

  **Source:** Niranjan Kaggere, *Bangalore Mirror*, November 28, 2011.

  **Coming soon: Gated colony near Bandipur**

  A new ‘gated community resort/villas promoted by the Pune-based NSB Group, the project is coming up near Mangala village along the Bandipur-Mudumalai road bordering Karnataka’s Bandipur Tiger in violation of wildlife conservation rules and regulations. The NSB Wildlife Hunt Resort is spread over 19.13 acres with 50 villas and 200 cottages. According to experts from Wildlife Conservation Society, the construction is outside the notified TR but is located in an area (and on private land) that requires to be notified as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) or ESZ as per the Environment Protection Act and new guidelines. The administration must also scrutinise several other issues (including if the owner is legally competent to own agricultural land), conversion from agriculture to commercial etc and restrict the project.

  Tourism initiatives such as this have increased drastically in the zone, restricting wildlife movement. “Many of these lands, albeit outside the tiger reserve, still fall under natural forest cover, regularly used by wildlife. Such resorts put up electric fences, hindering movement of wildlife, especially elephants. Further, it can cut off the corridor between Bandipur and Mudumalai in the future,” say experts.

  Principal conservator of forests BK Singh said, “The **project site is on one of the most important elephant corridors in Karnataka and would fragment that corridor if it were to come up.**” Karnataka’s forest minister CH Vijayashankara said he was not aware of the project. “The project was never tabled before my ministry in the past six months. We have not granted permission to any developer for such a villa project near the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. We will definitely examine the project,” he added. Meanwhile, the company has already put up a board near the project site.

  **Source:** ‘Resort edges into tigers’ turf,’ Jayashree Nandi, *TNM*, Feb 28; ‘Illegal villas in critical wilderness’, *Subhash Chandra N S*, Feb 26, Illegal resort eats into
big cat space in Bandipur Villa, *Mail Today,* ‘Villa Too Close for Tiger Hub Comfort’, *Bangalore Mirror*

**KERALA**

**Stampede due to violation of master-plan**

In a tragic incident 102 pilgrims were killed in a stampede while on their way to the Sabarimala shrine, in the Periyar Tiger Reserve, on January 14. While the Travancore Devaswom Board which manages the Sabarimala temple, alleged that inadequate security arrangement to ensure safety of pilgrims in Pulmedu was responsible for the stampede, the police report claimed that there were over 250 cops and that it did not have the permission to make security arrangements as Pulmedu fell within the Periyar TR. An unprecedented rush had also contributed to the mishap.

In a report submitted to the MoEF and NTCA, Field Director RR Shukla said that there had been violation of the rules and conditions laid out in the Sabarimala Master Plan, conceived for the conduct of a safe and eco-friendly pilgrimage, resulting into chaos and the consequent stampede.

MEF Jairam Ramesh wrote to the Kerala CM VS Achuthanandan for the quick implementation of the masterplan for the temple. He requested that the masterplan be implemented in a “time-bound” manner. “I solicit your personal intervention in the matter. The actions suggested are in the interest of lakhs of Sabarimala pilgrims as well as biodiversity conservation in the area. Jairam said the masterplan, drawn up in consultation with the state and the TDB, would have put in place crowd management issues, including aspects such as traffic and transportation, solid waste management and water supply, sanitation services and disaster management guidelines. “A faithful and timely implementation of this masterplan would have prevented any kind of disaster in the area,” he noted.

Jairam stressed that his ministry had allowed the diversion of 12.675 hectares of forest land in Periyar and another 110.524 hectares at Nilakkal for implementing the masterplan and that it could be cancelled if it was not executed. “I wish to add that non-compliance of master plan would lead to cancellation of diversion of forest land accorded by the Ministry. Any further demand for forest land by the TDB is meaningless at this juncture since the forest land already made available to them is not being used as suggested in the masterplan,” he wrote.

The minister severely criticised the TDB saying “The TDB has not ensured sanitation in the area and the Pamba river in the vicinity is extremely polluted with human excreta and garbage. The river cleaning programme has not gained momentum despite the fact that an amount of Rs.18.45 crore had been sanctioned in May, 2003, with a central release of Rs.378 lakh”.


**Comment:** There are temples and other places of religious significance in a lot of our tiger reserves—indeed many of our Protected Areas. The pilgrim traffic to the Pandupol temple in Sariska’s core is of grave concern, several lakh pilgrims visit the Shiva Temple at Srisailam (in Nagajuna Sagar -Srisailim TR), there were reports of people illegally entering Rajaji National park during Mahakumbh held in adjoining holy city of Hardwar—to name just a few. While one can understand the sentiments attached, it cannot be denied that pilgrim places—and the consequent activity causes additional disturbance to our already highly disturbed, fragmented and stressed Protected Areas.

It is not so much the physical area of the religious structure but the demand for ancillary facilities and infrastructure, pilgrim traffic, and the consequent disturbance, trash, fear of forest fire, conflict etc. that accentuates the problem.

**MADHYA PRADESH**

**“Tigers don’t need buffer”: CM**

The Panna Tiger Reserve had a major setback with the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan asserting that he was not in favour of creating a buffer zone for it. “Humans”, he said, “are more valuable than tigers. What will they do with such a buffer zone? There is no need for a buffer zone that can cause problems to Panna (the region). No such buffer zones will be made,” said the CM. Though his speech was clearly politically motivated, he is perhaps unaware that the forest department has got the consent of 45 of the 69 villages in the proposed buffer zone.

In the last decade, Panna has lost 34 tigers, most of them being poached. Under such circumstances ignoring the desperate need of a buffer zone for the tiger reserve has shocked all.
The CM has played into the hands of his political cronies who have mining interests in the areas that fall in the proposed buffer of Panna and have been opposing the creation of the same. The CM seemed to be quite oblivious of the fact that the Wildlife Protection Act, makes creation of buffer zones mandatory for all tiger reserves. The CM also appeared to have forgotten that his government has failed to hold anyone accountable for the extinction of tigers in Panna and that a multi-million rupee project is ongoing to relocate tigers from Kanha and Bandhavgarh to Panna. If he holds survival of tigers unimportant, why did he have millions of rupees spent from the public exchequer for these relocations?


Relocation of Kanha tigresses put on hold

Two more tigresses from the Kanha Tiger Reserve have been selected for translocation to the Panna Tiger Reserve, 450 km away. The tigresses were orphaned as cubs and have been raised in a semi-wild manner in a large enclosure in Kanha. They were due to be shifted by road to Panna on 6th December but the plan was called off at the last minute when one of them was noticed to be ‘physically unfit’ for the journey. It had apparently suffered an injury while playing with its sibling.

The tigresses are meant to join three more translocated tigers in Panna in an effort to rebuild the species in the reserve.

Meanwhile, concerned that the semi-wild tigresses may not be fully ready to go into the wild in Panna, NTCA has written to MP CWW HS Pabla asking him to initially release the two tigresses in the micro core area of the Phen Wildlife Sanctuary, adjoining Kanha Tiger Reserve. They shall be monitored closely using radio telemetry there and may be moved to Panna after they are found to be sufficiently capable of living in the wild.


Catfight in Kuno?

Palpur Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was earmarked as the ‘second’ home of the Asiatic lion, which currently is confined to just one habitat, the Gir National Park in Gujarat. Inbreeding and fear of an epidemic are pressing concerns and scientists and conservationist have been advising a second home for lions since years. Efforts to establish an independent second population of the animal at Palpur Kuno Sanctuary — selected as the reintroduction site because it was located in the range of the Asiatic lion inhabited before they were hunted into extinction around 1873 — have been going on for nearly a decade. Gujarat has been resisting parting with its ‘pride’, primarily because it would deprive Gir of its status as the world’s only home of Asiatic lion. The state has also raised several other objections. The issue is now before the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, there is a proposal to get another big cat into India: the cheetah, extinct in India with the last three shot (in one go) in 1947. India has tried —and failed—to get the Asiatic cheetah from Iran, which has the last remaining population of about 50, and refuses to compromise its precarious population. There has been talk of ‘cloning’ the cheetah, but besides being an imperfect science, Iran declined to be party to it and provide live tissue for the cloning experiment. Now, India plans to import cheetahs from Africa, and one of the sites earmarked for their grant ‘return’ is Kuno.

Meanwhile, the tiger has taken the matter into its own hands or paws, if you prefer, and come back to Kuno: a tiger from Ranthambhore has strayed from the park and into Kuno and pugmarks and other clues have been encountered since the past six months. Also, there is another tigress, with cubs, has also been staying in the Chambal ravines, and given the proximity a possibility is that she may move into Kuno.
At a meeting organised with the MEF, renowned wildlife biologist Dr George Schaller very categorically stated that it wouldn’t be advisable to reintroduce the cheetah into any habitat which had tigers or leopards.

Prerna Singh Bindra

Cubs missing, killed by father?

Field director responds to TL report

R Sreenivasa Murthy, field director of Panna has sent a rejoinder and clarification to the news update about Panna’s Relocation that appeared in Tiger Link, October 2010 based on Jay Mazoomdar’s ‘Killing Panna’s poster cubs’, an article published in Open, a weekly magazine.

The report is about the two cubs of the relocated tigress in Panna feared to be killed by their own father. It says, “Field Director SR Murthy however, found it “intriguing” that the father could have killed its own cubs. In his note sent to HS Pabla, Principle Chief Conservator of Forests, Madhya Pradesh, on 13 September, field director Murthy admitted that while the father (T3) tried to approach the mother (T1) and cubs soon after they were born, the monitoring staff ‘did not allow such meetings’, essential in the wild for natural familiarisation. According to this report, the litter of four cubs was born on 15/16 April. Shockingly, it took the monitoring team four months to get ‘technical and scientific opinions from all quarters and the project team of WII’ before allowing the father to meet the tigress and cubs on 19 August.”

In response R. Sreenivasa Murthy writes that the above conclusions were drawn by wrong interpretation of the report and limited data provided with the report. The data enclosed with the report belonged to the period between 1.08.10 and 13.09.10 and the reporter interpreted that the authorities did not allow the male tiger to meet the tigress with cubs for four months since their birth. The FD also details the meetings between the two tigers, based on the data collected from the monitoring registers maintained by the staff. The FD explains that he had approached WII about the dilemma of meetings between male and female with cubs on June 23rd and had received a quick response the same evening, and a final response five days later. Their observations and monitoring were now guided by the technical advice from WII. Before this, only one meeting between T1 and T3 was stopped, that too inadvertently by the monitoring party. Otherwise between April 4 and September 9, 2010 there were eight meetings between the two. The first meeting was before cubs were delivered on April 8th and all the rest of the meetings were after the cubs were born. Three earlier meetings between T1 and T3 before 29.08.10 were normal and not violent.

Thus the reporter’s conclusion based on the interpretation of the limited data is not correct. Park management and WII neither created a situation of animosity between the T1, T3 and their cubs nor disturbed the bonding process among them. One should remember that these three tigers (T1, T2 and T3) are picked up from different places and their behavior will deviate from that of a natural population for a while before they socialise among themselves. He added that the park management along with WII team is doing the best to facilitate the natural processes.

Roads through Bandhavgarh approved

The Standing Committee in its meeting on 24th January 2011 gave approval, with certain conditions, for repair of the 17.15 km road from Indwar-Tala-Parsi passing through Bandhavgarh National Park and Panpatha Wildlife Sanctuary. It was proposed that the entire stretch of the road (32.5km) can be repaired, preferably built into a one lane (3.75m) with effective speed breakers at every 500m intervals and in locations where animals cross. Glow sign board were also advised at every two kilometres.

Dr AJT Johnsingh, member, Standing Committee of NBWL, who did the site visit also recommended the same conditions for a two-lane Umaria to Maihar road which goes through the buffer zone of the reserve for about 15 km. In his report, Johnsingh says that the proposed road through the core from Karkeli to Chechariya, should be made into a two lane road suitable for multi axle trucks used for transport of coal, fly-ash, etc. since it passes through the edge of the core, and so have minimal impact. The idea was to take the heavy traffic away from the Indwar-Tala-Parasi road which passes through the centre of the core. No less than eight tigers including tigresses with cubs have been recorded using this road. The need to stop traffic from 8.00 pm to 6.00 am was stressed.

A TigerLink report

Gaur translocated to Bandhavgarh

Five gaur have been translocated from Kanha to Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve in a bid to reestablish the species. Gaur has been extinct in Bandhavgarh since
the late ‘90s. They were transported in a specially designed truck and have been placed in a 60 hectare enclosure to acclimatise to their new surroundings. The gaur would be released in the wild by March. Four of the gaur have been radio collared. The exercise is being carried out at a cost of Rs five crore and is borne by the state forest department and to a lesser extent by the wildlife tourism company CC Africa, now known Towards & Beyond Africa, under the supervision of the Wildlife Institute of India.

Bandhavgarh’s gaur population was at its peak in 1989-90, when it numbered 39, but soon plummeted and the last gaur vanished in 1998.

The move had its share of controversy and has been severely criticised. An NGO, ‘Uday’ has protested against the forest department’s undue favouring of a tourism company due to its close association with top officials. Allegedly, Towards & Beyond has been given night filming and photography permits by the forest department.

The translocation exercise had been proposed in 2007 but the NTCA had objected. It was finally approved by the Centre in 2010. The decision hasn’t gone well with the NTCA.


Comment: Was there any urgency or need to translocate gaur in to a reserve that at its peak had a gaur population of no more than 50? There are healthy population of gaur in some other PAs, so the urgency to do this questionable.

MAHARASHTRA

Rs 18 crore for Melghat village resettlement

The MoEF has released Rs 18 crore towards relocation of villages in the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The amount will help resettlement at least two villages.

The PCCF (Wildlife) had sent a proposal to the NTCA requesting Rs 75.5 crore to resettle 22 villages from inside Melghat Tiger Reserve. In addition, as promised by chief minister Prithviraj Chauhan, Rs two crore has been released for the villages of Vairat and Ghatladki. Spread over 2,000 sq km, Melghat is under severe anthropogenic pressure from 22 villages in its core area.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, TNN, Nagpur, January 7, 2011 with inputs by TigerLink

Mansinghdeo declared sanctuary

On November 2, 2010, the 183 sq km Mansinghdeo was finally notified as a sanctuary, an issue pending for over two decades. Mansinghdeo is rich in wildlife and is contiguous to the Pench Tiger Reserve. The protection accorded will strengthen contiguity between Pench, Tadoba, Nagzira and the Melghat Tiger Reserve. One of the main reasons for delay in the notification was opposition by the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra Ltd. (FDCM) so as to continue their forestry and plantation operations. The state had also tried to curtail the area of the sanctuary to 143 sq km. MEF Jairam Ramesh wrote to the CM warning them against any move to curtail the area of the proposed Sanctuary. This would lead to the centre holding back the denotification of a large chunk of the GIB (Nannaj) Sanctuary that Maharashtra has been pushing for.

Shockingly, even after the sanctuary was declared, the FDCM continued its timber operations and felling huge numbers of trees and bamboo extraction. They said they were ‘not aware’ of the notification till December 20th. By then, large scale felling from 23 compartments had been done. FDCM officials explained said that they did not carry out any felling but were only “thinning” the forest under silvicultural operations with the permission of the MoEF office at Bhopal. But a visit to the site revealed otherwise—truckloads of bamboo and teak being extracted.

This issue was taken up strongly by NBWL member Dr MK Ranjitsinh who pointed out the misuse that is made of the forest under the guise of “silvicultural operations”. He suggested that all such activities be carried out under the supervision of the respective regional offices of the MoEF. Refusing to believe the FDCM’s alleged ignorance regarding the sanctuary’s notification, he has asked for an enquiry into the matter. He stressed that the sanctuary notification was delayed inordinately because the FDCM wanted to continue exploiting the forest. “Now that they could not prevent its notification any longer, they could not resist the temptation of taking their last pound of flesh,” he said.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar & Sandeep Ashar, TNN, Nagpur, November 27, 2010, Times of India, January 13, 2011 with inputs by TigerLink

Tigress rescued after lion-hearted effort

Forest officials rescued a full-grown tigress from a 35-foot-deep dry well after a five-hour-long operation on the outskirts of Katlabodi, 40 km from Nagpur near Bazargaon. Katlabodi beat falls under Kalmeshwar Range under the Nagpur Forest Division.
Although the area where the tigress was found is a private land, it is a good habitat for carnivores and wildlife and villagers claimed presence of four to five more tigers in the area. The tigress must have fallen in the open well which is dry and covered with bushes while chasing its prey.

Forest officials led the team along with their staff, wildlife vets, conservationists, and the police which helped control the mob. It was a very difficult operation lasting five hours. Villagers said the tigress was a resident animal, and they had reported its presence to the forest department.

Source: ‘Tigress rescued after lion-hearted effort’, Vijay Pinjarkar, TNN, Feb 8, 2010

HC intervenes into Tadoba management

On 27th October, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court directed the government to remove all villages from the core area of the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve within a year. A division bench of Justices Sharad Bobde and Mridula Bhatkar came down heavily on the forest department for its failure to relocate the villages since the past two decades. It added the Divisional Commissioner as a respondent and asked him to take quarterly reviews of the relocation process, take monthly meeting of responsible officers, and submit a report.

The HC had taken serious cognizance of various media reports over depleting bamboo cover in Tadoba due to rampant and illicit felling.

Source: Times of India, Nagpur, October 28, 2010

Radhanagari diversion cleared

In a setback to wildlife conservation, the MoEF has cleared the proposal for diversion of 14.12 hectares of land in the Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary for construction of a minor irrigation project at Savarde. The proposal came up in the 20th meeting of the NBWL held on 13th October 2010, and again in the January meeting. It was opposed by a Standing Committee member who argued that apart from being in the core area, the diverted area was crucial for the long-term conservation of tiger habitat in the Sahyadri Tiger Reserve. The NBWL, however, approved the diversion in January on the basis of a report in favour of the diversion submitted by Dr Asad Rahmani of the Bombay Natural History Society, and endorsed by the Chief Wildlife Warden.

Allegedly, the Chief Wildlife Warden had been in favor of the diversion under political pressure.

There is reported to be a functional, but very tenuous, connectivity between the Radhanagari sanctuary and the Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve in Karnataka, and with Chandoli National Park (Sahyadri tiger Reserve). Dr AJT Johnsingh, member NBWL writes in Frontline that the tiger landscape in the Sahyadris, comprising the protected areas and corridor forests (1,600 sq km), can support a population of 15-20 adult tigers if its prey base is strengthened. The article also points out that the landscape is stressed by mines, dams, human habitation, tourism infrastructure, and the threats and pressures are accelerating. He notes that efforts must be made to consolidate and protect corridors and remove encroachment from the sanctuary. The prey base—sharply depleted due to rampant hunting, needs to be protected and an effort made to involve the local communities and win their support.

However, with a green signal to the diversion from Radhanagri sanctuary and with the Koyana sanctuary pillaged, the future of the tiger in the northern Western Ghats looks precarious.

Source: Vijay Pinjarkar, TNN, Nagpur, January 24, 2011

Koyana Sanctuary plundered

Koyana Sanctuary, part of the newly declared Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (in 2010) is being plundered relentlessly. This biodiversity rich sanctuary which the government has proposed to UNESCO as a World Heritage Site currently has 215 windmills and 10 tourist resorts within its boundary. One of the resorts belongs to the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation. Though the sanctuary was declared in 1985, the resorts were built between 1997-2005. An earthen dam is under construction and trees are being felled rapidly. Land is up for grabs, at exorbitant prices. More than 900 land deals have been finalised since 1985. The mad rush for land in Koyana is because of its potential to emerge as a tourist hub. The lush forest around the backwater of Koyana dam makes the sanctuary a much sought-after tourist destination. The state government envisaged a Rs 678-crore Hill Station project near Koyana in 2001. The project, finalised in 2004, proposed to include 14 villages of the sanctuary, and this is where most real estate deals were struck, in anticipation of a boom in real estate. These 14 villages, it is learnt are in the non-forest area, which constitutes about 47 per cent of the sanctuary.

The sanctuary itself has not been notified despite being declared 25 years ago, and it is believed that these
14 villages will not be included in the notification, as they are not forest areas.

The forest department says that all irregularities and offences have been taken cognizance of and currently there are seven applications before the CEC. The windmill case is currently in court—one among 41 cases pending in court regarding the reserve. Officials say that the plateau where the windmills have been developed is pretty much destroyed but stress that there are other equally important and ecologically fragile plateaus which must be conserved, and included as part of the tiger reserve.

There was opposition to Sahyadri being declared a tiger reserve from some political factions as it would put on hold the tourism development plans. Officially, Sahyadri has nine tiger, though villagers assert that there are more.

Source: Down to Earth, January 31, 2011, with inputs from the field

Protest against Sahyadri TR

Villagers agitating against the recently formed Sahyadri Tiger Reserve turned violent during a protest march and pelted stones on the forest department’s office. The incident took place in the first week of January in Patan in Satara district. Opposing the project, they also submitted a memorandum to the tehsildar. There are 90 villages in the buffer zone of the project and 83 villages in the core zone.

Source: DNA, January 5, 2011, Protected Area Update No. 89

Mining leases in Sindhudurg put on hold

The Maharashtra government has put on hold 49 mining leases that had been granted in the Sindhudurg district. It was pointed out that the leases were in rich forest (and productive farmland) that are also parts of tiger corridors connecting the Koyna and Radhanagari sanctuaries with the Anshi-Dandeli Tiger Reserve in Karnataka. Tiger presence has been recorded here, and cattle kills reported by the villagers. MEF Jairam Ramesh had written to the chief minister in October asking that the leases be relooked.

Source: Times of India, December 17, 2010; Protected Area Update No. 89; Refer “Gram sabha opposes mining in Konkan”, TigerLink, Revived Volume May 6, 2010

ORISSA

Legal cell for wildlife offences

Worried over the increasing poaching of wildlife in the state, the Orissa government decided on January 6th that it would set up a legal cell for proper monitoring of wildlife offences. This was decided at the meeting of the State Board for Wildlife held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.”

Source: IANS, Bhubaneswar, January 7, 2011

RAJASTHAN

First translocated tiger in Sariska poisoned

ST1, the first tiger to be translocated to Sariska from Ranthambhore, in 2008 to rebuild the reserve’s extinct tiger population was found dead on November 14, 2010. He was poisoned. Initially, the Rajasthan Forest Minister Ramlal Jat sought refuge in explaining that the death was due to a ‘territorial fight.’ However, poisoning was confirmed by a report from the Jaipur-based Forensic Science Laboratory which stated that the insecticide, Organophosphorus was found in the viscera sample.

The news does not augur well for the Reserve as it is a clear indication of the continuing hostility of the villagers in the surrounding areas towards the tiger or perhaps, even the concept of re-introduction. Forest authorities asked for a probe by the State’s CID into the death of the tiger. They have also sought additional police presence near the reserve.

Some reports suggest that increased vigilance on mining activity around the forest ever since tigers were relocated could have angered vested interests, and may have played a role in instigating the poisoning.

A report by the Wildlife Institute of India in March 2005 confirmed that there were no tigers left in Sariska. Poaching was found to be the main reason for the dwindling tiger population. Following this, it was decided to relocate tigers from Ranthambhore to Sariska, and from 2008 till now, five tigers - two males and three females – have been were relocated to Sariska.

Source: Rajan Mahan, NDTV, Jaipur, November 18, 2010; CNN-IBN, IANS, December 2010; Anindo Dey, TNN, Jaipur, ‘Sariska tiger died due to poisoning’, December 4, 2010 Sunny Sebastian, The Hindu
Sariska Field Director transferred
Following action against two officials of the forest department after the death of a relocated tiger in Sariska, the government of Rajasthan has transferred the field director, Sariska, KK Garg. RS Shekhawat has replaced him.

DFO, YK Sahu, has also been appointed after his predecessor was suspended following dereliction of duty. The MoEF has also re-appointed retired DFO, Sariska, S Sharma as a consultant for the NTCA. Two additional officers of state service were also posted in Sariska to execute the village relocation process.

Source: PTI, November 22, 2010

Rs 30 crore for Sariska village relocation
Terming the death of a translocated tiger in Sariska as a “wake up call”, MEF Jairam Ramesh has allocated Rs 30 crore for speeding up relocation of villages from Sariska. The grant followed after the minister was informed that villagers inside the reserve had expressed their willingness to relocate but could not as the state forest department did not have the funds for the rehabilitation package. The state government too is setting up a task force to oversee all activities in the park. The minister has also asked NTCA to procure the best GPS system available for the tigers’ radio collars. This came after one of the collared tigers went missing for a fortnight.

Source: The Times of India, Sariska, November 19, 2010

Bharatpur tiger translocated to Sariska
The elusive tiger T-7 who has been in Keoladeo National Park near Bharatpur for the past four months was tranquilised by a team of experts from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), the Sariska Tiger Reserve and Keoladeo on February 25 and then taken to Sariska within an hour by road. This followed MEF Jairam Ramesh’s go-ahead to the translocation during a visit to Keoladeo on February 2nd. Members of the NTCA board had expressed their apprehension regarding the safety of the tiger in Sariska, following the poisoning of ST1, the first tiger to be translocated from Ranthambhore to Sariska.

T-7 wandered from Ranthambhore National Park, into Dholpur and Mathura in Uttar Pradesh (see Conflict) before reaching Keoladeo.


Injured tigress dies in Ranthambhore
The Hindu on February 6th splashed the photograph of a wounded tigress and hailed Rajasthan’s minister of tourism Bina Kak as its savior. She had seen the tigress with a wound on its rear while on a visit to the park, and drawn the attention of the forest department. Eager to please, the department, jumped to respond to Kak and ‘rescue’ the tigress without considering the wisdom of their decision and its possible consequences. It may be noted that the tigress was lactating and had two three-month-old cubs. Two vets were called in from Jaipur to Ranthambhore on an emergency basis. The tigress was tranquilised and operated upon. No one verified the credentials of the vets, and whether they had any experience of working with wildlife.

When wild animals get wounded, which is more common than believed, they usually heal themselves, by licking the wound clean. Maggot wounds of the kind the tigress had are also usually dealt with in such manner and there was no call for interference by a medical team.

This hasty and thoughtless action came at a tremendous price—the tigress died two days later, and with her death, the cubs are doomed. Such hasty action on the part of the forest department to get credit from an influential minister resulting in the death of a tigress and its two cubs must be treated as culpable homicide though there is no such provision under the Wildlife Protection Act. The National Tiger Conservation Authority must look into the matter with the gravity it calls for. There is always the risk of a repeat act in any state when there is an injured tiger.

A TigerLink report

Road threatens Ranthambhore connectivity
A proposal for repair and black topping of existing approach road to Taragarh fort (Ramgarh Wildlife Sanctuary), Bundi, Rajasthan was rejected by the Standing Committee of the National Board of Wildlife on January 24, 2011. It was pointed out by a member of the committee that Ramgarh Wildlife Sanctuary serves as an important corridor for the tigers of Ranthambhore National park connecting it to Mansingh sanctuary, Kuvalji (both part of RTR), forests of Lakheri-Antarda-Ramgarh Wildlife Sanctuary and onward to Darra
Wildlife Sanctuary. As the crow flies the distance to Ramgarh from Ranthambhore is about 40 km. Tiger presence has been frequently recorded here—and confirmed tragically, by tiger mortality, such as the case of ‘Broken Tail’, who was killed by the Rajdhani train in Darra in 2003. The tiger had traversed through Ramgarh to Darra. Presently, a male from Ranthambhore which is in the Kota forests is believed to have used the Ramgarh sanctuary.

It must be pointed out that Mukandara Hills National Park which includes Darra, Jawahar Sagar and Chambal Wildlife sanctuaries has been given in-principle approval as a tiger reserve by the NTCA, and Ramgarh sanctuary serves as a crucial tiger corridor connecting Ranthambhore and the proposed reserve. Experts believe this tract is crucial for the ‘spill-over’ tigers of RTR, and steps must be taken to strengthen this corridor and provide for better protection, which is currently believed to very poor.

Given the ecological importance of the sanctuary, and the fact that the road has only one user agency, the Standing Committee did not give clearance for widening the road.

A TigerLink report

ID based entry into Ranthambhore

A new ID-based entry system has been introduced since December 7. According to the collector, Sawai Madhopur, RK Surpur, the system shall check unauthorised entry into the park. The ID based entry is expected to help arrest corruption among hoteliers and tour agents who book safaris on fake names and later sell them for a premium to visitors. A joint team of the tourism, revenue and forest departments shall be posted at the gate to implement this.

Source: The Pioneer, Jaipur, December 4, 2010

Tigress with cubs moves out of Ranthambhore

A tigress with two cubs has moved out of Ranthambhore national park into the Chambal ravines and is preying largely on cattle, raising fear of sharpened man-animal conflict, and ire of the nearby villagers. The tigress, T13, has strayed nearly 20-25 km out of her territory, and is now living near the Chambal ravines. The problem is accentuated by the fact that there are three villages Badalganj, Khirkhari and Sawanti, here.

According to field director, Ranthambhore, Anand Mohan, T-13 killed one bull in the Lasora village in the vicinity. Compensation was paid to the concerned villagers on priority.

Why has the tigress ventured out of Ranthambhore into admittedly a very disturbed habitat, especially when with cubs? Conservationists have been protesting and drawing attention to the huge amount of disturbance caused by construction of chowkis and roads that have disturbed critical breeding areas. Also, it could be that T13 felt insecure about her cub’s safety and moved away following the translocation of the father of her cubs to Sariska, in July last.

According to Fateh Singh Rathore, eminent tiger conservationist and former director, Ranthambhore, “The translocation of the resident male tiger ‘T-12’ tiger from Ranthambhore to Sariska, was not a good decision. It is very unusual for a resident tigress to desert her territory, especially in that vulnerable stage with two small cubs. Two other male tigers are also in the same territory hence it is likely that she found the cubs unsafe. The life of the tigress and her two cubs is now at stake.”


State sends proposal on eco-sensitive zones

The Rajasthan state government has sent its proposal to the Centre earmarking eco-sensitive zones around various national parks and sanctuaries. The proposals were sent just before the new guidelines for declaration of eco-sensitive zones were issued by the MoEF. The move follows directives by the ministry to all states to constitute a committee comprising wildlife warden, ecologists and a revenue department official for suggesting requirement of an eco-sensitive zone and its extent.

According to HM Bhatia, chief wildlife warden, Rajasthan, “We have prepared the proposal and handed it over to the state government who has forwarded it to the centre. As a general rule we have decided to earmark eco-sensitive zones at a distance of 500 metre around the national parks and 100 metres in the case of other sanctuaries. It is now up to the Centre to issue the notification”.

Source: ‘State sends proposal on eco-sensitive zones’, Anindo Dey, TNN, Mar 4

Comment: Does 100mts or 500 mts make for an eco-sensitive zone? Rather than make a mockery of it, the state might as well do away with the exercise.

Construction-and destruction-in R’bhore core

Construction activity was temporarily stopped following intervention by the Central Empowered
Committee at Bhanwar Deh, a critical and perennial waterhole in Berda—where many of Ranthambhore’s star tigers, including Machli have brought up their cubs. Bhanwar Deh lies within the core of the national park and has been destroyed by bulldozers, ironically, for the construction of an anicut. After the Wildlife Protection Society of India approached the CEC on 2nd March 2011 about the construction work, the CEC sent a directive to the state Chief Secretary asking the State Government to respond to the claims and ensure that no works be allowed in violation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the orders of the Supreme Court.

The Pioneer reports that according to the field director Anand Mohan, “this construction was part of a long-term water management plan and its ecological impact had been assessed by an expert panel.” He said that the very objective of this project is to improve availability of water within the park for wild animals. The work, it is reported, is being carried out by the irrigation and forest departments, with MNREGA and NABARD funding. The State irrigation department have apparently approved construction of 20 anicuts and ponds inside the tiger reserve, costing within the range of Rs 35 to Rs 75 lakh. Nearly 100 anicuts and 20 telais (ponds) have been constructed in the reserve in the past two years.

WPSI executive director Belinda Wright pointed to the gravity of the situation, saying any unnecessary manipulation of a natural ecosystem could cause irreversible damage. She said there were a number of perennial waterholes in critical areas and that artificial cemented anicuts and uncalled-for human intervention could be destructive.

A proposed anicut, for instance, at Adi Dagar beyond Lakardah, is on a nullah that runs from Lakardah to Bakola. The nullah has waterholes that do not dry up even during the critical summer months. It is feared that the proposed anicut may destroy this natural waterhole and inundate the surrounding rock walls. The construction of numerous cement anicuts and earth dams around Galai Sagar could also affect the water-holding of this lake in an area where there are a number of resident big cats, including a tigress with cubs.

Experts feel that besides the physical disturbance, destruction of natural perennial waterholes will cause long term ecological damage. The anicuts will dry up because of silting, destroying the natural waterholes or due to destruction of the natural water retaining base. Research shows that the alteration of a semi-arid region, like Ranthambhore where water is a natural, limiting factor, by introducing ‘unnatural waterbodie, leads to over utilisation of foraging areas.

According to sources, the Chief Secretary is to set up an expert committee to decide on the issue. Till then, work in the protected area would stay stalled.


TAMIL NADU
TR status for Sathyamangalam

A proposal for according tiger reserve status to the Sathyamangalam Reserve Forests is under consideration, PCCF and CWW R Sundararaju said on 9th March. He said that studies conducted using camera traps and scats had given an indication that there could be 19 to 25 tigers in Sathyamangalam forests. He also added that the forests across Tamil Nadu might have 100 to 110 tigers. These statistics was based on the camera traps and scat examination done in tiger reserves such as Mudumalai, Anamalai and Kalakkad Mundanthurai.

Source: The Hindu, March 10, 2011

UTTARAKHAND
A herbal ‘spa’ in Rajaji NP?

The Rajaji National Park will now have an ‘Ayush Gram’ (Herbal Village) with facilities like ayurveda, siddha, and other nature cure besides yoga, herbal garden etc. The proposal submitted by the state government to build an ‘Ayush Gram’ in Chaurasi Kutia was approved in a meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife chaired by the MEF Jairam Ramesh on January 24. The matter had come up before the committee in its previous meeting of October 13, 2010 but was strongly objected to by members who questioned the need for such activity-which was not site-specific in the midst of a national park that is already very stressed and disturbed with highways, railway lines, canals, transmission lines, human habitation etc. Rajaji represents the north-westerly limit of tiger and elephant range.

Dr AJT Johnsingh, member NBWL who went for a site inspection along with faculty of the Wildlife Institute of India, noted the presence of leopard and elephants and also wrote that the Chief Wildlife Warden had a direct sighting of a tigress.
close to the site of the ‘Ayush Gram’. It is also learnt that scat collected from the ‘Ayush Gram’ site is of tiger.

Dr Johnsingh categorically states in his report that approval would only be given on certain conditions which include that gujjars in Gohri Range must be relocated; the 70 odd families of those not actively working in the Chilla Power House are encroachments and should be evicted, a bridge across the Ganga upstream of Lakshmanjhula should be built from the west bank to the east bank to divert the traffic which now goes along the Haridwar-Chilla-Kunaun road which cuts across prime tiger habitat. Most importantly, a clear condition laid down by the Standing committee that Shyampur Range which is being used by tigers and is tenuously linked to the Corbett Tiger Reserve be annexed to Rajaji National Park, to strengthen tiger and elephant conservation in this landscape and the connectivity between Rajaji and Corbett landscape.

A TigerLink Report
Comment: The main concern here is: Will the state abide by its commitment to all the four conditions, and will the ministry ensure the same?

This shouldn’t also set a precedent for diverting land for frivolous purposes. This clearance has only been recommended conditionally, if the four conditions—which are of clear benefit to the tiger and elephants—given are met.

No protection for Lansdowne

The Lansdowne forest division that connects the Corbett Tiger Reserve with the Rajaji National Park is yet to have Protected Area status despite having confirmed the presence of 8-10 tigers, in about 450 sq km as shown in a recent camera trapping exercise by the WII in partnership with Dehradun-based NGO Operation-Eye of the Tiger. NTCA has pressed the state government to act on the proposal to declare it as part of the buffer zone around Corbett Tiger Reserve.

Rajesh Gopal, Member-Secretary, NTCA is quoted in The Pioneer (December 21) saying that a proposal in this regard has been pending with the Uttarakhand government since three years. As highlighted in the last issue of TigerLink (Revived Volume 7, October 2010), a recent study titled “An assessment of the Rajaji-Corbett corridor, Lansdowne Forest Division” by Malviya et al. has shown that this corridor’s usage by tigers has increased by nearly 45 per cent since 2004. Currently, the Lansdowne Forest Division has a tiger density of healthy 5.49 animals per 100 sq km.

A TigerLink report

Rescue centre for big cats

The Uttarakhand government has taken a decision in the last week of December to set up a well-equipped ‘Tiger Transit Rescue Centre’ at Ramnagar. CWW Shrikant Chandola said that this would be a first of its kind centre in the state and would be used to keep ‘rescued’ tigers and leopards from conflict situations.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi, December 28, 2010

Celebrating Corbett?

As the Corbett National Park completes 75 years of existence, the Government of Uttarakhand has announced the year 2011 as ‘Corbett Platinum Jubilee Year’ and has planned a number of events centred around it. The idea is to create awareness, build support for conservation and celebrate 75 years of this iconic tiger reserve.

The main events of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations shall be organised from March 15 and continue December 2011. There will be weekly events focusing attention of wildlife conservation in the Corbett Landscape. The activities will include an international photography competition, film fest, guided trips for school children and peripheral villagers into the reserve, publication of books, literature on the reserve and its biodiversity, etc. There shall also be exposure visits for Members of Parliament, ministers, journalists and members of the judiciary. A major event shall be the gathering of top tiger experts of the world to chalk out a conservation plan for the tigers of Corbett over the coming 25 years. A ‘high-powered’ brainstorming session was held on December 29 to chalk out ambitious plans for the celebrations, ironically as Corbett saw one of the worst cases of man-tiger conflict in recent times which cost four lives, and the killing of a tiger.

While there are elaborate and fancy plans for the jubilee year, much of it is fluff. Will any part of the celebration translate into concrete action that will help alleviate the crisis that Corbett faces today? The need of the hour is a real effort to strengthen both protection and consolidate the Greater Corbett landscape.

There was no bold policy decision taken at the meeting or even resolved to be the part of the jubilee
celebrations. The problems Corbett faces are well-documented. There is also an urgent need to recover the Kosi river corridor, and include Ramnagar forest division and Lansdowne division as part of Corbett to strengthen the Greater Corbett Landscape.

**A TigerLink report**

**UTTAR PRADESH**

**Pilibhit: Rare species revealed by camera traps**

Strategically located in the Terai Arc landscape and connecting India’s Dudhwa Tiger Reserve with Nepal’s Sukhlapanta National Park, the 700 sq km Pilibhit Forest Division and proposed Tiger Reserve has thrown some surprises. In a joint WWF India-WII-NTCA camera trapping exercise, previously undocumented species like the Rusty Spotted Cat (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*) and the Chausingha (*Tetracerus quadricornis*) were captured on camera: the first evidence of the species in this region!

The 40-day exercise carried out by WWF-India’s team of Meraj Anwar, Dr. Harish Kumar and Joseph Vattakavan along with WII from May 22nd to June 30th 2010 also revealed a healthy presence of tigers in the region including breeding tigresses.

**Source:** WWF-India, October 12, 2010

**Comment:** This only strengthens the case for giving Pilibhit a tiger reserve. The matter has been resting with the state for nearly a decade.

**Mayhem in Dudhwa**

There are reports that there have been repeated attempts by villagers to enter Dudhwa enmasse to cut grass. Such an attempt was repelled by the management in the last week of January. Then on January 26th, over 250 villagers again entered the core critical habitat (Dudhwa range) and cut grass, clearing the forest floor and generally created mayhem. With local political support, a plaint district administration and motivated by a few criminal elements—some of whom have been involved in timber smuggling and poaching—such incidents threaten to become a practice. There is fear that they could take away timber-and generally set the trend for lawlessness once given a free hand. It is reported that these villagers are *tharus* who were shifted out in 1982 and given 16,000 hectares of prime forest land. They are now cultivating sugarcane and other cash crops.

The management, one gathered, is under pressure to look the other way, though they fought back and have resisted the onslaught to the core critical habitat.

On the basis of a report of an NBWL member, the NTCA took note of the gravity of the situation and wrote to the Principal Secretary (Forests) Uttar Pradesh, asking for a factual status and action taken in this matter.

**A TigerLink Report**

**Ambedkar Tiger Reserve?**

Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh maybe renamed Ambedkar Tiger Reserve after Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, if the Chief Minister Mayawati has her way. However MEF Jairam Ramesh urged the CM that it would be better rechristen it as Billy Arjan Singh Tiger Reserve as a mark of tribute to the legendary conservationist.

In a letter dated October 15 Ramesh wrote, “I fully share your admiration and respect for Dr Ambedkar, one of the greatest sons of India. Whatever we do is not enough to acknowledge his magnificent contribution to our political life. However, in the matter of the Dudhwa National Park, may I say that Billy Arjan Singh’s contributions have been so very outstanding that naming Dudhwa as ‘Billy Arjan Singh Tiger Reserve’ would in no way diminish our gratitude to Dr Ambedkar. Billy Arjan Singh was “an internationally known figure who more than any one else put Dudhwa on the world map.”

This gesture, he said, would also go a long way in strengthening the bonds between the Forest Department and outside experts for saving our endangered national animal and our forests.

**WEST BENGAL**

**Sundarbans tiger figures not before rains**

The estimates for Sundarban’s tiger population shall not be released till the monsoons. Due to the difficult terrain, the Wildlife Institute of India could only complete two phases of the population estimation. The distribution and occupancy data of the tigers shall be out earlier, though.

Qamar Qureshi, WII said that work on the third phase can only start in September. “We have collected scats, put camera traps and have radio collared a few tigers. Now, we are running the ungulate survey and sign survey of tigers to arrive at the number. DNA sampling too will be done in this phase,” Qureshi added. It may be noted that according to the last census in 2008, occupancy of tigers in Sunderbans was about 1,586 sq km, though the numbers could not be assessed. The last census done in
Sunderbans in 2001-02, put the tiger numbers in Indian Sunderbans at 274, which was widely contested. But in 2006, Indian Statistical Institute claimed that the number cannot exceed 75. The report, however, was rejected by the state government.

Source: Krishnendu Mukherjee, TNN, Kolkata, November 23, 2010.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

St. Petersburg tiger summit

The Global Tiger Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia, held in November 2010 ended with promises from the 13 range countries to double the wild tiger numbers by 2022 as part of the Global Tiger Recovery Program. During the summit governments, NGOs and individuals such as Hollywood star Leonardo Dicaprio pledged $150 million for stabilising existing tiger populations and on forest habitat schemes. The funds will be administered by governments and NGOs, but overseen by a combination of the Global Tiger Forum and the Global Tiger Initiative.

However, conservationists stressed for stronger commitments to curb illegal trade and habitat fragmentation.

In terms of raising the funds necessary, the summit fell short. The funds needed for the next five years has been estimated to be $350 million. Despite the $150 million announced, these were not entirely new funds, and the fact that other donor countries did not step forward with commitments of funds was a disappointment, especially to the range countries in attendance.

The summit was hosted by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. The forum participants included non-tiger range countries like France, Germany and the UK. It was attended by leaders and delegations of the governments of Tiger Range Countries, heads of major international organisations, including bilateral and multilateral donor organisations such as the World Bank, highly renowned scientists, experts, advocates of wildlife conservation and biodiversity, captains of industry and the private sector. Celebrities, musicians, and young people from around the world celebrated wildlife and the tiger with a concert and cultural fair in the heart of St. Petersburg.

Wild tiger numbers are down to only 3,200, with scattered populations surviving across 13 countries having lost more than 93 percent of their historic range.

The future of wild tigers depends on whether or not the range countries, donor nations, bilateral aid agencies, NGOs, and others step up with major pledges of support.

Source: WWF, February 1, 2011; Voice of Russia, Moscow, November 27, 2010; GTI, November 16, 2010, BBC Wildlife, Feb 2011, Steve Monfort, head of the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

GTI signs MoU with GTF

The Global Tiger Initiative and the Global Tiger Fund agreed to cooperate and work collaboratively in their deliberations in the St Petersburg summit. The GTF secretariat had asked for financial support from GTI for their activities in tiger range countries for the National Tiger Recovery Programme and the Global Tiger Recovery Programme. However, the document will be signed by World Bank Executive because GTI is not a legal entity. On behalf of the GTF, the MoU will be signed by the officiating Secretary General. The Government of India has support the GTF by Rs. Ten Million. Subject to fulfilling certain conditions the GTI will give USD 100,000 annually. It is hoped that this will encourage non-member tiger range countries to join GTF.

Ten thousand wild tigers a possibility

According to a new paper from scientists at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and other world-leading conservation researchers, Asia’s tiger reserves could support over 10,000 wild tigers—three times their current number—if they are managed as large landscapes with well connected core breeding habitats. The study is the first assessment of the political commitment made by 13 tiger-range countries at November’s tiger summit in St Petersburg, Russia, to double the tiger population across Asia by 2022.

It will take a global effort to ensure that core breeding reserves are maintained and connected via habitat corridors. Wild tiger numbers have declined from about 1,00,000 in the early 1900s to as few as 3,200 today due to poaching of tigers and their prey, habitat destruction and fragmentation and human-tiger conflict. Most of the surviving tigers are scattered in small, isolated pockets across their range in 13 Asian countries. The paper’s authors found that the 20 priority tiger conservation landscapes with the highest probability of long-term tiger survival could support more than 10,500 tigers, including about 3,400 breeding females.

Besides poaching, the $7.5 trillion in infrastructure projects like roads, dams and mines that will be invested in Asia over the next decade threaten tiger landscapes. Developers and politicians may see a focus only on core
sites and protected areas like reserves, instead of larger landscapes, as a green light to move forward with harmful infrastructure projects outside of core sites. The authors insist that conservationists and governments must be involved in helping design infrastructure projects to mitigate their impacts on tigers both inside core sites and in current and potential forest corridors.


India, Bhutan to jointly monitor Manas tigers

Forest authorities of India and Bhutan have agreed on a joint initiative to camera trap tigers moving across the international border separating India’s Manas National Park from Bhutan’s Royal Manas National Park. The idea is to monitor the movement of tigers between the two parks, which are a contiguous and compact forest. The monitoring began on November 20th and around 450 sq km are covered on both sides of the border. On the Indian side, the areas covered include Bansbari and Bhuyanpara while in Bhutan, authorities will cover the Manas range of the national park. The meeting discussed the concept of Greater Manas which has already got support from the World Heritage Committee and a resolution was passed for conservation of the Greater Manas landscape. While Manas India has an area of 500 sq kms, Manas Bhutan covers 1,057 sq km. Tigers move from Phibsbo Wildlife Sanctuary in Bhutan to Manas Tiger Reserve, Buxa Tiger Reserve and Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary in India. The meeting also discussed the idea of having a similar exercise for monitoring elephants.

Among NGOs, WWF, Aaranyak and Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) rendered their support.

Source: Roopak Goswami, The Telegraph, Guwahati, November 10, 2010

BANGLADESH

Stray tiger rescued

In a first for Bangladesh, a stray tigress was saved from possible death by a panicked crowd after it entered Harinarag village in Satkhira district. The tigress was immobilised, before being released into the forest by a Forest Department and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) team on the night of 20th February. Villagers saw the tiger swimming across the canal towards their village on Feb 19th and immediately called the Village Tiger Response Team, the Forest Tiger Response Team and the Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh.

But before the rescue teams could arrive, some villagers started hitting the tigress who sustained injury in its eye. It was only when more Forest Department staff, Border Guards (BGB) and police arrived at the spot that the crowd came under control.

The tigress was immobilised and released into the forest later at night after it had fully recovered from the effect of anaesthesia.

Last year, WTB had provided immobilisation training to 30 field staff of the forest department by international experts. The Forest Department and WTB had earlier launched a project to build and train local community teams to tackle issues of human-tiger conflict. A total of 29 Village Tiger Response Teams have been formed in the most conflict prone villages adjacent to the Sundarbans.

The main tasks of the VTRTs include patrolling and responding to villagers’ needs if there are any reports of tiger-sightings, and—crucially—controlling the crowd that forms when a tiger strays into a village, until the forest department arrives with more help and equipment.

Source: Dhaka, Feb 22 (UNB), Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh, Zoological Society of London.
More teeth for tiger law

Before leaving for St Petersburg for the World Tiger Summit, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved a law that can award jail terms of up to 12 years for killing endangered animals. Wildlife officials said while the penalty for killing crocodiles and pythons is two years in jail, the term could go up to 12 years for killing tigers and elephants. Under the earlier law, the punishment was between two months and two years, along with fines of a meager Rs 322 to Rs 1,200.

Source: Ananya Sengupta, The Telegraph, Dhaka, November 21, 2010

Comment: Implementation (or non-implementation) of the law, remains as serious a concern as it is in India

Skulls, skins seized in Sundarbans

Md Jamal Fakir, an enlisted fisherman of Sharankhola range of the Sundarbans was arrested on February 15th with forest officials recovering from him four tiger skulls, three tiger skins and 138 pieces of tiger bones. During preliminary interrogation, Jamal admitted that he and his associates had killed three tigers by using poisoned wild boar at Harintana in Chandpai range of the Sundarbans, within the last 45 days.

Jamal also gave some names and addresses of local poachers and their patrons, who are active in the Sundarbans, said a forest department official.

Since independence in 1971, 151 tigers have been killed in Bangladesh. Mihir Kumar Dey, divisional forest officer (DFO) of the Sundarbans said a forest department official. that the government has enacted Wildlife (Conservation) Act-2010, which has provisions of fine up to Tk 5 million and up to 12 years of imprisonment, for killing tigers. He added that the authorities concerned are yet to publish the gazette of the newly formed act.


CHINA

Seeking a promised land for the tiger

Tigers hold an important position in traditional Chinese culture. But unfortunately, China is also one of the countries where wild tigers are the most endangered and it also has the dubious distinction of being the world’s largest tiger part consumer. Worse, it has allowed the tiger to be abused materially and be farmed like livestock for commercial trade in its body parts.

Over the past 50 years, China’s population has increased rapidly and the tiger has vanished from most of its forests, with just about 30 wild tigers believed to be in the country. It had the maximum number of tiger sub-species: The North China (Siberian) tiger (Panthera tigris altaica), the Indochinese Tiger (Panthera tigris corbetti) and the Bengal Tiger (Panthera tigris tigris) all of which also exist in other countries. But, the South China Tiger (Panthera tigris amoyensis), unfortunately does not have such ‘dual nationality’ and it is believed be extinct in China with no sighting in the past 25 years.

The future of the tigers looks desperately pessimistic, but following are a few way by which it can be given a second chance:

a. China should set up ‘Special Ecological Zones’, similar to Special Economic Zones in its border regions. These can provide habitats for tigers on the borders of Yunnan province with Myanmar and Laos, and along the border between Heilongjiang province and Russia.

b. The State must rebuild the ecological environment, protect biological corridors, create safe habitats, build up populations of the tiger’s natural prey, reduce interference by man, and in this way, attract the Bengal Tiger, the Indochinese Tiger and the North China tiger back into Chinese forests to live and breed in.

c. China needs to establish national parks in traditional habitats ie a in the Gaoligong National Reserve area in Baoshan, Yunnan; Xishuangbanna, Yunnan; east Heilongjiang and in the southern part of China in the southern part of China, so tigers can come from across the border, or an attempt can be made to return the tiger to the wild from captivity.

d. China needs to build up community co-management in and around habitats.

e. China needs to pass more severe laws and take effective measures to punish the traders of tiger part. The penalties for drug trafficking should be the reference point to determine such punishment.

f. China must build up social consciousness of the need to protect wild tigers, based on Chinese traditional tiger culture and customs.

**Comment:** Tiger numbers in China have dramatically declined. There is a ray of hope for Siberian tigers in northeast China - home to about 20. Tigers from Russia are migrating to northeast China, but lack of prey species and too much human activity in forests on China’s side remain a worry. Maybe the author hopes that by taking the above steps such tigers have a future in China. There is a $3 million project to reintroduce south-China tigers from captivity but questions have been raised about the viability given that there is a very tiny captive population and also, the validity of pouring huge amounts of money into this exercise, while surviving wild tigers across its range urgently require protection.

**Siberian tigers repopulating China**

After two oxen were killed and eaten in Sandaowan Town, Yanji, Jilin province, experts from the Beijing Forestry University have concluded that the predator was a wild Siberian tiger. This was the first sign of tiger activity discovered in Yanji in nearly a decade. Experts believe that this implies an increasingly evident trend that the habitats of wild Siberian tigers are expanding from the Sino-Russian border areas to include China’s inland areas. Located at the junction of China, Russia and North Korea, Jilin’s Huichun serves as an ecological passage for the free migration of wild Siberian tigers between China and Russia.

Siberian tigers mainly inhabit Russia’s Far East and China’s Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces.

**Source:** People’s Daily Online, November 8, 2010

**INDONESIA**

**Sumatra holds 2nd highest tiger population**

A rare bright spot in the world of tiger conservation: New research by the Wildlife Conservation Society’s Indonesia Program and Forum HariumauKita has produced a new map of Sumatran tiger distribution which shows that the Indonesian island may actually have the second-highest population of wild tigers in the world now, second only to India.

The survey found that tigers are still living in 97 per cent of suitable habitat in Sumatra and in every eco-region from coastal lowland forests at sea level all the way to high mountain forests at elevations of 10,500 feet, which is the good news. The bad news is that just 29 per cent of the remaining tiger habitat on the island is protected. This is especially worrying considering Indonesia’s bad record in logging, conversion of forest to agriculture, etc. which continue to be the main threats to remaining Sumatran tiger habitat.

Hariyo Wibisono, who conducted the survey, said that the positive indicators of the survey should mobilise commitment from the governments and increased support from tiger experts and the international community to conserve Sumatran tigers.”

The results of this research are expected to be published soon.


**Comment:** On enquiry, scientists associated with the work in Sumatra told TigerLink that with the tiger population in Russia is on the decline, Sumatra certainly might have the second largest population after India. But, with the massive destruction of forest, logging concessions, clearing for plantations (see news below), this ‘good’ news seems iffy. Scientists confirm that all is not well in Sumatra. While things are somewhat okay in Aceh, it’s a situation of despair in rest of Sumatra. First the large scale human migration from Java to Sumatra took its toll. Now coffee, oil palm, paper and pulp plantations are eating away the remaining tiger habitats, which are getting increasingly isolated.

**Camera traps bulldozer**

Videos and photos in May and June 2010 captured—released to the public for the first time on 12th October—captured an interesting-and endearing, picture of a male Sumatran tiger walking straight to a camera and sniffing it. A week later, the heat-activated-video camera trap documented a bulldozer clearing trees for an illegal palm oil plantation in precisely the same location. The next day, the camera recorded a Sumatran tiger walking through the devastated landscape. Bukit Batabuh, where the film was taken, was classified as a protected area by Riau Province in 1994, and categorised as a ‘limited production forest’ based on Indonesia’s 1986 Land Use Consensus, meaning no company can legally exploit the forests.

“Because of its status, both as a protected area and limited production forest, the area cannot be developed as a palm oil plantation. Therefore, any forest clearance—including bulldozing activities to clear the path—strongly indicates that this excavation was illegal,”
said Ian Kosasih, WWF-Indonesia’s Director of Forest and Species Program. “The law should be enforced. To stop illegal activities such as this, the palm oil industry should not source its material from farmers or producers who develop their plantations illegally.”

Since mid-2009, WWF has installed video camera traps in Bukit Batabuh to study Sumatran tiger distribution, habits, and the threats they face.

“These video camera traps show that Bukit Batabuh area is an important habitat for the Sumatran tiger in Riau, functioning as a wildlife corridor between Bukit Tigapuluh and Rimbang Baling Tiger Priority Landscape. Hence it becomes a priority area for tiger conservation,” explained M Awriya Ibrahim, Director of Investigation and Forest Protection, Ministry of Forestry, adding that “the Ministry of Forestry is investigating this matter and will take strong measures in law enforcement, if this activity is proven violating the law.” The location where the tiger and bulldozer were documented by video in May 2010 is only 200 meters away from a video camera trap which captured a tigress and her cubs passing by in October 2009.

Source: WWF, October 12, 2010.

Tiger numbers dwindle in Jambi

The population of the critically endangered Sumatran tiger in the Jambi province has dwindled to an alarmingly low number. Tri Siswo, a Jambi Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) spokesperson said that there were only an estimated 40 tigers left in the area. According to Tri Siswo, poaching and deforestation were the biggest threat. Meanwhile, the population of Sumatran tigers in Way Kambas National Park (TNWK), which covers 1,300 square kilometers in Lampung province, has also dwindled to less than 30 from the estimated 40 a decade ago.

Source: The Jakarta Post, Jambi, February 8, 2011

Human-tiger conflict on the rise

Human-tiger conflict seems to have increased in Sumatra since August 2010. One villager was killed in Rokan Hilir district, close to the Senepis Sumatran Tiger Conservation Area in August. On September 20th, a villager, Sugianto (36) was found dead in the Bengkalis district, within an industrial logging concession. From his injuries it became apparent that a tiger had attacked him. Villagers then approached authorities and reported the matter, following which, the Conservation Authority of Riau and the Foundation of Sumatran Tiger Protection set up a wooden trap cage for the tiger. A tiger was caught on 30th September, but was left unattended. It was found dead a few hours later. Its hind leg had been badly injured in a snare injury.

The conflict occurred in an industrial logging concession which is part of the buffer zone of Giam Siak Kecil-Bukit Batu Biosphere Reserve and which the villagers have encroached into. Large scale logging and encroachment has been fueling human-tiger conflict in the region.

Source: WWF-Tesso Nilo Newsletter, September-October 2010.

MYANMAR

World’s largest TR pillaged

In August, Burma proudly announced that Kachin state’s remote Hukawng Valley, in its entirety, would be designated as a Protected Tiger Area - a declaration welcomed by conservationists as an important commitment by Myanmar to conserve the world’s last wild tigers. But now, a report and video released by a network of civil society groups and development organisations in Kachin state shows that a powerful Burmese tycoon is clearing swathes of forests across the reserve to create sugar and tapioca plantations and to plant jatropha for biofuel.

The report, ‘Tyrons, Tycoons and Tigers,’ published by the Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG) details how forests are being destroyed, leaving only the conservation signboards standing.

The report says the tycoon Htay Myint is establishing massive mono-crop plantations in the world’s largest tiger reserve. Htay Myint’s Yuzana Company, a Burmese conglomerate with close ties to the ruling military, was granted 2,00,000 acres in the Hukawng Valley Tiger Reserve in 2006 to establish sugarcane and tapioca plantations, five years after the Hukawng Valley Reserve was established.

According to the KDNG report, ‘fleets of tractors, backhoes, and bulldozers rip up forests, raze bamboo groves and flatten existing small farms. Signboards that mark animal corridors and ‘no hunting zones’ stand out starkly against a now barren landscape; they are all that is left of the conservation efforts. Application of chemical fertilisers and herbicides together with the daily toil of over 2,000 imported workers are transforming the area into huge tapioca, sugarcane, and jatropha plantations.’ KDNG
spokesman Ah Nan said: ‘The destruction in Hugawng makes a mockery of the tiger reserve.’

Ironically, Burma’s military regime claims in its recent National Tiger Plan that it will double the country’s tiger population by 2022, which was submitted at the Global Tiger Summit in St Petersburg next month.


Wife with soup ladle scares away tiger!

In an incident straight out of Ripley’s Believe it or Not, the BBC reports on February 14 that a man has been rescued from a near-fatal attack by a tiger in northern Malaysia by his wife who used a soup ladle as her weapon!

Tambun Gediu, now badly lacerated and recovering in hospital said that, “I was terrified and I used all my strength to punch the animal in the face, but it would not budge,” New Straits Times newspaper quoted him as saying. He was attacked by the tiger when trying to hunt a squirrel. He tried hitting the tiger away in vain, when his 55-year-old wife rushed out of the kitchen on hearing his screams and used the ladle to successfully ward off the tiger. Wildlife rangers plan to track the tiger and relocate it into dense, unpopulated jungle in the northern state of Perak.

Source: “Malaysia tiger mauling stopped by wife with soup ladle”, BBC News, February 14, 2010

NEPAL

Three held with tiger skin

Acting on a tip off provided by Wildlife Conservation Nepal (WCN), Armed Police Force (APF) personnel on 14th November arrested three persons from Janakpur, one of them on the charge of smuggling tiger parts.

This is the fifth incident of the smuggling of tiger parts in the last 10 months in Nepal. According to a recent report made by World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Nepal is among the five hotspots in the world for illegal trade of tiger parts.

Source: Republica, Kathmandu, November 16, 2010

Nepal sees its first wild tiger translocation

For the first time in Nepal, a wild tiger fitted with satellite collar was translocated from the Chitwan National Park (CNP) to Bardia National Park (BNP) on January 23rd. CNP authorities had rescued the injured male tiger from the premises of a hotel in Sauraha in September last year. “The tiger was placed in a secure enclosure at the park headquarters in Kasara for treatment where it recovered completely. A team of wildlife veterinarians, biologists and park authorities tranquilised it and fitted it with a Global Positioning System (GPS) collar,” said Maheshwor Dhakal, ecologist, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC).

“This translocation is a concrete example of our promise to save the wild tiger using the best science available, including the application of cutting-edge technologies,” Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation, Deepak Bohara, said after the DNPWC translocated the big cat with help from WWF and National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). According to the officials, the big cat was transported about 600 km in a specially constructed trailer from CNP to BNP under strict supervision and security measures.

For the first three months, wildlife authorities will closely monitor the tiger’s ability to adapt to the new habitat.


RUSSIA

Amur tiger in population crisis

The effective population of the critically endangered Amur tiger is now fewer than 14 animals, say scientists. Approximately 500 Amur tigers actually survive in the wild, but the effective population is a measure of the genetic diversity of the world’s largest cat. Very low diversity means any vulnerability to disease or rare genetic disorders is likely to be passed on to the next generation. These results paint a grim picture for the tiger’s chance of survival.

The findings are reported in the journal Mammalian Biology.

The Amur tiger, or Siberian tiger as it is also known, once lived across a large portion of northern China, the Korean peninsula, and the southernmost regions of eastern Russia. During the early 20th Century, the Amur tiger was almost driven to extinction, as expanding human settlements, habitat loss and poaching wiped out this biggest of cats from over 90 per cent of its range.

By the 1940s, just 20 to 30 individuals survived in the wild. An intensive protection program saw a revival of the species. However, genetically speaking, the Amur
tiger has not recovered, even though its actual numbers may have increased. The new study has identified that this ‘genetic bottleneck’—when the breeding population of tigers was so critically low—has decimated the Amur tiger gene pool. A more genetically diverse population of animals has a much better chance of survival; it is more likely, for example, to contain the genetic resistance to a variety of diseases and less likely to succumb to rare genetic disorders, which can be ‘cancelled out’ by healthy genes.

Scientists in Russia, Spain and Germany worked together to analyse DNA samples from 15 wild Amur tigers in the Russian Far East. They took blood samples from the animals and screened them for certain ‘markers’—points in the DNA code that show that an animal had parents that were genetically very different from each other.

“Our results are the first to demonstrate a quite recent genetic bottleneck in Siberian tigers, a result that matches the well-documented severe demographic decline of the Siberian tiger population in the 1940s,” the researchers wrote in the paper. “The worryingly low effective population size challenges the optimism for the recovery of the huge Siberian cat.”

Source: ‘Amur tigers in population crisis’, By Victoria Gill, BBC News

Tiger habitat threatened by timber auctions

The Forest Management Agency of Primorsky Province plans to conduct an auction for logging rights in 16 harvest sites in the Bikinsky and Pozharsky Pine Nut Harvesting Zones and the proposed Middle Ussuri Wildlife Reserve, by making them available for so-called ‘intermediate harvesting’ a widely abused legal loophole which allows loggers to cut valuable Korean pine, oak and ash timber in protected forests.

This practice greatly increases poaching access to remote tiger territories (through forest road building), destroys key breeding, feeding and over-wintering habitat for tigers and their prey, and significantly reduces the supply of pine nuts and acorns on which tiger prey species survive.

The logging rights up for auction will allow loggers to cut down forests that protect salmon breeding grounds and are crucial habitats for Amur tigers. Coordinator of forest projects for the Amur Division of WWF-Russia Anatoliy Kabanyets identified the key problem – authorities’ lack of genuine information on the true scale of illegal logging and its influence on region’s forests. Hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of illegally logged timber are shipped to China.

Michael Stuewe, senior consultant for WWF-US on species conservation, noted that Primorsky Province is the homeland of two of the most charismatic examples of global biodiversity: the Amur tiger, and the Korean pine.

Source: WWF, October 21, 2010

Understanding conflict

For a study on human-tiger conflict in the Russian Far East, scientists examined data collected on human-Amur tiger (Panthera tigris altaica) conflicts from January 2000 through February 2009 with an aim to (1) summarise and characterise human–tiger conflicts, in the area, (2) examine causes of human–tiger conflicts, and (3) attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the Tiger Response Team (TRT), which was set up by the the Russian Federation in 1999 to investigate and intervene in human–tiger conflicts. The team investigated 202 conflicts. Both attacks on humans and depredations were greatest in winter. Just over half the conflict reports were attacks on domestic animals, followed by tigers near human habitations, miscellaneous conflicts and attacks on humans, which was nine per cent. Dogs were killed more commonly than other domestic animals, likely because livestock were well-managed. Nineteen attacks on humans were recorded in this period resulting in 11 injuries and two deaths. Every year, four tigers were killed, or were removed from the wild. Attacks on humans were most often by wounded tigers, most of which were human-caused. The effectiveness of interventions focused on reducing depredation on domestic animals was unclear, but data suggested that removal of injured and other unhealthy tigers from the wild by the Tiger Response Team resulted in fewer human deaths.

Source: ‘Conflicts between Amur (Siberian) tigers and humans in the Russian Far East’, Biological Conservation, John M. Goodrich; Ivan Seryodkin a,b, Dale G. Miquelle a, Sergei L. Bereznuk, October 2010.

Woman caught with pet tiger

A woman in the Russian Urals city of Yekaterinburg is being investigated for illegally keeping an Amur tiger, according to local police. The owner of the big cat was keeping her ‘pet’ in a 4x4 meter outdoor cage. She faces a fine of only 2,500 rubles ($80).

Amur tigers are classed as endangered by the World Conservation Union. Since 2006, poachers have killed at least 10 of the rare animals in Russia’s Far East.

VIETNAM

Man nabbed with frozen tiger

A Vietnamese man was arrested in possession of a frozen tiger, state media reported on November 16th. Pham Hai Nam, the accused, told police that he bought the animal in the northeastern port town of Hai Phong, according to An Ninh Thu Do newspaper. The accused, who was detained in Hanoi on 15th November, also reportedly told police that he would crush the tiger’s bones to make traditional medicine if he failed to find a buyer for the whole carcass.

Source: AFP, Hanoi, November 16, 2010

International forum discusses enforcement

Tiger-range nations’ officials came together at Hanoi, Vietnam, to discuss wildlife law enforcement issues at a workshop organised by TRAFFIC and the Wildlife Conservation Society, in conjunction with the Government of Vietnam. It was funded by the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility, as part of the ‘Tiger Futures’ Project.

Personnel from a partnership called the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICCWC), launched during the International Tiger Forum, acted as resource persons during the event. These included officials from INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Bangkok, the World Customs Organisation’s Regional Intelligence Liaison Office in Beijing, and the CITES Secretariat in Geneva. A senior official from the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) Programme Coordination Unit in Bangkok and a wildlife law enforcement officer from South Africa also participated.

The workshop allowed Vietnamese officials and international counterparts to discuss the difficulties in combating illegal wildlife trade. Special attention was given to illegal trade in tigers, ivory, pangolin scales and rhinoceros horns. Topics discussed included recent wildlife product confiscations by enforcement agencies in Vietnam and their disposal and effective communication, collaboration and coordination at national, regional and international levels.


UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Backyard tigers in the US

With more tigers in captivity in the US than surviving in the wild, the United States needs a centralised federal database to monitor the big cats, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) said on October 2010. Weak US regulations could be helping to fuel the multimillion dollar international black market for tiger parts, according to a new review released by WWF and TRAFFIC, the world’s largest wildlife trade monitoring network. Additionally, WWF released a new online tool that allows users to learn about their states’ captive tiger regulations and how weak oversight puts wild tigers and human safety at risk.

America’s 5,000-plus captive tigers are mostly kept by private individuals, not zoos, often in deplorable conditions. A patchwork of federal laws governs the possession, sale and exhibition of captive tigers. Seventeen states allow the keeping of tigers by individuals with a state permit or registration, while eight have no laws on captive tigers. Due to a host of exceptions exemptions, and loopholes, federal agencies charged with implementing these laws have no mandate to maintain a current inventory of how many tigers are in the country, where they are, who possesses them, when they die or how they are disposed off. A nationwide database is essential to ensure that captive cats don’t end up in traditional folk medicine, tiger wine, or as somebody’s hearth rug or wall hanging.”

This report was the follow up on the 2008 TRAFFIC report.

Source: WWF/TRAFFIC, for details go to: http://www.worldwildlife.org/species/finder/tigers/captive-tigers/index.html
Tiger deaths chronology

Assam reported a high number of deaths in November 2010, with three tigers dying on November 10, 11th and 19th. All are believed to have died of natural causes.

- **11th November, 2010**: Carcass of male tiger found in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh. Death accounted to territorial fight.
- **14th November 2010**: ST1, first tiger to be translocated to Sariska Tiger Reserve, found dead. It was confirmed to be have been poisoned.
- **26th November 2010**: Forest officials arrested eight people and recovered a tiger skin from them at Karumathampati near Coimbatore.
- **21st December 2010**: Headless body of tiger found at Kawardha, Chhattisgarh. Investigations revealed that it was poached by local villagers. Nine villagers were arrested and tiger parts including teeth, claws etc. were recovered. The area where the tiger’s body was recovered is part of the Achanakmar-Kanha corridor.
- **25th December 2010**: A tiger was found dead, most probably poisoned, in the Orang National Park, Assam.
- **25th December 2010**: A team of Special Task Force personnel arrested three persons and seized a tiger skin near Sathyamangalam forest (proposed tiger reserve).
- **5th January 2011**: Carcass of young tigress, around three years old, recovered from Thekkady lake, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala.
- **10th January 2011**: Carcass of an old tigress found by forest staff during patrol at Kukalthorai Halla in the Nilgiris.
- **12th January 2011**: Tiger found dead floating in the Bramhaputra near Kaziranga. It was poisoned.
- **14th January 2011**: One year old tiger cub found killed by adult tiger in Satpura TR.
- **17th January 2011**: Subadult tiger cub found killed by adult tiger in Chandrapur district.
- **27th January**: Male tiger shot dead in Sunderkal, adjoining Corbett TR for being “maneater”. See under ‘Conflict’ for detail.
- **2nd February 2011**: Carcass of an old tigress found in Similipal Tiger Reserve. Reported to be a natural death.
- **9th February 2011**: Tigress, mother of two cubs, died after being captured and operated upon for maggot infestation in Ranthambhore.
- **13th February 2011**: Decomposed carcass of tiger found in Sollepura range, Nagarhole TR. Said to be natural death.
- **13th February 2011**: Tigress found dead in Mudumalai TR. Allegedly died of injuries from a ‘fight with leopard’.
- **19th February 2011**: Male tiger found killed in fight with another tiger in Corbett TR.
- **28th February 2011**: Two week old decomposed carcass of tiger found in the Sunderbans.
- **5th March 2011**: Tigress killed by another in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, MP.

Ten poachers surrender in Kaziranga

Following an ultimatum issued by villagers, ten poachers hiding in Assam’s Kaziranga National Park have surrendered before forest authorities. The surrender took place on 26th November.

**Source:** The Tribune, Guwahati, November 27, 2010.

Sariska tiger poacher arrested

‘ST1’, the first tiger to be translocated to Sariska from Ranthambhore, to rebuild the reserve’s extinct tiger population was found dead on November 14. He was poisoned. Later investigations led to the conclusion that one Parsadi Lal Gujjar and his nephew Kailash Gujjar were involved in the poaching. While Parsadi Lal is already in custody, efforts are being made to nab Kailash Gujjar. They had killed the tiger because they feared it would harm their livestock. Both accused are residents of a village located in Taha range of the reserve.

**Source:** The Pioneer, Jaipur, January 4, 2011

Five held in Ranthambhore

At least five people were arrested on 7th December on charges of illegally entering the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve while allegedly carrying arms. The arrested were in possession of wild boar meat and were also
### Tiger Deaths, November 2010-March 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>10 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Kaziranga National Park</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>11 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Kaziranga National Park</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>11 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Pilibhit</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>14 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Sariska Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>19 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Agoratoli, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>23 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Nagabandha in Morigaon district</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>25 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Chandrapur district, Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>6 Dec 2010</td>
<td>Chandrapur</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>21 Dec 2010</td>
<td>Amnia Village, Kawardha</td>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>25 Dec 2010</td>
<td>Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>5 Jan 2011</td>
<td>Periyar Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>10 Jan 2011</td>
<td>Nilgiris district</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>12 Jan 2011</td>
<td>Brahmapurta River bank Kaziranga</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>17 Jan 2011</td>
<td>Bramhpuri Forest Division Chandrapur</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>25 Jan 2011</td>
<td>Kotdwar, Kalagarh Forest Division</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>27 Jan 2011</td>
<td>Corbett Tiger Reserve Sunderkhal</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>2 Feb 2011</td>
<td>Similipal Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>6 Feb 2011</td>
<td>Terai (West) Forest Division</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>9 Feb 2011</td>
<td>Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>10 Feb 2011</td>
<td>South Wyanad Forest Division</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>13 Feb 2011</td>
<td>HD Kote, Mysore Forest Division</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>13 Feb 2011</td>
<td>Mudumalai Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>19 Feb 2011</td>
<td>Corbett Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>5 Mar 2011</td>
<td>Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>5 Mar 2011</td>
<td>Kaladhungi Range, Rannagar Forest Division</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tiger Seizures, November 2010-March 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Seizure Info</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>16 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Sunderbans</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>Tiger Skins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>26 Nov 2010</td>
<td>Karumathampati near Coimbatore</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Tiger Skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>19 Dec 2010</td>
<td>Brihaspat Kund, bordering the Panna reserve</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Tiger Bones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>7 Jan 2011</td>
<td>Gadchandur, Chandrapur</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Tiger Skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>28 Feb 2011</td>
<td>Moreh</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>3 kgs tiger bones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Tiger Mortality/Seizures according Wildlife Protection Society of India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>SKINS</th>
<th>BONES</th>
<th>OTHER DEATHS</th>
<th>REMARKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06-Oct-10</td>
<td>Kanha TR</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead with injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Oct-10</td>
<td>Pench TR</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decomposed body of a tigress found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-Oct-10</td>
<td>Ranthambore TR</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead in a nala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Oct-10</td>
<td>Bandhavgarh TR</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poisoned, later rescued and rehabilitated by FD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Nov-10</td>
<td>Kaziranga TR</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead with injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Nov-10</td>
<td>Kaziranga TR</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead with injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Nov-10</td>
<td>Pilibhit Dist.</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-Nov-10</td>
<td>Sariska TR</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Nov-10</td>
<td>South 24-Parganas</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seized by Forest Dept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-Nov-10</td>
<td>Kaziranga TR</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-Nov-10</td>
<td>Morigaon dist.</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shot dead by Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Nov-10</td>
<td>West Chanda Division</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead with injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Nov-10</td>
<td>Terai West Division</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Died in fight with other animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Dec-10</td>
<td>Chandrapur district</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Dec-10</td>
<td>Chhatarpur Division</td>
<td>tiger bones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sambar body parts were also recovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Dec-10</td>
<td>Kawardha Dist.</td>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Killed by poachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-Dec-10</td>
<td>Erode Dist.</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seized by Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-Dec-10</td>
<td>Orang National Park</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Poisoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Jan-11</td>
<td>Periyar TR</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Jan-11</td>
<td>Chandrapur Dist.</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seized by police with the assistance of WPSI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Jan-11</td>
<td>Kaziranga TR</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Jan-11</td>
<td>Satpura TR</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-Jan-11</td>
<td>Brahmapuri Division</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-Jan-11</td>
<td>Corbett TR</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pregnant tigress found dead with 5 fetuses in the womb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Jan-11</td>
<td>Ramnagar Division</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shot dead by Forest Dept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Feb-11</td>
<td>Terai West Division</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Feb-11</td>
<td>Similipal TR</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-Feb-11</td>
<td>Ranthambhore TR</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Feb-11</td>
<td>South Wyanad</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Feb-11</td>
<td>Mudumalai TR</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead, allegedly due to fight with leopard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Feb-11</td>
<td>Mysore Forest Division</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-Feb-11</td>
<td>Corbett TR</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Feb-11</td>
<td>Sunderbans TR</td>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Feb-11</td>
<td>Moreh</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>3kgs</td>
<td></td>
<td>tiger bone</td>
<td>Seized by Assam Rifles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Mar-11</td>
<td>Kaladhungi</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Found dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-Mar-11</td>
<td>Bandhavgarh TR</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>tiger</td>
<td>Found dead due to infighting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wildlife Protection Society of India
carrying weapons. A joint team of the forest department, police and members of the Tiger Watch group carried out the raids after a tip-off.

Source: **TNN**, Jaipur, December 8, 2010

**Tiger poached near Kawal**

Police arrested six people while they were trying to smuggle a tiger skin in Gadchandur, Chandrapur district, Maharashtra. The seizure was following a tip off from the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI).

It was found that the tiger whose skin was being smuggled was poached in Kagaznagar district of neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. Forest officials of Kagaznagar range have arrested the accused, Anandrao Madavi, Adilabad district. The accused revealed that one of their relatives had poached the tiger on the outskirts of Vempalli village in Adilabad district of AP and that they brought the skin to Chandrapur to seek customers.

“Madavi had put electrified wire to prevent intrusion of wild animals into his farm in the jungle. However, an adult tiger got electrocuted by the wire and died on the spot. He then skinned the animal and buried the carcass in the nullah passing through the outskirts of his farm,” said ACF, Rajura, KD Kove.

Taking cognizance of the incident, Assistant Director of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, Shaik Karimulla visited Vempalli with Kove and inspected the spot where the poaching took place. The six couriers arrested with the tiger skin were sent to magisterial custody remand by Rajura court.

The Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary in Adilabad district, where the tiger was poached, is an important yet much neglected tiger habitat that has tremendous potential for long term conservation. It is linked to the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra and serves as a sink for its spillover tigers.


**Rise in poaching in Kawal**

A sharp rise in wildlife poaching has become a worrying factor in and around Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary in the Adilabad district (Andhra Pradesh). While over 50 traps and snares were seized from poachers in 2009-10, only one case has been booked. Over the past five years, only a dozen such cases have been booked which include the electrocution of a leopard in Laxmipur, Kadem range in early 2009. As is the case across India, prosecution rates are very low.

Range Officer, Jannaram, R Uttam Rao says that local communities usually hunt nilgai, wild boar, spotted deer, hare, peafowl and jungle fowl either for meat or to prevent crop depredation using traps, nets and through electrocution. Most offenders hail from the villages of Malyal, Maisampet, Islampur, Dongapalli and Alinagar, which are so notorious, that even officials and trackers rarely set foot in them.


Comment: It is worth noting that this is one of the first sanctuaries which had the impact of Forest Rights Act. People with red flags entered into the sanctuary and massacred thousands of trees and then cleared it for agriculture. The consequent disturbance has devastated prime tiger habitat which forms a vital link with Tadoba TR and can serve as a sink for Tadoba’s tigers. It is also connected to Indravati TR in Chhattisgarh

**“Kingfisher, Jet involved in wildlife smuggling”**

Two major private airlines—later revealed to be Kingfisher Airlines and Jet Airways—are allegedly being used in smuggling of endangered species, a high-level meeting chaired by MEF Jairam Ramesh was told on 20th January.

Astonished, Ramesh decided to write to Civil Aviation Minister Vayalar Ravi about the matter.

The fact was revealed during a meeting of various security agencies including the Intelligence Bureau, CBI, Delhi Police, CISF, Bureau of Civil Aviation and Security, ITBP, BSF, SSB, CBEC and the Enforcement Directorate. An official, who attended the meeting, informed the minister that “smuggling is going through” two major private airlines and requested the minister to take “some measures,” including the cancellation and suspension of their licences.

The Minister directed the officials to “put this on record”. A top WCCB official, who was critical of the Bureau of Civil Aviation and Security, complained that the department officials face difficulties in getting passes at airports to check smuggling. The official suggested that a system should be in place at the airport as “in the
developed countries” in regard to presence of wildlife officials. Later in an RTI filed by Governance Now, the WCCB revealed the names of the airlines as Kingfisher Airlines and Jet Airways. The airlines’ spokespersons claimed the charges to be baseless and said that they have “little control over security”.

Source: PTI, January 20, 2011; Danish Raza Governance Now, March 7, 2011

Poacher arrested in Ranthambhore

Early on the morning of 18th February, at around 4.15 am, Sawai Madhopur police conducted a raid on tip off by Tiger Watch and caught wanted tiger poacher, Mukesh Mogya, brother of another known poacher, Devisingh Mogya, of Madhya Pradesh. He was listed as wanted by the CID.

Source: Dharmendra Khandal, Tiger Watch, February 18, 2011

Investigation nails poacher for 5 years

In a fast track judgment pronounced on February 9th by Chief Judge Magistrate, Mahrajganj, Uttar Pradesh, Harsha Tamang, accused of smuggling two tiger skins and 38 kgs of tiger bones across the Indo-Nepal border, was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment and fined Rs 1 lakh.

Tamang was arrested in July 2009 by SSB personnel at the Indo-Nepal border at Sonauli with the skins and bones. The conviction was made possible due to a well-executed investigation by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau and Central Bureau of Investigation with the help of the UP Forest Department and Gurgaon Police. Tamang was nailed after links of his involvement appeared from the simultaneous crackdown on three different poaching cases in different parts of the country. The investigative agencies together broke three poaching modules: one in Sonauli, where Tamang was arrested, one in Nagpur, where a tiger skin, two leopard skins and seven otter skins were seized and a third in Corbett where Bheema Bawaria, wanted in Gurgaon in a tiger skin seizure case, was arrested. Tamang also had links with Sonam Xiangpo, an alleged Tibetan wildlife trader who is still absconding. One Totaram, accused in a tiger poaching case in East Terai division of Uttarakhand in 2004-5, was also convicted for three years as a result of these investigations.

This is a step ahead in wildlife crime persecution given the abysmal rate of convictions recorded.

Source: PIB

Tiger poaching gang busted in Corbett

In a joint operation by the forest department and police, more than two dozen poachers belonging to notorious poaching gangs have been arrested. The operation was conducted simultaneously in both the Kumaon and Garhwal regions of the Corbett Tiger Reserve over a number of days.

The poachers reportedly have nexuses with international poaching trade rackets and also with the infamous Bawaria group of the country. Parts of wild animals, bones, skins and weapons were confiscated from these poachers. Apart from having involvement of outsiders, people from local Gujjar community and villages were also found to be involved in the racket.

Source: The Corbett Foundation

Seven arrested with tiger & leopard skins

In a joint operation, officials of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR) and special teams of the Conservator of Forests, Erode, recovered one tiger skin and five leopard skins, including one of a black leopard in Pollachi on 3rd March. Seven persons have been arrested.

Source: The Hindu, Coimbatore, March 4, 2011

Buy a tiger skin, online!

A preserved tiger skin (mounted trophy) was seized yesterday by the Nagpur Crime Branch and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau officials.

Devesh Subhashrao Raut (29) and Kapil Gangadharrao Devke (31), both residents of Civil Lines, Daryapur, Amravati district, were trying to sell the trophied skin of a full-grown tigress from a city hotel on Wardha Road when they are nabbed by undercover agents. Devesh, an MSc in computers, and Kapil, a BSc graduate, also opened an online account and mentioned details about the skin and its genuineness. The Raut family had been in possession of the skin since 1958, when tiger hunting was still a sport. The skin had a mounted skull with eyes and jaws intact.

Police sources said their advertisement was spotted on ‘tradeindia.com’, where the duo had bragged about their business, including claiming the ability to supply various types of tiger skins and trophies for different purposes. They had advertised seven types of products on ‘tigerskin.tradeindia.com’
The traders who are currently in custody had ownership certificates. However, sale of tiger skin (even licensed) is prohibited under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act under sections 49, 49A, and 43 which prohibits sale of licensed wildlife articles/trophies through commercial transactions of any nature. Online surveillance and support was provided by Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) enforcement assistance team.

**Source:** Wildlife Trust of India, ‘Bid to sell tiger skin online lands two youths behind bars’, Vijay Pinjarkar & Soumittra S Bose, The Times of India, March 17

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**MEDIA**

**Save tiger campaign concludes**

NDTV in association with Aircel embarked upon a unique programming initiative to support its ongoing “Save Our Tiger” campaign by telecasting a 12-hour nonstop program - Tigerthon on its network channels on 12th December. Campaign ambassador Amitabh Bachchan along with Dr Prannoy Roy, Chairman, NDTV, Vikram Chandra and several wildlife experts highlighted the key issues of tiger conservation. The campaign received an overwhelming response with people from across the country generating over Rs 2.00 crores. Hemendra Kothari, founder and chairman of Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) offered a matching grant for every rupee collected during the Tigerthon. Thus, the total amount rose to Rs. 4.00 crores. WCT, in consultation with the Chief Wildlife Wardens of states and Field Directors of several tiger reserves, plans to disburse 31 Rapid Response Kits (RRKs) to over 20 tiger reserves across India from this money.

NDTV and Aircel have been campaigning to save tigers, highlighting all the major issues and taking the critical agenda to the Chief Ministers of all tiger states for the last one year. The 12 hour telethon was the final event to raise money to equip Rapid Response Teams who will protect the country’s tigers and respond to any emergency in and around the tiger parks by the WCT.

NDTV Chairman, Dr. Prannoy Roy said, “NDTV is overwhelmed by the nationwide response. We are most pleased that the Tigerthon achieved three aims: to raise awareness and initiate action on the ground, to get Chief Ministers to pledge support to save the tiger.”

**Source:** NDTV, WCT

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**BOOKS**

**The Tiger: The Soul of India: ● Valmik Thapar ● Oxford University Press**

The tiger is not just a tiger, a mere animal, it’s larger than life, a mythical, magical creature, revered, worshiped, feared, hated, loved. For those of us fortunate enough to have seen the tiger, it’s a magical moment, an out-of-this world experience that leaves a mark, influencing, and even changing our life forever.

The tiger has inspired many books, is the subject of many photographs, artists paint their imagination... and people have devoted their life to the tiger, fighting for its cause.

This fascination is nothing new, from time immemorial, the tiger has inspired many art forms, many cultures—and no better to delve into the cult of the tiger than its best-known aficionado and crusader Valmik Thapar. The author delves into the cult, you could call it a relationship-between man and tiger—which has stood the test of time, dating back to more than 10,000 years. Thapar takes the reader into this fascinating journey, which begins in a cave ten thousand years ago, in present day Madhya Pradesh, where tigers are etched on rock; and further down the years, tigers depicted in seals during the Indus Valley civilisation, in religious text, in Mughal miniature paintings, carved in Tipu Sultan’s throne and etched into art based on the 19th and 20th century hunts especially those executed by Indian royalty and the sahibs. There are references to the occult powers of tigers in the Atharva Veda, in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and in the Buddhist text. My personal favourite is a quote from the Mahabharata, 400 BE, “Do not cut down the forest with its tigers and do not banish the tigers from the forest... the forest perishes without its tigers”. Ancient wisdom, that we try to impress upon the politicians and corporate of present day!

The book brings together all the curated imagery of the tiger, sourced from across the world.

The book is about the impact of the tiger on man—how the tiger was vital to the people across India, how the animals resides in the very soul of the country’s culture, beliefs, myths and legends. One distinctive image, etched in stone, paper, wood, across the landscape, and in our minds is of Durga—the devi riding the tiger. From this, says Thapar, stems another thought, that the tiger is a friend, of tiger and man combining forces to fight evil.
The tiger is a symbol of prosperity, of fertility. The tiger’s pugmark in an agricultural field is a reason for celebration. It meant the earth would yield a verdant crop. It is this imagery that the book invokes, that make it a fascinating read, it weaves with illustrations, photographs, inscriptions and words, a fascinating yarn that depicts tigers as intrinsic to our civilisation, it is testimony on why we cannot, must not let the tiger fade away.

The title says it all: The tiger is the soul of India. Can there be a country without a soul? Will we even be a country then?

Prerna Singh Bindra

Billy Arjan Singh: Tiger of Dudhwa ● Shaminder Boparai ● Harper Collins
This biography is a tribute to legendary conservationist Billy Arjan Singh. It chronicles his controversial life and times, and tells the story of his pioneering experiments in bringing up leopard and tiger cubs, amazingly along with his pet dog, in harmony. This is the first pictorial biography on Billy and comes in a timely moment one year after his passing away. It is simple and lucid and summarises his entire life and work with big cats. Its strong point is the repertories of pictures which reflect Billy’s amazing-almost unbelievable-life. A must read for all those who love wildlife and feel passionately about saving the tiger. It is an inspirational book for youngsters who do not know about the work of pioneers in tiger conservation.

OBITUARY

RIP: Fateh Singh Rathore
On March 1, Fateh Singh Rathore, one of the original stalwarts of Project Tiger, ‘creator’ of Ranthambhore and one of the strongest champions of the tiger passed away. Widely acknowledged as ‘tiger guru’ for his legendary knowledge of the big cats, he died at 73 after a two-month battle with cancer.

‘Mr Ranthambhore’ devoted his life to the park: he walked the forest with his band of men, laid out the network of dirt roads to facilitate protection, took on poachers, bureaucrats and politicians, patiently won the trust of villagers, persuading and coaxing them to relocate from the park. Relocating the villagers, and giving tigers inviolate space, was one of this more remarkable achievements. The tigers bounced back, and flourished, but Fateh describes this as his most difficult assignment, “The people hugged the trees and wept,” he told Sanctuary magazine in 2008. “I was crying with them because inside me I knew they were paying the price for something they may never understand.”

He founded Tiger Watch, an NGO that works actively on protection—and has successfully cracked down on many poaching gangs. They work with communities, including addressing livelihood concerns of families of traditional hunting tribes.

His single-minded determination—and devotion—to protect Ranthambhore National Park, and the tiger, won him much acclaim—and even more enemies, including the government. In 1983, Fateh Singh got the International Valour Award for bravery in conservation. Fateh Singh was honoured with the lifetime achievement award by the World Wildlife Fund on February 16, 2011. While presenting the award, the president of WWF’s India chapter, Divyabhanusinh Chavda remarked that it was largely because of Fatji that, “Ranthambhore became the place which brought the tiger to the consciousness of people the world over.”

Tributes
‘One of the greatest legends in the world of the tiger is no more.
For me, it is the loss of my best friend and a man who opened for me the windows of a lifetime with tigers 35-years-ago. He was bigger than life itself and lived his life to the full. He was enormously generous in spirit and welcomed every stranger to his home which was the beautiful Ranthambore National Park. I was one such stranger.

I have never met and will never meet someone so unique in character and spirit. He loved his tigers, Ranthambore, ghazals, Rajasthani music, and, his fireplace in the winter was an experience like no other for many who were made welcome. He was the true tiger man and an instinctive expert. He did not need the formal training to put Ranthambore on the world map. He did it with common sense and is singly responsible for its success and fame across the world. He was disliked by many for being truthful but he never compromised. And he was at home with one and all: be it PMs or Presidents or his forest guards
and villagers. He deserves recognition from all, especially from a government that refused to recognise his skill, expertise and experience till the end. Even Project Tiger as a whole should be indebted to him for the ‘success story’."

Valmik Thapar, The Times of India, March, 2, 2011

Fateh Singh was perhaps the greatest living example of three altruisms in conservation not often acknowledged—that dedicated commitment to conservation is more important in wildlife management than erudition, publicity, even science; that men are far more important than money in saving nature, and that one man indeed can make a difference.

Dr MK Ranjitsinh, member NBWL

Fateh Singh Rathore’s crowning achievement was the successful translocation of several villages from the core area of the Park which helped restore its fractured ecosystem, giving the tiger a chance to bounce back. Fateh’s contribution to the tiger and his home is indelible and has no parallel. Fateh proved that people can invest in environment and that tourism can bring awareness and economic gain to the communities surrounding our National Parks.

Mike Pandey, Wildlife filmmaker, The Hindu

It is difficult to think of Ranthambhore without Fateh Singh Rathore. His contribution to tiger conservation is immense, it cannot be measured. I have lost a great friend and perhaps the most knowledgeable person who could speak the language of the tiger.

PK Sen, director, Ranthambhore Foundation

Ranthambhore and Fateh Singh Rathore: it is impossible to talk of one without the other. But for Raghu and I, our most enduring appreciation of this legend-of-a-man is in connection with Panna. Panna’s tigers had been decimated; the forest department instead of accepting this, preferred to ostracise those who said so. In this hostile climate, Fatehjee was one of very few conservationists who stepped forward to try to help stem the tide of tiger extinction in Panna Tiger Reserve. In 2005 the forest department held a census and allowed observers. In response to our request, Fateh Singh energetically gave his time and knowledgeable weight to the tigers of Panna. Sadly, even his ‘insider’opinion and vast experience were insufficient to convince the authorities of the true situation; they continued to present a false picture to the last tiger.

Fatehjee was not of this ilk! Many of us will appreciate how hard it is to speak out from within. It takes men of the stature of Fateh Singh Rathore and the late Sanjay DebRoy to do so and be beacons of light for the rest of us to follow. How much we miss these giants –will we see their like again?

Joanna van Gruisen, Trustee, Baavan

Fateh Singh Rathore embodied the Power of One. He changed the world of the tiger... if the tiger lives today, in Ranthambhore, and in our hearts, we owe it to him.

Prerna Singh Bindra, The Sunday Guardian

NGOs

TRC’s communication platform

The Global Tiger Initiative is proposing a web based Tiger Range Countries’ (TRCs) Communication Platform for the networking of all TRCs. It envisages to connect all tiger reserves across all tiger landscapes for knowledge exchange, information sharing, sharing of best practices, etc. The portal shall be under the ownership of the Global Tiger Forum (GTF), supported financially by the GTI.

As per the 1st Asia Ministerial Conference Declaration, the GTF already has the mandate of knowledge dissemination among TRCs.

Source: Global Tiger Forum

Human Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

In partnership with Adventure Ashram, a UK Charity, local conservation NGOs have taken up a project for improving human livelihoods and mitigating human-wildlife conflict in the Malenad-Mysore Tiger Landscape (MMTL). The project began in January 2010 and shall stretch for a period of two years. The project seeks to achieve its goal through an incentive based voluntary relocation of remotely located households based on their explicit request. On the basis of intensive and careful studies, the relocation project is being focused on the
Kudremukh National Park, where demand from local communities, potential to avoid human-wildlife conflict and promotion of conservation values were deemed to be of the highest priority.

Mangalore based conservationist Niren Jain of the Kudremukh Wildlife Foundation is heading the project locally with the assistance of noted wildlife conservationist, DV Girish of Bhadra Wildlife Trust and the NGO Wild Cat-C.

Dr Ullas Karanth of Wildlife Conservation Society is the scientific advisor to the project.

**Source:** Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore

### Youth for tigers

The International Tiger Conservation Forum in Russia in December 2010 was unique for laying its focus on youth and their role in conserving the tiger. Parallel to the high level meeting of governments, WWF organised a Youth Tiger Forum in Vladivostok, in the Russian Far East, home of Siberian tiger. Youth representatives from all tiger range countries gathered together for a week, went on field visits and developed youth outreach plans for tiger conservation in their respective countries.

At the youth forum, the representatives jointly wrote an Appeal, which they later addressed to the Prime Ministers and heads of delegation at the Tiger Forum through a video link to St Petersburg. Young representatives, known as ‘Youth Tiger Ambassadors’ from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Russia and China were among those present.

The youth appeal to the high level delegation was both emotive and effective. “We know for many of our countries, development is important. However, we do not want development that results in us losing many of the world’s natural wonders and wild species like the tiger. We want our children to be able to inherit a living planet full of the wonders of the natural world.” Most of them will initiate campaigns which will drive changes in policy and management of tiger conservation in their respective countries. In the next six months, WWF-India’s Youth Tiger Ambassadors, Ansuha Shankar and Devanshu Sood will visit villages in some of the protected areas in the country to raise local awareness towards tiger conservation.

India’s Youth Tiger Ambassador Anusha Shankar is a student of MSc Ecology and Environmental Science at Pondicherry University and Devanshu Sood, the other Ambassador, is a student of Class XII at Shriram School, Gurgaon. He has been a core member of his schools’ Junior Tiger Task Force since the last 8 years.

**Source:** WWF India, December 2, 2010

### Mitigation measures for key Assam corridor

The Lumding Reserve Forest (RF) located in Assam’s Nagaon district is an important wildlife habitat connecting the Marat-Longri Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) in Karbi Anglong district in the east to Langting Mupa RF in the west. This continuous stretch of forest is part of a migration corridor for wildlife, notably tigers and elephants. Field biologists of WWF-India have recorded 37 species of mammals in the corridor including tiger, elephant, clouded leopard and western hoolock gibbon.

The Doboka-Silchar National Highway (NH-54E) bisects the Lumding RF and it is proposed to be upgraded it into a four-laned highway. The widening of the highway is planned almost in the same alignment as the existing road. Though the existing road does not affect the crossing of elephants and other mammals much, an upgraded four-lane highway will increase and speed up traffic on it. A team supported by WWF-India has surveyed the area and mitigation measures have been suggested in the report ‘Ensuring safe access to wildlife in Lumding Reserve Forest, Assam’.

**Source:** WWF, March 11, 2011

### Course Announcement

The Satpuda Foundation, Nature Conservation Society Amravati, SGB Amravati University, EECG USA and Maharashtra Forest Department’s Wildlife Wing announce an “International Course in Education and Communications Strategy for Species Conservation” from 9th-29th January 2012. To obtain an application form, emails may be sent to emccrea@eecg.org or satpuda@gmail.com or ncsa.india@gmail.com

**Source:** Satpuda Foundation

### KFT cycle rally in Sunderbans

Kids for Tigers in association with the Bengal Tiger Bachao campaign organised a cycle rally from Gosaba bazar to Pakhiralaya to show support for the tiger and the Sundarbans Forest Department on 30th January. Over 300 participants from eco-development committees, forest protection groups, local clubs and schools attended the rally. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Institute of Climbers and Nature Lovers (ICNL) and Sundarban Nature & Social Welfare Society (SNSW) were field partners for the event.

**Source:** Sanctuary Asia
Tigers are being spotted in various locations around Delhi since December 2010. Dilli Haat, Connaught Place, Central Park, ISBT, schools, malls, cinema halls, hotels and even the CM’s residence and Rashtrapati Bhavan have reported sightings. It’s just that these aren’t any of the living wild tigers that are becoming increasingly rare to spot even in the forests, but fibreglass ones painted by some of India’s leading artists in an effort to spread the message of conservation.

Project ARTiger, as the exhibition is called, was the largest display of public art India has ever seen. With 58 tigers displayed around the capital, starting with the Rashtrapati Bhavan, where the exhibition formally kicked off on 20th December 2010.

The project aimed to raise awareness about the plight of tigers whose numbers are decreasing fast in the wilds. The idea of ARTiger came from gallerist Aparajita Jain, art collector Swapan Seth and social activist Nandita K Baig who were struck when they saw the ‘Elephant Parade’ in London in June 2010. They then collaborated with the Ranthambhore Foundation to make ARTiger a conservation success. “It seemed the best way to promote public art and save the tiger”, said Seth, managing partner of the art house Henry S Clark.

Fifty-eight artists were brought into the fold. They included veterans like Anjolie Ela Menon, Satish Gujral and Manu Parekh as well as contemporary artists like GR Iranna, Mithu Sen and Paresh Maity. Each of them was given a white fibreglass tiger as a canvas to work on. They came up with many interesting concepts from covering the tiger with pins “giving it a protective layer” to using multimedia work to perch several animals on the tiger, effectively communicating the fact that the survival of all biodiversity depends on the tiger.

The installations were allotted to corporate houses including DLF, Jindal, Max India, Apollo Tyres, Zee Telefilms and Fortis and many schools, to whom the tigers were pre-sold before being put up at various public locations.

Money from the sale has come to the Ranthambhore Foundation which shall use it primarily to educate and create awareness among school children around Ranthambore National Park and encourage teachers and villagers to support the cause of tiger conservation. The foundation will also assist in the development of skills of women living on the fringes of tiger habitats in order to cut down their dependence on forests, aid in the education and eco-sensitisation of children. It will also help finance direct interventions at local levels to contain poaching.


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
Bombay Natural History Society: www.bnhs.org
Nature Conservation Foundation: www.ncf-india.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: wwwwcsindia.org
“The Truth about Tigers”: www.truthabouttigers.org
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
TigerLink October 2010 issue has several statements which one has to ponder over very carefully: no economic security without ecological security, if Park managers fail the tiger how can we expect support from outside, roads cutting through forests are an increasing and a grave threat to wildlife, tiger need not be viewed as an impediment to growth, and saving tiger saves water. There are worrying news also: changing course of Sharada threatens Jhadi Tal home to endangered swamp deer and mysterious disease stalks Siberian tigers whose numbers have reportedly declined by 40 per cent. There are encouraging news also, however difficult it may be: nations pledge to double tiger numbers. It also brings to light the national effort under the leadership of Hon’ble Minister Jairam Ramesh to save our forests and wildlife.
The Ranthambhore Foundation and the TigerLink team and you should be congratulated for compiling, packing and analyzing such a very useful issue with diverse and valuable information vital for tiger conservation.

Dr AJT Johnsingh, NCF & WWF-India

I would like to extend this statement to emphasize the need for 'exchange of information' and 'bridging the gap' between the research, management, policy, and ethics philosophies of human-kind. Such philosophies are diverse, yet go hand-in-hand towards conservation and protection of wild tigers - the goal - that can only be achieved via collaboration, not hierarchy within. Tigerlink is precisely this essential link - a platform for global tiger biologists, managers, conservationists, enthusiasts and policy makers (all alike) to communicate and collaboratively yet pragmatically approach the multi-billion dollar issue of saving the tiger.

Ashwin Nadiu, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group Member (2009 - 2012)

'Tigerlink provides a thorough and up-to-date compendium of news, literature and opinion that should be a "go-to" resource for anyone concerned about saving tigers and the environments in which they live. The TigerLink team is to be commended for their hard work and dedication to providing this valuable service.'

Robert Miles, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, Washington

Send feedback to: tigerlinknetwork@gmail.com