



# The SAWEN Bulletin



South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network's quarterly bulletin on wildlife crime issues.

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## NEW CEC IN SAWEN

Mr. Fanindra Raj Kharel has been appointed as the Director General of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Nepal and by the current provision of SAWEN he is the new Chief Enforcement Coordinator (CEC) of SAWEN from October, 2015. Mr. Kharel has three decades of experience in park management and wildlife conservation in Nepal with outstanding roles at the field, managerial as well as policy level.

**NOTE :** This bulletin needs your support. Please contribute by sharing wildlife crime/seizure reports or any other significant news report pertaining to wildlife trade from your country.

**Editor's Note:** This Bulletin contains wildlife crime related news compiled from various online sources. To make it concise and informative, multiple news are combined. Please refer to the web version of the Bulletin in SAWEN website ([http://www.sawen.org/publication/list\\_all/bulletin](http://www.sawen.org/publication/list_all/bulletin)) for the original news and the sources. §



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## FROM THE DESK OF CEC



Wildlife crime is one of the major threats to the survival of many species around the globe. Motivated by high profit and low risk, the wildlife crime is controlled by organized criminal networks operating across country borders. Tackling wildlife crime thus demands a targeted, collaborative, and highly coordinated approach at the national and regional level. Realizing this, SAWEN, as a regional wildlife enforcement support body, is promoting such coordinated efforts and facilitating the member countries for better regional cooperation in the collective fight against the wildlife crime in South Asia.

To continue its effort in enhancing regional cooperation, SAWEN Secretariat successfully organized a Regional Meeting of Focal Persons of SAWEN held on 4-6 November,

2015 in Kathmandu. I am highly encouraged by the level of support and commitment expressed by all the focal persons during the meeting. I hope the commitments will be materialized efficiently, including the early endorsement of SAWEN Statute from all the member countries. The SAWEN Secretariat would like to congratulate the government of Sri Lanka for getting the Statute endorsed.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy New Year 2016. May the New Year give all the wildlife enforcement communities and the public a renewed strength to fight against the wildlife crime and better protect our species.

I look forward to the third meeting of SAWEN in Bangladesh in 2016.

Fanindra Raj Kharel  
Chief Enforcement Coordinator

## REGIONAL MEETING OF FOCAL PERSONS OF SAWEN



The first Regional Meeting of Focal Persons of SAWEN was held on 4-6 November, 2015 in Kathmandu. The major objectives of the meeting were to discuss on various emerging wildlife crime issues, update on the national initiatives to combat wildlife crime, and to discuss on the institutionalization of SAWEN including early endorsement of the SAWEN Statute from the member countries. All the country focal persons, except from Afghanistan, were present in the meeting.

Inaugurating the meeting, the chief guest of the inaugural session Mr. Madhu Prasad Regmi, Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Nepal, shed light on the threats of highly trans-national and organized wildlife crime to biodiversity conservation

in South Asia. He stressed on the need of multi-agency collaboration within a country and at the regional level. Mr. Fanindra Raj Kharel, CEC of SAWEN, emphasized the need for strengthened regional cooperation and collaboration through SAWEN and urged the member countries to have the SAWEN Statute endorsed as soon as possible.

The SAWEN Secretariat updated its activities during the meeting. Highlights included the activities under IDF grant; Trilateral Trans-border Wildlife Interception (TTWI) project; WCD-MIS application piloting; various publications such as bulletins, meeting reports, and annual report; and events such as co-hosting 'Symposium towards Zero Poaching in South Asia'; Transnational





Continued from page 1

meeting with WCCBs of India and Nepal; and SAWEN's cooperation in INTERPOL Operation (PAWS II).

The meeting reaffirmed the commitment from the focal persons to continue cooperation and collaboration among the member countries to combat wildlife crime which has become one of the greatest threats to the survival of many species in each of the member countries and the region on the whole.

The focal persons agreed to expedite the SAWEN Statute endorsement process from their respective Governments. Some issue on few clauses of the Statute which impeded the endorsement in some member countries were discussed and clarified during the meeting. The focal persons recognized that the Statute endorsement from at least four member countries would add significance to the third meeting of SAWEN to be held in Bangladesh and proposed for February, 2016.

The focal persons also engaged with Project Coordination Unit - National Trust for Nature Conservation (PCU-NTNC) and SAWEN Secretariat team in a brainstorming session to discuss on the institutionalization and smooth running of the Secretariat. The major issues discussed were the early endorsement of SAWEN Statute, exploration of financial resources, communication and information sharing, trans-border cooperation through intelligence sharing, reviewing progress, and enhancing partnerships with regional and international organizations.

The meeting was organized by the SAWEN Secretariat together with Government of Nepal with support from the World Bank and NTNC. §

## 802 BIRDS RESCUED

**Bangladesh:** Wildlife Crime Control Unit (WCCU) of the forest department rescued 802 birds and arrested two traders, Lal Mia and Nazrul Islam both hailing from Habiganj, on 7 October, 2015 from Gazipur. They were jailed for one year. 'A team of the WCCU raided a warehouse near Joydebpur intersection around 7:00 am and recovered the birds, including blossom-headed parakeet, munia, house sparrow and starling (shalik),' told Ashim Mallick, inspector of the unit.

The traders collected the birds from Rajshahi and kept them at the warehouse for sale, the inspector said. The traders claimed that they would sell a pair of parakeets at Tk 2,000, a bank myna (shalik) at Tk 1,000, a pair of munias at Tk 500 and a pair of sparrows at Tk 400. The duo also confessed that they coloured bank mynas to look those like hilly mynas and sold those at a higher price.

According to the Wildlife (protection and

conservation) Act, 2012, trading, catching, hunting, carrying, killing and possession of wild birds is a criminal offence.

(Source of Link: 1)

## REWARD TO INFORMANTS

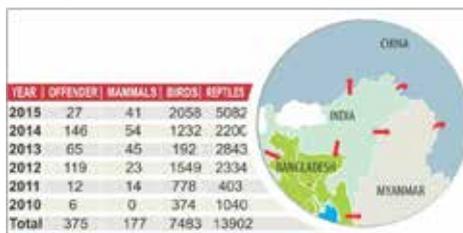
**Bangladesh:** The government of Bangladesh is coming up with a set of guidelines on rewarding people with Tk 4,000 to Tk 50,000 for information on poaching and trading in wildlife, and on smuggling or collection of skins, bones, and teeth. 'This initiative is being taken to create public awareness to protect and preserve wildlife,' told Mr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Environment and Forest Secretary.

Welcoming the initiative, environment and wildlife experts, however, urged authorities to ensure the informant's safety as a top priority. Recent media reports say that smuggling and trade in hides of tigers and deer, meat and horns of deer have increased, leading to a higher rate of poaching of Royal Bengal Tigers and deer in the Sundarbans and deer in other forests in Bangladesh.

The rewards will only be given if the information proves to be useful in stopping wildlife-related crimes. The government will not reveal the identity of the informant. The Forest Department will return the reward money to the government if the informant fails to collect it within three months.

'Money is not the priority here. Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) doesn't openly give their informant money. They pay it as they see fit. But an informer's life will be at risk if his or her identity is made public,' the expert said.

'Lives get put at high risk after people get publicly rewarded for this kind of work.'



Prof Anwarul Islam, Chairman of the Dhaka University's Department of Zoology told 'Bangladesh currently is ranked second in the list of countries with high rate of wildlife poaching, smuggling and related crime.'

'These guidelines should be finalised after thorough discussions with everyone while ensuring that the informants will be safe,' he added.

Dr. Tapan Kumar Dey, Conservator of Forest, and Focal Person of SAWEN, told that they were taking opinions from 'everyone'. 'These guidelines are being formulated to bring all the issues (regarding wildlife related crimes) under the law.'

This year RAB got the 'Bangabandhu Award

for Wildlife Conservation' for its contribution. In addition, two individuals and an organisation were also awarded in three categories by the environment and forests ministry.

(Source of Link: 1)

## ROCK PYTHON RESCUED



**Bhutan:** A rock python (*Python malurus*) was rescued by Tsirang forestry officials from a settlement on 7 October, 2015. The team caught the python in the paddy field which weighs roughly around 25 kg and it is 12.3 ft long (4 meters) with its mid circumference of 1.5ft (45 cm girth).

As it may pose threat to the farmers, the forestry officials released the python in the GRF land at lower Tsholingkar- in the same area where the previous python was released.

One month earlier, a team of forest officials captured and released a python safely at lower Tsholingkar. The giant reptile weighs roughly around 40 kg and it is 15.3 ft long (5 meters) with its mid circumference of 1.5 ft (45 cm girth). (Source of Link: 1, 2)

## JUMBOS IN ILL FATE

**India:** Growing illegal ivory trade is hitting hard India as evident from current ivory seizure and arrest of poachers and smugglers from different parts of the country. Ivory hunters arrested by the Kerala forest department have confessed to mass poaching of elephants-33 confirmed killings and an estimated toll of 80-100 in the last 18 months- in the state and the adjoining forests of Tamil Nadu. 'Total 402 elephants died in Odisha from 2010/11 to end of 2015 among which at least 35 elephants have been killed by poachers' said Mr. Bikram Keshari Arukha, Forest and Environment Minister of the State.

During investigation, forest officials have arrested over 40 persons, including poachers, middlemen and traders in the past few months. As a major bust, they arrested a suspected trader Rajan alias 'Eagle Rajan' and suspected kingpin of the gang Umesh Aggarwal, Rajan's prominent client. The special squad of the Forest Department at Thiruvananthapuram arrested other two accused, Hemant Kumar of Uloor and Vikraman, a native of Poojappura.

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They are accused of making ivory idols for Delhi-based trader Umesh Aggarwal, who was recently arrested for possessing ivory worth IRs 20 crore. Rajan's wife Mini had also been arrested by the officials from her residence at Pettah after her bank records provided details of transactions made to Aji Bright, another accused in the case who was already arrested.

Including a soldier from Assam Rifles, four men allegedly involved in poaching racket were arrested by Forest Officers in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal and seized a rifle, few cartridges, an elephant ivory and Rhino killing machineries. Similarly, Karnataka CID Forest Cell (Police) with help of WCCB Volunteers on 1 September, 2015 seized Ivory weighing about 33 Kg and arrested seven persons for their involvement in the case. In Karnataka, two elephant tusks weighing 26.7 kg was recovered by the Karnataka CID Forest Cell on 4 October, 2015

As an alarming issue, it is revealed that death of elephants from electrocution has outnumbered the total deaths from poaching in Odisha. In the last seven years, at least 69 elephants have died due to electrocution where 40 elephants were killed by the poachers in Odisha.

Similarly, rail lines have become a death trap for the gentle giants and other wildlife. For instance, tusker was run over by a Guwahati-bound goods train between Madarihath and Dalgaoon stations of northern West Bengal's Alipurduar district around 2:30 am on 22 November, 2015.

In addition, a two-kilometer-long boundary wall in 'No Development Zone' built by Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) inside the Kaziranga-Karbianglong corridor killed the elephants due to severe haemorrhaging while trying to cross over the wall.



Under investigation, it is revealed that the owners of captive elephants are also involved in illegal ivory trading in Kerala.

The smugglers are using less used route for the illegal ivory trading. 'Now, Meghalaya is an active spot of ivory smuggling, the same which were being smuggled from Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland to countries like Burma and Bangladesh' said Mr. YS Shullai, the Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife).

(Sources of Link: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)

### TURTLES SMUGGLING



**India:** More than 900 turtles and tortoises were rescued from different parts of India between September to December, 2015. Indian officials arrested eight suspects including two women and one international smuggler. Customs officials of Madurai International Airport detained Abdul Alim of Ilayankudi in Sivaganga district with 247 star tortoises to Kuala Lumpur via a flight to Sri Lanka and the security personnel at the Chennai airport seized 200 star tortoises while they were being smuggled to Kuala Lumpur. The final destination of the 200 tortoises was Indonesia. Others were recovered from markets and smugglers' possession. Each star tortoise is priced between US \$300 to \$500 in international black market.

Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) has arrested an international wildlife smuggler, Mohd Muqeem alias Munna, from Unnao district and recovered 290 black spotted turtles from his possession. He used to visit Unnao to take consignment of turtles for Patna and Kolkata from where they are sent to foreign countries.

Police arrested a woman named Omawati, a resident of Etawah, who was carrying 123 turtles in 6 bags to sell them off in east Delhi's Anand Vihar area.

Hong Kong customs have seized 23 live turtles found in two in-bound air parcels sent from New Delhi, India. This was the second attempted import of a suspected endangered species via the postal system this month, and the tenth in the past two months. Previously, airport customs seized live turtles, cut ivory, red sandalwood and rhino horns.

Traders claim that these animals are good luck charms and their shells contain iridium. The worth of the animal is fixed by the number of nails it has and tortoises with more than 16 nails are believed to bring prosperity and wealth.

Wildlife experts claim that these reptiles are on every poacher's hit list but get very little attention by conservation and enforcement agencies.

The soft-shell, green turtles are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, the same protection status given to tigers. The possession of animals listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 may attract imprisonment of three to seven years. (Sources of Link: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)

### LANKAN FISHERMEN APPREHENDED

**India:** Acting on a tip-off from police control, Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Samudra Prahari apprehended two Sri Lankan trawlers along with 29 Sri Lankan nationals on 24 October, 2015 in Lakshadweep waters for poaching of sea cucumber. In air-sea coordinated search, the poachers were apprehended in 40 nautical miles from Chereapani reef after hot pursuit and firing of warning shots.

The boats namely Holy Cross III and VI were in possession of approximately 4,000kgs and 5,000kgs of Sea Cucumber each, an endangered species under Schedule I of Wildlife Act 1972, India and declared highly protected marine species. The poachers were taken into custody. (Source of Link: 1)

#### STATISTICS OF TIGER MORTALITY AND BODY SEIZURE IN INDIA

Tiger Mortality	
2014	2015
66	69
Seizure of Tiger body	
2014	2015
12	8

Source: : <http://www.tigernet.nic.in/Alluser/Default.aspx>

### SMUGGLERS ARRESTED

**Nepal:** Nepal Police have arrested two Indian nationals, Raju Bagadi (19) and Ramdev Bagadi (35) hailing from Indian state of Rajasthan, with a tiger's hide in Itahari municipality of Sunsari district. They were heading to India with the tiger's hide when they were arrested. They were made public on 27 December, 2015

The Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Nepal Police arrested two persons, Gyan Bahadur Moktan of Kavrepalanchowk and Anil Moktan of Sindhuli district, along with a pangolin from Mahamanjushree Nagarkot municipality of Bhaktapur district

The CIB arrested other two persons, Saheb Mahato (27) of Bara district and Arjun Shah (28) of Mahottari district, while trying to smuggle five endangered tortoises from Lalitpur district on 6 December, 2015.

Sleuths of CIB of Nepal Police nabbed two persons, Tara Bahadur Rai (32) and Bhupal Rai (24) of Thakle-6, Okhaldhunga, with 3.2 kg pangolin scales from Kathmandu on 14 December, 2016. Pangolin scales can fetch around US\$ 2,500 per kg in the international market.

A recent study found that smuggling of pangolin increased eight-fold in Nepal in the last five years. The law enforcement agency has recorded 52 cases of wildlife crime in Kathmandu in the past one year. It is believed that pangolin scales are used in traditional medicine and manufacturing bulletproof jackets.

The arrestees were sent to the district forest offices for further investigation.

(Sources of Link: 1, 2, 3,4)





## SMUGGLING OF REPTILES

**Pakistan:** During a raid based on a tip off, a team of the Sindh wildlife department seized around 150 desert lizards near Jamshoro and arrested six persons involved in hunting of lizards on 4 September, 2015. The wildlife officials say that certain communities such as *Jogis*, *Bheels*, *Ribaris* and other indigenous communities of Sindh, who live away from urban areas, are involved in such activities. The hunters damage the backs of the lizards so that they may not be able to move and escape.



In another move, a joint team of Sindh Wildlife Department and WWF-Pakistan rescued 62 vulnerable tortoises and freshwater turtles on 13 October, 2015. These reptiles later released at Hub Dam near Khar Centre in the Kirthar National Park. Both species of the rescued reptiles; Afghan or Central Asian tortoise (*Testudo horsfieldii*) and black pond turtle (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*), are categorized as vulnerable according to the IUCN Red list and are also protected under Schedule II of the Sindh Wildlife Protection Ordinance 1972. The population of these two reptiles is rapidly declining as their illegal trade has escalated due to higher market demand over the past few years. In the international market, each turtle is believed to be worth PKR 200,000 to 500,000 depending on the weight and size of a turtle.

Likewise in Lahore, the Customs officials on 8 September, 2015 foiled an attempt of smuggling rare turtles at Allama Iqbal International Airport and handed over the suspect, Muhammad Afzal, to wildlife and parks department for further investigation. Afzal was trying to smuggle 120 rare turtles from Lahore to Bangkok by hiding them in baby diapers. (Sources of Link: 1, 2, 3)

## BIRDS SMUGGLING

**Pakistan:** Wildlife department officials foiled smuggling attempt of protected birds from different parts of Pakistan and rescued 700 quails, 200 shovelers, 125 falcons (including 86 laggar falcons, 2 saker falcons), 20 rare cranes, 4 sesi partridges, and an owl. Arrests in connection with these seizures include 18 wildlife law violators including a secretary of the Regional Transport Authority, Panjab and the officer in charge of the Liaquatpur Wildlife Department.

Similarly, the Sindh Wildlife Department for the first time seized large number of falcons

(22 rare falcons), each worth Rs 1 million, from a passenger bus while smuggling to Karachi from Peshawar. Usually the smugglers used to transport only two to three falcons from one area to another.

Karachi and Peshawar are main cities where birds smuggling is high. The smugglers can fetch large amount by selling endangered, migratory birds in these areas where international buyers also visit. A pair of Saker falcon can fetch at least Rs 6 million.

The birds hunting in Pakistan has been linked with its relation with foreign countries. Recently, the Pakistan government has asked the Supreme Court to review its order of 19 August, 2015 clamping a ban on hunting bustard by foreign dignitaries, saying the restriction was adversely affecting the country's already-weakened relations with the Gulf States.

Meanwhile, to address the increasing wildlife crime in the country, the Government of Pakistan with WWF Pakistan has launched 'Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade by Establishing a National Monitoring Network that Benefits Local Communities and Environment'. Supported by USAID, the project will be implemented with the involvement of the Ministry of Climate Change, Provincial Wildlife Departments, Pakistan Customs, Pakistan Rangers, Police, Civil Aviation Authorities and local communities. (Sources of Link: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)

## SRI LANKA ENDORSED THE SAWEN STATUTE

**Sri Lanka:** The Cabinet of Ministers of Sri Lanka has granted approval for the SAWEN Statute in December, 2015. Sri Lanka has become the first member country to endorse the SAWEN Statute. The SAWEN Secretariat would like to congratulate the government of Sri Lanka for getting the Statute endorsed. The Secretariat would also like to appreciate the efforts made by individual members and agencies involved including the official signatory on behalf of government of Sri Lanka, the Director General of the Department of Wildlife Conservation, and the SAWEN focal person from Sri Lanka.



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## QUERY OVER IVORY DISPOSAL



**Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka Customs is planning to crush the blood ivory that was seized by the Sri Lanka Customs in May 2012, while being trans-shipped to Dubai from Tanzania.

'President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe instructed the Customs Department to destroy the entire stock. 'Very soon we will destroy them in Colombo also in the presence of the local and foreign media,' said Lesley Gamini, Customs Spokesman.

'The stock of blood ivory was valued at over Rs.360 million and were piled in 20 feet containers. It was confirmed that they have been cut off from the elephants after killing the tuskers in cold blood. This is the largest consignment of blood ivory which weighed more than 1.5 metric tons that have been seized by a South Asian Country,' sources added.

'The poachers may have killed a herd of 170 to 200 elephants to obtain these tusks' said Pubudu Weeraratne, Chairman of Species Conservation Centre. 'The lengths of these tusks are from 1 ½ feet to 8 feet which clearly shows that the poachers have massacred even the baby elephants.' (Sources of Link: 1)

## POACHER KILLED

**Sri Lanka:** A poacher was killed during a confrontation between wildlife officers and a group of poachers at Yala National Park at Kochchipathana on 5 November, 2015 around 2:40 pm.

'Wildlife officials had been deployed to arrest poachers at Kochchipathana where poaching activities are rampant. When the officials reached the area the poachers fired at them. The wildlife officials were left with no other option other than retaliating,' Tissamaharama Police said. The poacher's body is lying at the Kataragama Hospital. Police investigations are continuing. (Source of Link: 1)

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