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NEPAL TOWARDS ZERO POACHING



Kathmandu-Nepal: A Symposium "Towards Zero Poaching in Asia" was hosted by the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Nepal and co-hosted by South Asia Wildlife Enforcement Network (SAWEN), Global Tiger Forum, Global Tiger Initiative, WWF-Nepal, and National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) from 2-6 February, 2015. The symposium aimed at sharing and understanding best practices to improve anti-poaching actions and promote the launch of an Asia-wide escalation of activities to combat poaching of tigers, Asian rhinos, Asian elephants and other threatened species in the region. High level government officials from the 13 tiger range countries, wildlife and anti-poaching experts and practitioners, and representatives from relevant organizations took part in the symposium.

The four-day symposium primarily focused on the five key elements "Toolkit" for achieving zero poaching; assessment, tools and

technologies, capacity building, prosecution, involving communities and other partners, and national and regional cooperation. The symposium adopted five recommendations; swift and decisive action, adoption of zero poaching toolkit, improving collaboration, improving trainings and support, and committing to identify national contact points for zero poaching actions.

Mr. Tika Ram Adhikari, Chief Enforcement Coordinator (CEC) of SAWEN and Director General Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Nepal said "poverty, greed, unemployment, corruption, lack of awareness, political instability and weak law enforcement are the main factors behind the rise in poaching and wildlife crime". He highlighted that zero poaching is achievable as proven by Nepal and expressed that symposium like this will help enhancing the collaborative anti-poaching actions across the tiger range countries.

TRANSNATIONAL MEETING

Kathmandu-Nepal: SAWEN has coordinated a meeting with Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) of Nepal and India which was held on 30 March, 2015 at Kathmandu, Nepal. Officials from DNPWC, Central Investigation Bureau (CIB), Nepal Police, and WCCB-Nepal Secretariat from Nepal side and representatives from WCCB-India and Indian Embassy in Kathmandu from Indian side were present in the meeting.

Chairing the meeting, Mr. Tika Ram Adhikari, the CEC of SAWEN, Director General of DNPWC, and Coordinator of WCCB-Nepal, emphasized the need for regular transnational coordination meetings between neighbouring countries for effective coordination and cooperation to combat the wildlife crime across the border.

The meeting discussed on various issues mainly on Indo-Nepal border coordination, sharing of intelligence and information, and integrated effort to dismantle vicious networks of wildlife crime in both of the countries. The meeting also discussed on the need for research and development to aid to combating wildlife crime, and future cooperation between these two open bordered neighbouring countries.

Both of the WCCBs sought the role of SAWEN and requested to take initiatives for capacity enhancement in due course of time. The meeting was concluded with principle agreements between WCCBs aiming to coordinate and combat wildlife crime between India and Nepal.

POACHERS HELD WITH DEER SKINS



Bangladesh: Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in a drive arrested two poachers, identified as Shahin (30) of Kalmegha village, and Ujjal (28) of Pirojpur town and recovered 36 deer skins from their possession at Kalmegha village in Pathorghataupazila of Barguna district on 3 February, 2015. The other members of the poachers group managed to escape.

The arrestees and the seized skins were handed over to Pathorghata Police Station and lodged a case. The gang was carrying the deer skins to sell in the capital, added Asaduzzaman, ASP of Rab-8.

The next day, police arrested Shahbaz Khan (48), son of Abdul Mazid, along with a deer skin from his house at Chhoilabunia village, said Md. Rezaul Karim, officer in-charge of Sharankhola Police Station. Earlier, Rab members seized three deer skins from Ghyanpara village of the Pathorghataupazila on 28 January, 2015.

(For more: <http://www.thedailystar.net/two-poachers-held-with-36-deer-skins-in-barguna-63294>)

RHINO NUMBERS INCREASE

India: The rhino population in India has significantly increased since last year taking the total number of the one-horned pachyderms to 2,401.

'This is great success of conservation efforts which lead us to net increase of 70. Although we lost 20 rhinos but killed 30 poachers in various encounters in the country' said Mr. Prakash Javadekar, Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

On the very first day of 2015, two rhino poachers were killed in an encounter with forest guards in the Bagori Range area of Assam's Kaziranga National Park. Also, two more rhino poachers were gunned down at night on 10 April, 2015. Nine poachers have already been killed by the park staffers, while 20 have been arrested so far this year till mid April.

Now, Government of India has planned to set a special force of 1200 highly trained

and equipped rangers to operate against the rhino poachers in Kaziranga. The new force will be equipped with the latest military equipment including night vision goggles, thermal scanners, surveillance cameras and other highly advanced equipment found in the field of modern warfare.

Sadly, the statistics of the Assam government - which were accessed by an RTI activist - revealed that 247 people have been arrested since 2009 till 2014 for their involvement in rhino poaching in four districts of Assam - Karbi Anglong, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Nagaon. But none of them have been convicted by a court so far.

(For more: <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/two-rhino-poachers-killed-at-assams-kaziranga-national-park-721008>)

SEA CUCUMBERS SEIZED

India: Coastal Security Group (CSG) seized more than five tonnes of sea cucumbers from different places of Tamil Nadu, India.

Five tonnes of sea cucumber illegally stocked in a godown at Akkaraipettai in Nagapattinam was seized on 9 April, 2015. The value of the seized contraband was put at Rs.5 crore in the international market. M. Kubendran (40), landowner, and his associate T. Senthil (39) were arrested in connection with the seizure.

Later, 600 kg of fully processed sea cucumber, worth Rs. 12 lakh in the illegal market, was recovered from the house of one Murugan in Keechankuppam and arrested him at night on 18 April, 2015. He was planning to smuggle it to Sri Lanka.

Earlier, on 2 January, 2015, Indian Marine Police of the CSG seized about 110 kg and detained one person who was planning to sell them to a smuggler at Tamil Nadu, India.

The culprits were handed over the Forest Department officials and produced before a local magistrate for further judicial process.

It is illegal to collect sea cucumber, which is protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972 in India. However, sea cucumbers were being harvested illegally and sent to Sri Lanka and other South East Asian countries where they are used as food and in preparing medicines, officials said.

On 25 April, 2015, the seized sea cucumbers were dumped in a large pit and destroyed near Velankanni in the presence of the CSG personnel.

(For more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/endangered-species/>)

SANDALWOOD CUTTERS GUNNED DOWN



India: Twenty sandalwood cutters from Tamil Nadu, India, found felling red sanders, were killed in an encounter in the Seshachalam forest at the foot of the Tirumala hills on 7 April, 2015.

The newly formed Red-sanders Anti-Smuggling Taskforce was on a combing operation on the Seshachalam hill ranges of Chittoor district when the incident happened. On finding over 100 woodcutters felling trees and carrying logs, the officials asked them to surrender. However, the woodcutters rained stones and hurled sickles at the team, injuring some of them. 'We fired random shots in self-defense,' a taskforce member said on condition of anonymity.

Among 20, eight of the slain woodcutters were believed to be from Namiyambattu village in Tiruvannamalai district, eight from Sankarapuram in Villupuram district and four from Vellore district of Tamil Nadu.

'Earlier on January, 2015, the Badvel police had arrested an international red sanders smuggler Guddeti Ramanadha Reddy (35), a former key aide of notorious red sander smuggler Kollam Gangi Reddy and 10 others and seized 49 red sander logs, vehicles and cellphones, worth ₹ 20 lakh', Navin Gulati, Kadapa Superintendent of Police. As another success, the police of Adhra Pradesh, India arrested five persons at Boyapalli village of Rayachotimandal and seized 27 red sanders

logs and a two-wheeler from their possession on 2 February, 2015.

In the local smuggling market, the red sanders priced from ₹16-20 lakhs per tonne while it can fetch ₹ 80 lakh a tonne in the international market.

Recently, Andhra Pradesh Government

initiated a move to legalize the felling of red sanders trees. 'We have asked the Centre to remove red sanders from the endangered species list and to allow the felling and exports of red sanders,' said B Gopala Krishna Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Minister for Environment and Forests. He further added 'there is a big problem with smuggling of red

Statistics of Tiger Mortality and body seizure in India

Tiger Mortality	
2014	2015 (as of April end 2015)
66	23
Seizure of Tiger body	
2014	2015
12	3 (as of April end 2015)
Tamil Nadu with 15 had the highest number of deaths.	
Source: http://www.tigernet.nic.in/Alluser/Default.aspx	

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Kollam Gangi Reddy, wanted in a number of red sanders smuggling cases, was arrested by INTERPOL in Mauritius while he was trying to board a flight to Sri Lanka.

sanders trees out of the country. We need to take steps to correct this.' However, as the signatory of CITES, there is legal complication to materialize the state proposal.

During the last five years, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), Chennai, Unit had seized 155 tonnes of red sanders worth over Rs 415 crore and arrested 16 people in the connection with the seizures. 'The seizure was mainly done from the Chennai port and also some godowns located in and around the city,' DRI sources said. Red sanders smuggled out of the Andhra Pradesh forests are kept in various godowns in Chennai and Tiruvallur and moved through Chennai port in containers to South East Asian countries like Malaysia, Japan and China where red sanders logs are high in demand for their medicinal value and their use in musical instruments

(For more: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhra-pradesh/20-red-sanders-smugglers-shot-dead-in-chittoor-encounter>)

TURTLES SEIZED



India: Five passengers, who were about to board a flight to Bangkok from the Trichy international airport, India were arrested by immigration authorities on 24 March 2015 and 492 spotted black terrapin pond tortoises were seized from them.

Three weeks later, on 11 April, officials of the Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) nabbed two passengers, who were supposed to fly to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on that night, and rescued 183 spotted pond turtles from their possession. The arrested smugglers were identified as Sayyad Ibrahim Sikandar and Shahjahan Naina Mohammed, both hails from Chennai.

Again, 161 turtles were recovered on 25 April while being smuggled to Kuala Lumpur, in two cardboard cartons. The accused, who have been identified as Thimmarayappa Jnanamurthy and Ramaswamy Shanmugam, were trying to smuggle the turtles as part of check-in luggage on their departure. Each

turtle is worth anything between ₹ 10,000 to ₹1,00,000 in the international market.

Also, in 2012, 200 star tortoises were seized by the immigration authorities from here.

However, according to officials of the Customs Department at the Nedumbassery airport, of the half-a-dozen star tortoise seizure cases registered in the past couple of years, none has gone beyond the arrest of the courier operators and carriers. Almost all the cases were closed after releasing the seized tortoises into their natural habitat, after a brief sojourn at the rehabilitation centre of the Forest Department.

(For more: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Trichy/492-tortoises-seized-at-Trichy-airport-5-arrested/articleshow/46682975.cms>)

MOST WANTED NEPALI POACHER ARRESTED

Nepal: The Central Investigation Bureau (CIB) of Nepal Police on 8 February, 2015 brought INTERPOL's most wanted notorious rhino-horn poacher Rajkumar Praja (33) to Kathmandu from Malaysia. The Malaysian government had deported him after he was found living there illegally with a changed identity of Bhaktaraj Giri.

Following a request by Nepal Police, INTERPOL on 6 December, 2013 had issued a red corner notice against Praja, who was wanted for more than 15 rhino poaching and trading rhino horns internationally.

Praja was on the run even after the District Court of Kathmandu in July 2013 convicted him of rhino poaching at Chitwan National Park and slapped 15 years jails and fine of Rs 100,000 each on Praja and 12 others involved in the racket. Praja was identified as kingpin of the poaching racket only after the arrest of one of his close aides Buddi Bahadur Praja, who allegedly killed about seven rhinos.

Praja has been identified as the first Nepali against whom INTERPOL issued red notice under wildlife crimes. Earlier, a similar notice had been issued against Ian Baker, an American adventurer charged with possessing antiquities and animal hides.

(For more: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=91840)

TURTLES MEAT SEIZED

Pakistan: Custom office of Karachi port seized the largest consignment of its kind in the history of the country, comprising meat of over 4,000 freshwater turtles in the last week of February, 2015. The meat was being transported in a container, marked as dried fish maw and skin.

The Customs officials claimed the consignment contained meat of 4,342 turtles, a protected species in Pakistan and listed in Appendix I of CITES, adding that the total weight was about 1,900 kg. 'The meat of a single turtle is worth over Rs150,000,' said additional collector of Customs, Irfan Javed.

Officials of the wildlife department believe

that several influential people were involved in the smuggling bid. Customs officials claimed that some suspects have been detained and an FIR according to the Customs and Sindh Wildlife laws has been registered.

In another move, the Punjab Wildlife Department arrested two people and seized 504 turtles being smuggled to Bangkok on 21 April, 2015 from the Allama Iqbal International Airport. 'The suspects were just carriers from Karachi. They were told that they were carrying seafood items. The turtles all belong to the spotted-pond species,' said Javed Awan, the wildlife officer who conducted the raid.

In the meantime, on 27 February, custom officials in Hong Kong intercepted a fishing vessel in its territory and seized around 751 turtles which were smuggled from Sindh, Pakistan. Hong Kong authority already contacted to the Pakistani officials however yet to back home these protected species.

Two States, Sindh and Panjab, according to the sources, serve as major hotspots for illegal turtle trade that has been going on in the country for many years

(For more: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/848454/shells-in-trouble-meat-of-over-4000-turtles-seized-from-karachi-port>)

SAUDI ROYAL ON RARE BIRD HUNTING

Pakistan: Saudi prince is on a hunting spree for rare birds in southwest Pakistan despite a court-imposed ban and the government's insistence that the foreign delegation is only on a diplomatic mission, senior officials said on 9 February, 2015.

The annual hunt has sparked controversy in recent years because of the IUCN red listed Houbara Bustard's dwindling numbers, fewer than 97,000 left globally.

Though a provincial High Court in Baluchistan in November last year cancelled all permits for hunting in the province, the provincial government has filed an appeal in the Supreme Court against the ban to seek a formal permission for the Royal guests to hunt, but the hearing has not been fixed.

'Arab dignitaries are engaged in hunting Houbara but our staffs are not allowed to have access to their camp or accompany the hunting party. There is no knowledge that how many birds have been hunted,' the official said. The government for its part has denied that the Saudi party is engaged in hunting, saying that they had come to oversee development activities.

The issue has stirred controversy on social media and among youth activists and up to 40 youth activists from Chaghi district protested in front of Quetta Press Club against the hunting of Houbara.

(For more: http://zeenews.india.com/news/south-asia/saudi-royal-on-rare-bird-hunting-sprees-in-pakistan_1543947.html)

INDIAN FISHERMEN ARRESTED

Sri Lakna: As many as 54 Indian fishermen have been arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy for allegedly poaching in island's waters off the coast of Kankasanturai and Talaimannar in the north.

Indika Silva, Sri Lankan Naval spokesman Commander, said that 21 fishermen were arrested and five boats were seized at Kankasanturai while the rest of them on another five boats were arrested at Talaimannar at night on 21 March, 2015

(For more: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-03-22/news/60369504_1_sri-lankan-navy-kankasanturai-and-talaimannar-21-fishermen)

CUSTOMS SEIZES PANGOLIN



Sri Lanka : An Indian who attempted to smuggle a rare species of Sri Lanka 'Indian Pangolin' weighing more than 2 kg to India was nabbed at the Bandaranayake International Airport by the Sri Lankan Customs officers attached to Biodiversity, Cultural and National Heritage Protection Division (BCNP) here on 17 February, 2015.

Investigation revealed that the suspect had travelled between India and Sri Lanka on hundred times during the past two years. According to the CITES, it is prohibited to trade these endangered animals as the species is included in Appendix I. Indian Pangolin was forfeited and a penalty of LKR 50,000.00 was imposed on the offender since the said attempt is a violation of Fauna & Flora Protection Ordinance and Forest Ordinance and Customs Ordinance.

(For more : <http://customstoday.com.pk/sl-customs-seizes-illicit-indian-pangolin-clutches-smuggler>)

FIRST COUNTRY TO BAN TROPHIES

Global: Australia became the world's first country to ban the import or export of lion trophies, often taken from so-called canned hunting where lions are raised solely to be shot by foreign hunters.

Lions, Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List, have been decimated across Africa due to habitat loss, prey decline, human-lion conflict, snaring, poaching, poisoning, and, some conservationists argue, legal hunting. Today some 20,000-40,000 lions roam the continent, down from 100,000 a half century ago. Even more worryingly the West African lion—a distinct subspecies—is down to just 250 animals but, at least a few years ago, was still legally hunted in some countries.

(For more : <http://news.mongabay.com/2015/0409-hance-australia-lion-trophies.html>)

UN IN FIGHT AGAINST WILDLIFE CRIME

Global: With the world facing a poaching crisis and an unprecedented surge in illegal wildlife trade, the 13th UN Crime Congress, held in Doha, Qatar, has taken a significant step to boost global efforts to tackle transnational organized environmental crime on April, 2015.

Countries will be adopting the Doha Declaration, where they would agree to enhance their efforts to counter 'new and emerging forms of crime', particularly the 'serious problem of crimes that have an impact on the environment, such as trafficking in wildlife, including flora and fauna, timber and timber products and hazardous waste, as well as poaching'.

The declaration calls on countries to take the fight to environmental criminals by 'strengthening legislation, international cooperation, capacity-building, criminal justice responses and law enforcement efforts aimed at, inter alia, dealing with transnational organized crime, corruption and money-laundering linked to such crimes.'

Ban Ki-moon, The UN Secretary General, highlighted the fact that 'wildlife is under severe threat' in his opening remarks, while Sam Kutesa, the President of the UN General Assembly, stressed the need to deal with 'emerging forms of transnational crime, including wildlife and forest crime.'

(For more : <http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/4/16/un-crime-congress-raises-stakes-in-fight-against-wildlife-cr.html>)

WORLD'S LAST MALE WHITE RHINO

Global: Since December 2014, there has been only one male white rhino left on earth. Today, due to ever-increasing illegal poaching activity in Kenya, this male is being protected around the clock by armed guards at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy.

The number of living white rhinos has dwindled down to just four: in large part due to growing demand for rhino horns and lack of adequate law enforcement in the African countries where the rhinos live.

At the end of last year, the only other male white rhino left on earth, a 44-year-old named Angalifu, died of natural causes after being in poor health and refusing food for several days. Although conservation researchers had been attempting to mate Angalifu with an elderly female named Nola for several years, their attempts were in vain.

(For more : <http://www.ecorazzi.com/2015/04/11/worlds-last-male-white-rhino-protected-247-by-armed-guards>)

THEMATIC MEETING REGIONAL IDA WILDLIFE PROJECT

A thematic meeting on the Institutional Arrangement for Wildlife Crime Control in Countries participating in the Regional Wildlife APL was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh during 10– 11 March, 2015. The main objective of this meeting was to discuss on developing regional platform to combat wildlife crime where the participating delegates of Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh discussed on the topics of increasing institutional capacity to enforce wildlife crime in three countries, enhancement of cooperation on trans-boundary issues, updating policy and law enforcement on forest and wildlife crime, create awareness and reduce wildlife crime demand and increase financial support for strengthening institution.

The meeting observed country presentations that focused on regional wildlife crime control status and institutional arrangement for wildlife crime control in the respective countries. Mr. Tulasi Ram Sharma, Planning Officer, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, highlighted on specific issues pertaining to wildlife crime enforcement in Nepal. One of the focuses of meeting discussions was on the strengthening of SAWEN for the institutional arrangement for wildlife crime control in South Asia. The discussion emphasized the need for endorsement of SAWEN Statute from its member countries and organizing third annual meeting of SAWEN in Bangladesh in 2015.

Dr. Siddhartha Bajra Bajracharya, Chief of the Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Wildlife Protection in Asia Project, SRCWP-Nepal, requested the participating countries to endorse the SAWEN Statute from their governments to progress towards formalizing regional collaboration in combating the crime in the region. Dr. Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Secretary of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Bangladesh assured the necessary supports to strengthen SAWEN including endorsement of Statute and hosting the third Annual Meeting of SAWEN in Bangladesh. The meeting also shared progress update of the activities under the SRCWP Project and several important decisions were made towards making the programme more effective in Nepal.

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