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Well-knit gang behind poachings in Jharkhand, say authorities

MANOJ PRASAD
RANCHI, APRIL 11

AUTHORITIES suspect that a gang with foreign links may be behind the spurt in poaching in Jharkhand. Only a few days ago, the carcass of a wild elephant was recovered from inside the Palamau Tiger Reserve (PTR), one of the 15 forest reserves established under the Project Tiger by the Union Ministry of Forests and Environment in 1974.

"A well-knit gang with bases in and around Palamau division seems

to be engaged in the calandestine business of killing wild animals and birds for their parts," says a senior police officer. He adds that the elephant's carcass was first spotted by forest guards four-five days after its killing, and its trunk and jaws had been sliced away by the poachers and abandoned at the Baresanr area of the reserved forest. The Chief Conservator of Forests A.K. Malhotra later visited the site.

Baresanr, which falls inside the PTR, is described as a black hole for animals. Since July last, carcasses of

three elephants have been recovered from farflung areas of the PTR, spread over 1,026 sq km. None of these carcasses had the trunk, jaw or tusk. In 1991 too, the carcass of a Royal Bengal tiger had been found here, leading to six people being booked by the police. In 1995, a carcass of a tiger was found in the same place and the police arrested four people, including Munna Khan, who reportedly has links in Nepal and Dhaka. All these accused poachers, including Khan, are out of jail on bail.

Expert for saving river dolphins in Araria dist

TIMES NEWS NETWORK [SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2003 02:46:10 AM]

FORBESGANJ: Environmentalist and researcher on Gangetic Dolphins Sudan Sahay who is also the state representative of WWF, India, in a letter to the commissioner-cum-secretary of the state forest and environment department, has requested to take immediate action to save the Gangetic dolphins in this bordering district of Araria. Dolphins are available here in river Panar, Bhalua, Lohandra and its tributaries. Sahay has demanded to notify the river zones as Dolphin sanctuary. He requested that the department should take immediate action for developing Dolphin sites for eco-tourism which would project, preserve and promote the population of dolphins. There were nine dolphins in the rivers here in 1993, according to census conducted by Sahay then. Now, there are 23 dolphins, including infant ones. In January, 1993, when the news of killing of one dolphin in river Bhalua near village Southa under the Tarabari police station of Araria district was brought to the notice of Sahay, he started a research on it and since then he has been tirelessly working for the preservation and conservation of dolphins in this area in coordination with the Golden Ark awardee (highest civilian award for dolphin conservation by the government of Netherlands), Dr R K Sinha, who happens to be the chairman of Asian River Dolphin Committee. Sahay's research paper on Dolphin was also read out in the International Forum of Dolphin Conservation and he is also in constant touch with many other experts of international repute in this field. Sahay said the Nepal government, with only three river dolphins, developed a dolphin sanctuary in river Karnal near Pokhara (Nepal) and was earning a good chunk of foreign exchange as eco-tourism. Why not both the union and the state governments can come forward for developing sanctuary and promoting eco-tourism in Araria district which is known for its dolphin habitat worldwide? he asked. He hoped that the department concerned would take appropriate steps so that this endangered aquatic species may not be snatched by the enemies of environment which is on the verge of extinction. Earlier, Sahay, also a member of Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, Uttarkashi, and the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Darjeeling, worked for the maintenance of ecological balance in the foothills of Himalayas by launching awareness campaign to save the green belts of the mountains.

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attempts failed to elicit desirable response and Bibi Jagir Kaur con-

est of the Sikhs. They also informed him that Badal was upset over what

she said Kaur on Saturday evening.

B. L. V.

Bihar's roving elephants to be nabbed

MANOJ PRASAD
RANCHI, MARCH 20

16 2/3/00

Villagers living in the forest areas of Ranchi, Lohardaga and Gumla districts of Bihar are likely to be enthused over a virtual race to catch wild elephants.

This will be part of the Union Ministry of Forest and Environment's Kheda operation which aims to catch 25 elephants identified as the ones which have destroyed crops worth lakhs of rupees and trampled to death 60 people during the past decade in the forest areas of these districts.

According to the operation plan, after these elephants are nabbed, they will be transported to the State Government-run zoological parks in Ranchi and Patna and kept there permanently.

For the implementation of this operation, the ministry has released Rs 24 lakh to the State forest department. "After the money is received, the operation will start immediately," said Bihar Wildlife Warden J.L. Srivastava.

The operation entails hiring a Karnataka-based team of a dozen-odd mahouts with trained elephants, veterinary doctors and shooters with tranquilizer guns. The trained elephants or *kunkis* are to be deployed with a couple of forest personnel to catch these elephants at a fee of Rs 1.25 lakh.

Bihar has over 550 wild elephants. Divided into herds, these pachyderms never stay in one forest for more than two or three months and often follow a migratory route criss-crossing the forest areas of Midnapore and Purlia in West Bengal, Sarguja and Jashpur in Madhya Pradesh, Bonai and Simlipal in Orissa and Singhbhum, and Ranchi, Gumla, Lohardaga and Palamau in Bihar, said two experts in elephant behaviour on condition of anonymity.

They pointed out that the population boom, encroachment on forest land and largescale deforestation in Khunti, Bero and Lapung in Ranchi, Basia and Simdega in

Gumla, and Senha in Lohardaga always compelled the elephants to drift to nearby villages, causing undue damage to life and property of the residents there.

As part of a damage control exercise, the Rs 10-crore elephant project was planned and executed by the ministry and the state forest department in 1995. Although this project reportedly led to electrified fencing of the selected migratory routes of the elephants, it failed to end the problem.

Against this backdrop of the man-elephant conflict, is not the Kheda operation a piecemeal measure? "We don't think so. Once the operation is successful, it will contain the problem," replied Srivastava.

But a villager, Sona Munda, whose son, Chakra Munda, was trampled to death by an elephant last year is not reassured by the operation. "What is the guarantee that if 25 elephants are caught and brought to zoos, 25 other elephants will not intrude into our village in future?" he said.

ashish kothari

Update 20

From: NALINM@aol.com
To: Natural History of South Asia - General discussion and research <nathistory-india@lists.Princeton.EDU>
Subject: Re: Bihar-Baraila Lake
Date: Tuesday, January 19, 1999 6:38 AM

FYI-all
Fwd from HINDUSTAN TIMES 19 JAN 1999
(Article may have some factual inaccuracies)

Killing of migratory birds goes unchecked
Baraila Lake (Bihar), January 18 (Subodh Mishra)

Ornithologists and bird lovers will definitely be hurt to learn that killing and trapping of Siberian cranes and other migratory birds of rare species go unchecked in this protected Baraila Birds Sanctuary in Vaishali district of Bihar. The alarming situation assumes significance for the simple reason that the lake area falls into Jandaha Assembly constituency, represented by no other than Forest and Environment Minister Tulsi Das Mehta.

The Minister, when contacted for comments, pleaded ignorance, saying that he had not come across such serious happenings in the sanctuary area. If birds were being killed and trapped, the Forest Department would definitely initiate action against the erring persons for sheer violation of Forests and Wildlife Protection Act. A comprehensive plan had been lying with the Central Government for its clearance.

Once cleared, the entire wetland area would be developed into major place for tourists, he said. Surprisingly, dozens of closely-woven nets are being laid in and around the wetland area, spreading into six square km, but the Forest Department authorities are yet to notice it.

The "winged guests" touch down the lake, preferably during morning hours and finally get themselves trapped into the waiting nets. If disclosure made by the locals is to be believed, poisoned insects are thrown into the water plants, luring the migratory birds.

Once they consume the insects, the end comes abruptly. And the dead birds are taken to the nearby village markets for sale on comparatively cheaper rate. A live bird of rare species sells for Rs 350-450. The popular names of the bird are Lalsar, Dumar, Dighauch, Malthaand Khesra, which are found at selling points in Jandha and Gudri Bazar.

Villagers of Loma hamlet said the migratory birds usually arrive during November and continues to enjoy the sweet waters of Baraila Chaur (lake) till February-end. It was the location of the lake which is surrounded by paddy and tobacco fields that attract the birds from various countries.

The fresh waters which come through the gate number 13 of Nooh river up to the lake had a very special quality of quick food digestion. This might be the reason why the migratory birds preferred the wetland since long, the locals point out. A group of villagers sitting near Rampur Chowk appeared enraged over the indifferent attitude of the Forest Minister who hail from the area. Had Minister taken a serious note of the alarming situation, the illegal practice would have been stopped much earlier.

As things stand today, bird killers were quite active because they knew fully that the lake was a "free zone", they quipped in chorus. Meanwhile, the Vaishali district Samata Party is seriously planning to launch an agitation

against the illegal practice which jeopardised the prospects of the birds sanctuary. Pankaj Kumar Choudhary, president of the district unit of Samta Party, said that a meeting had been convened on Jan. 25 to discuss the situation arising out of the continuance of this illegal practice. The party would mount pressure on the State Government to ensure a blanket ban on this practice.

