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Govt. delaying nod for Project Tiger

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, MAY 31. The State Government has not yet accorded approval for the Project Tiger scheme at the Nagarahole (Rajiv Gandhi) National Park, which was approved by the Centre a few months ago.

Currently, Bandipur and Bhadra are the two areas where Project Tiger is being implemented in the State. No one seems to know what is delaying sanction for the project at Nagarahole. If approved by the State Government, it would bring in additional funds for the project. The funds could also be used to re-

locate the tribal people from the park, top Forest Department sources told *The Hindu* here on Friday.

According to one source, the Forest Ministry, including the minister concerned, is of the opinion that if Project Tiger is introduced at Nagarahole, it would put restrictions on the extraction of timber. However, no tree is to be felled inside the national park as per a Supreme Court order.

On the other hand, as per a management plan prepared by a consultant, M.K. Appaiah, teak could be removed provided it was done carefully.

More time sought to complete Eco-Development Project

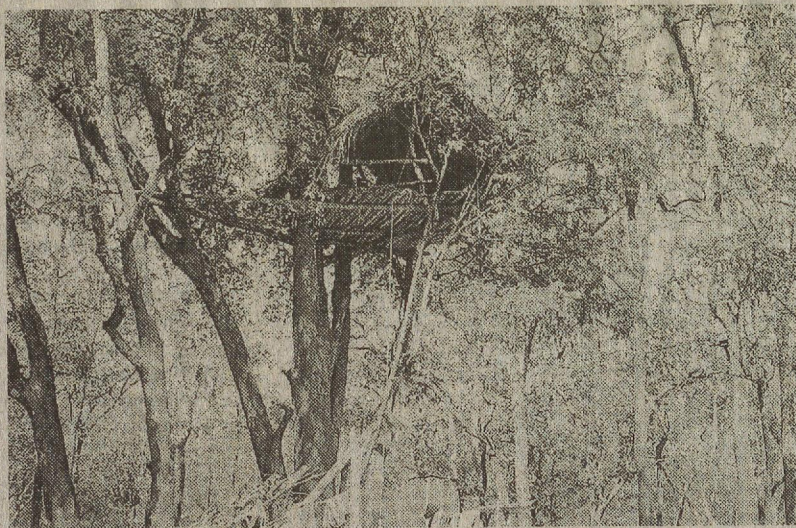
By K. Jeevan Chinnappa

MADIKERI, MAY 2. The World Bank-sponsored Eco-Development Project for the Nagarahole (Rajiv Gandhi) National Park is making progress, though it is behind schedule.

A sum of Rs. 23.93 crore was spent till January 2002, against the Rs. 39.49 crore earmarked under various heads. The project is scheduled to be completed by June 2002, and the Forest Department, the implementing agency, has sought one year's extension from the World Bank. A team of World Bank officials is expected to visit the national park in a couple of days.

According to the records, Rs. 13.15 crore has been spent on the improved protected area management (IPAM), Rs. 9.74 crore on the village eco-development plan (VEDP), Rs. 60.12 lakh on the environment education and awareness programme (EEAP), Rs. 33.36 lakh on the impact monitoring and research (IM&R) programme, and Rs. 10.62 lakh on the information technology (IT) area. The park covers an area of 643.40 sq.km. in Kodagu and Mysore districts, with a core zone of 192 sq.km. and a tourist zone of 110 sq.km.

The project was started in 1997-98,



PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY: A watchtower on treetop in the Nagarahole Reserve Forest. — Photo: T.L. Prabhakar

by the end of which Rs. 59.99 lakh was spent.

Next year, Rs. 3.77 crore was utilised. The expenditure was Rs. 7.1 crore in 1999-2000, Rs. 7.25 crore in 2000-2001, and Rs. 5.19 crore in 2001-2002 (up to January 2002).

Under the IPAM, 155 tribal families

were rehabilitated at Veeranahosalli in Hunsur taluk. Each family was provided with two hectares of agricultural land, a house, electricity, water, seeds, fertilizers, and facilities for education of children. Under the village eco-development head, 78 villages were identified, and NGOs entrusted with the job

of apprising villagers of the eco-development plan. The eco-development committees formed later were given facilities such as LPG and solar lamps.

Under the EEAP, the stakeholders were made aware of the advantages of the eco-development project and the need for their cooperation. In April 2000, a World Bank team conducted a mid-term review of the progress of various programmes.

More than 30 agencies and individuals have been drafted under the project. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), who is the administrative head, coordinates activities with the Director, Project Tiger, New Delhi, and the World Bank. The Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Circle (South), Mysore, is the Field Director of the project.

The Eco-Development Project involves seven protected areas including five tiger reserves. They are: Buxa in West Bengal, Palamau in Bihar, Pench in Madhya Pradesh, Periyar in Kerala, Ranthambore in Rajasthan (all tiger reserves), the Gir National Park in Gujarat, and the Nagarahole National Park in Karnataka. The project cost is \$67 million.

The basic aims of the project, which faced resistance from some NGOs, ini-

tially, delaying its implementation in the Nagarahole National Park, are protection of eco-systems and habitats, village development, which includes participatory micro-planning, fostering alternative livelihoods, voluntary relocation of tribal people, environmental education, and preparation for future biodiversity projects.

The Conservator of Forests, Kodagu Circle, P. Anur Reddy, says the National Forest Policy of 1988 envisages forests as an ecological necessity. India's Environmental Action Plan, published in 1993, enlists sustainable utilisation of biodiversity in selected ecosystems as one of the top seven priorities.

It has become imperative to give importance to eco-development programmes, as India's biodiversity is rich and unique but endangered. A report says that India accounts for nearly 70 per cent of the world's biodiversity. Its biodiversity is considered endangered as nearly 10 per cent of plant species and 21 per cent of the 372 species of mammals are facing the threat of extinction because of the widespread degradation of ecosystems.

There are 75 national parks and 421 wildlife sanctuaries in India, covering about 4.3 per cent (14 million hectares) of the land area.

Trees and Other Plants: see Appendix A

FAUNA:

Mammals [mp, q1, fv, KFD-Nag2]

- Antelope, Fourhorned
- Bear, Sloth
- Boar, Indian Wild
- Cat, Jungle
- Civet, Common Palm
- Civet, Small Indian
- Deer, Barking
- Deer, Mouse
- Deer, Spotted
- Dog, Indian Wild
- Elephant, Indian
- Fox, Flying
- Gaur
- Hare, Indian
- Hyena, Striped
- Jackal
- Langur, Common

Reptiles [mp, KFD-Nag2, Forest Department undated]

- Crocodile, Marsh
- Keelback, Green
- Krait, Common
- Python, Indian
- Skink, Snake

- Leopard
- Leopard-cat
- Loris, Slender
- Macaque, Bonnet
- Mongoose, Common
- Mongoose, Stripednecked
- Mongoose, Brown
- Otter, Common
- Pangolin, Indian
- Porcupine, Indian
- Sambar
- Shrew, Grey Musk
- Squirrel, Common Giant Flying
- Squirrel, Indian Giant
- Squirrel, Threestriped Palm
- Tiger



Viverricula indica

Birds: see Appendix B

Two packs of Wild dogs that were normally seen around the park tourist complex are reported to have vanished suddenly in 1984-85, and it is feared that they may have become the victims of some epidemic [fv]. Officials at the park also report that while the number of Elephants is increasing, the number of tuskers may be declining due to heavy poaching outside the park [fv].

OCCURRENCE AND CONTROL OF DISEASE: In 1968 the Gaur population declined due to an outbreak of rinderpest that first affected domestic cattle in the area [mp]. No subsequent epidemic has been reported [fv]. Thirty percent of the cattle in villages adjoining the park have been vaccinated by the Veterinary Department. There is a veterinarian located at Titimati, on the north-western boundary of the park [fv].

OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING HABITAT: Forest fires are widespread and reportedly caused by graziers, NWFP and fuelwood collectors. These occur chiefly between February and April [fv]. Two fire watchtowers connected with wireless exist, along with 675 km of fire lines* [mp].

In March 1992, an area of a few thousand ha. was set on fire by villagers, causing extensive damage (see HUMAN PRESENCE, *Miscellaneous*).

WATER RESOURCES: The major sources of water for the park are the rivers Lakshmantirtha, Sarati Hole, Nagar Hole, Balle Halla, and Kabani River [tp]. In addition there are 4 major perennial streams [tp], 47 seasonal

* This vast network may include roads doubling as fire lines.

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RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL PARK

Earlier known as Nagarhole National Park, this park got its former name from the Nagar Hole ('Snake River' in Kannada), which runs eastwards through its centre. The area has in the past seen extensive forestry activities. Plantations, in fact, cover almost 15% of the park area, with some plots being over a century old. Yet it is rich in animal life, and is known for its large population of Elephants. Covered chiefly by moist and dry deciduous forests, dominated by Teak and Rosewood, the terrain is gently undulating and well-watered by streams. Relatively better off than most of the other sanctuaries and parks in Karnataka in terms of management inputs, this park has also become a popular tourist centre.

To its south-east, the park is connected to Bandipur National Park by the Kabani Reservoir, while the Wynad Sanctuary of Kerala adjoins to the south-west. This entire block forms a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. To the west, coffee plantations separate the park from the Brahmagiri Sanctuary.

LEGAL STATUS: Constituted a National Park on April 1, 1983, vide Notification No FFD 195 FWL 82, dated 16 March, 1983 [notif]. Intention to constitute the area a national park was declared on February 4, 1975 vide Notification No. FD 14 FWL 73 [notif]. Prior to this, the area was declared a sanctuary on July 2, 1955 vide Notification No. A4.6118/R. DIS 339/54 [np]. An extent of 57,155 ha. has been declared as National Park vide Notification no. AFD.14.FWL.73 dt.4.2.75. The area was increased to 64,339 ha. vide notification No. AHFF.91.FWL.87 dt.8.12.1983. To mark the first death anniversary of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, this park was renamed as "Rajiv Gandhi National Park" vide notification No. AHFF.134.FWL/92 dt.13.5.92.

AREA AND ZONING: 64,339.26 ha. (643.39 sq.km). Initial area of the sanctuary till 1975 was 28,416 ha. The area intended to be made, and subsequently made into a national park was 57,155 ha., i.e. an addition of 28,739 ha. Intention to extend the park to include an area of 7184.26 ha, adjacent to the south, was declared on December 8, 1988 vide Notification No. AHFF 91 FWL 87 [notif]. The park has a core zone of 19,200 ha [notif 2], a buffer zone [mp, qa], a tourism zone (in two parts) [qa '91], and a restoration zone (areas not worked out or located on the map as yet) [mp, qa]. The restoration zone is supposed to comprise those areas which have been totally degraded and need complete protection.

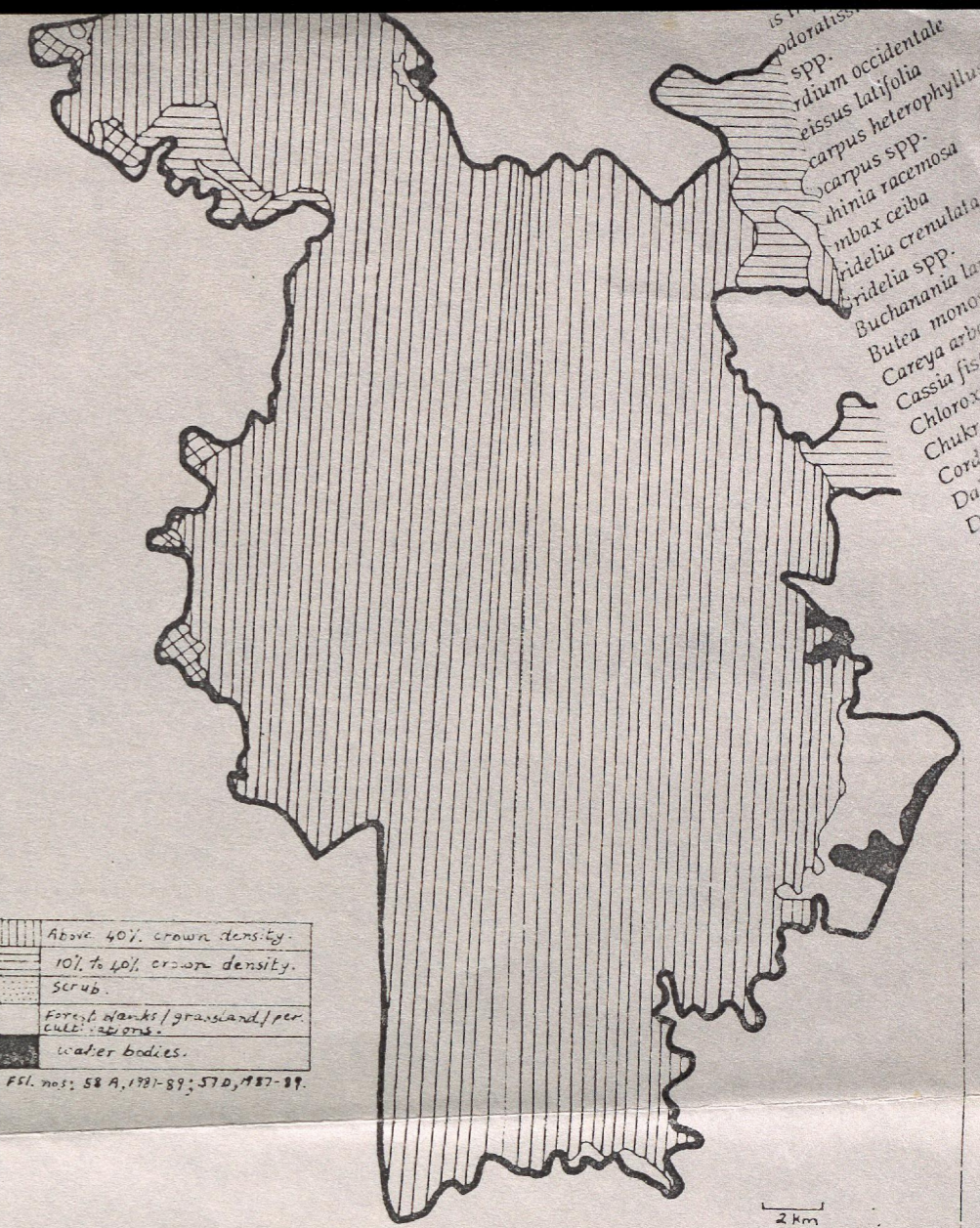
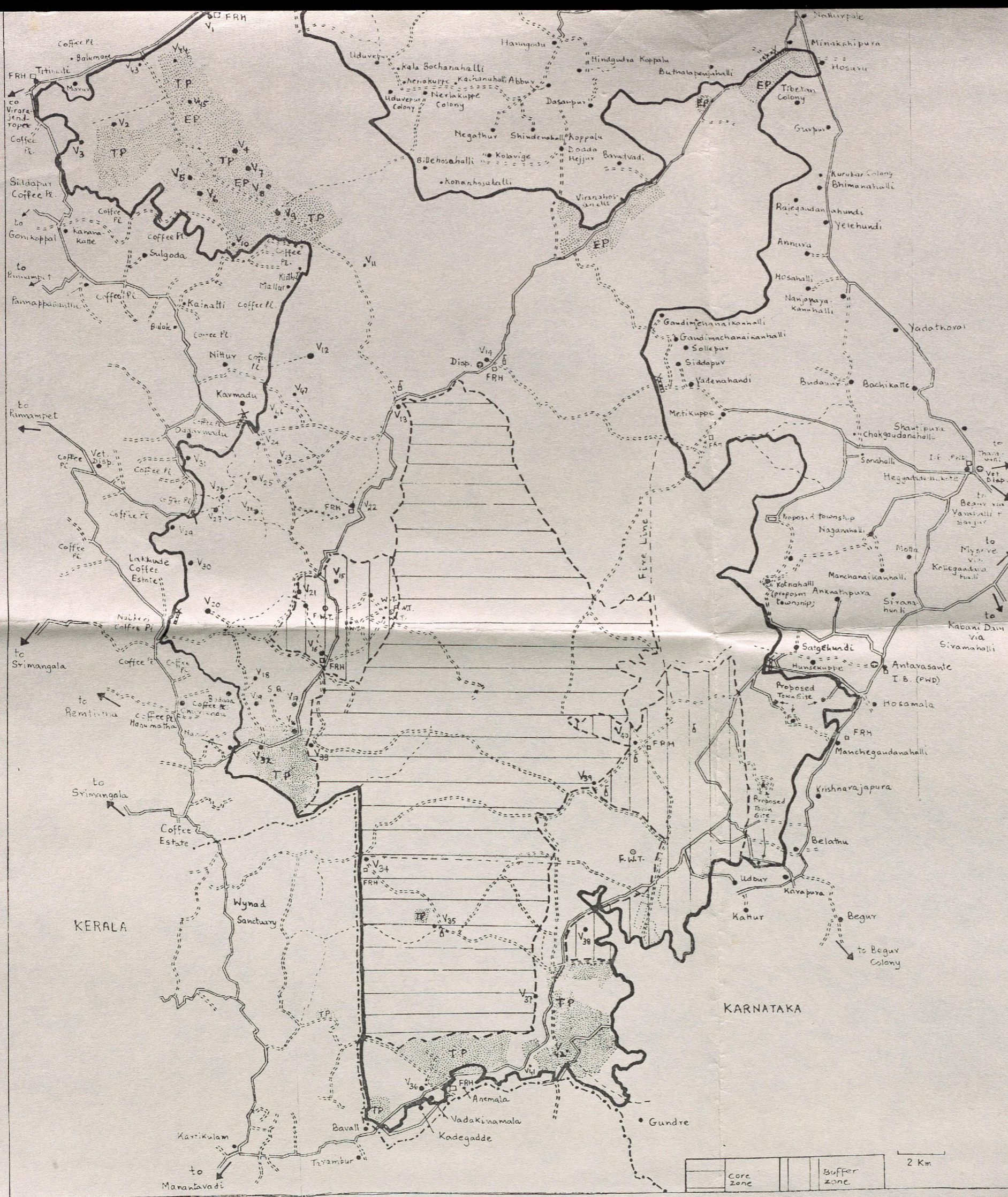
LOCATION: Districts Kodagu and Mysore; *Latitudinal range* 11°51'20" [tp] to 12°15'37" N [tp]; *Longitudinal range* 76°00'02" to 76°17'13" E [tp]; *Nearest town* Kutta (7km); *Nearest railhead* Krishnarajanagar (70km) [mp]; *Nearest airport* Mysore (94km).

APPROACHES: From Bangalore first to Mysore (142 km) then on to Hunsur (75 km), and to Nallurpala (7.5 km), on to Murkah (19 km) inside the park, to Kalhalla (10 km), on to Nagarhole (8.5 km) [tp]. From Calicut via Manantavadi to Nagarhole (93.5 km) [Road Map undated, KFD-Nag1].

TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE: *Altitude* 700 m [q1] to 957 m, the highest point being located in the extreme south [tp]; *Temperature* 14°C to 33°C; *Mean annual rainfall* 1778 mm at Nagarhole, decreasing to 1270 mm on the eastern fringes of the park [mp].

FLORA: According to Landsat imagery, the park consists entirely of closed forest with a crown density of 40% and above [Landsat 1986]. To the north-east, adjacent areas are devoid of forest cover. Forest types found in the park include South Indian Tropical Moist Mixed Deciduous 3B/C2, Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous 5A, Southern Tropical West Coast Semi Evergreen 2A/C2, and Scrub Forests (degraded 5A) [q1, mp, KFD-Nag1, fv].

Extensive Teak *Tectona grandis* plantations covering 9000 ha. were carried out by the Forest Department, before the park was notified, between 1868 and 1982. No subsequent plantations have been raised though some silvicultural operations are undertaken in the existing ones. Small patches of *Eucalyptus* had also been planted much before the park had been declared [q1, mp, fv]. The weeds *Lantana* sp. and *Eupatorium Chromolaena odorata* are proliferating in the area [mp].



Above 40% crown density.
 10% to 40% crown density.
 Scrub.
 Forest, tanks/grassland/per. cult. etc.
 water bodies.
 F.S.I. nos: 58 A, 1981-89; 57 D, 1987-89.

Note: Boundary of the park in the upper half has been drawn approximately as the scale of the F.S.I. map and not consistent with the lower half.

Habitation inside the National park.

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| V1- Ancechaur | V24- Bandihalla |
| V2- Mallipatna | V25- Navalagadde |
| V3- Siddapur | V26- Nallurkolli |
| V4- Begur | V27- Malalakolli |
| V5- Madayanura | V28- Kanthur |
| V6- Bettatur | V29- Sampigekolli |
| V7- Chinapuram | V30- Berkolli |
| V8- Chinapuram | V31- Gergundi |
| V9- Gonagur | V32- Bolekom |
| V10- Rahaoyram | V33- Ammala |
| V11- Hebballa | V34- Kaimura |
| V12- Sujjalugadde | V35- Doddahadi |
| V13- Kolangere | V36- Dodabalrankuppe |
| V14- Murkah | V37- Nagankattehadi |
| V15- Sagaramandala Colony | V38- Ballehadi |
| V16- Nagarhole | V39- Mattigodu |
| V17- Siddapura Colony | V40- Bialvadi |
| V18- Chantapura | V41- Golurmachur |
| V19- Shantapura Colony | V42- Kurubadi |
| V20- Gonigadde | V43- Mattigodu |
| V21- Kunturu | V44- Kantrpura |
| V22- Kalhalla | V45- Mattigodu |
| V23- Anemadugadde | V46- Arnesothagadde |
| | V47- Irmanigadde |

Core zone Buffer zone 2 Km

is...
 odoratus
 spp.
 rdiun occidentale
 crissus latifolia
 carpus heterophyllus
 carpus spp.
 ahinia racemosa
 mbax ceiba
 ridelia crenulata
 ridelia spp.
 Buchanania la...
 Butea monoe...
 Careya arbo...
 Cassia fist...
 Chlorox...
 Chukra...
 Corda...
 Dal...
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ones [tp], and several smaller seasonal ones [tp]. There are four small perennial lakes, 41 artificial tanks (24 perennial) and several swamps [mp]. Other major sources are the reservoir of the Taraka dam, entering the eastern part of the park, and the Kabani reservoir, forming the south-eastern boundary of the park [tp].

BUDGET: Budgetary expenditure incurred during 1990-91 was Rs.21.65 lakhs, and in 1991-92 Rs.14.25 lakhs.

MANAGEMENT PLAN: A plan for the period 1990-1995, was prepared in December 1989 by the DCF (WL), Mysore, and has been sent for approval.

PERSONNEL: The Deputy Conservator of Forests (WL), Hunsur is overall in-charge. He is being assisted by One ACF, seven RFOs, 29 foresters, 98 forest guards, 19 forest watchers, 51 mahouts, 52 kavadis, and one elephant jamedar (for elephant camp) [fv].

EQUIPMENT: 20 wireless sets, 14 rifles and 24 guns, 12 binoculars, six jeeps, one car, three vans, and one mini bus (vans and mini bus are for tourists) [mp, qa '93].

RESEARCH AND MONITORING: Two research projects have been conducted by the Centre for Wildlife Studies, Mysore, in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department. They are (i) Ecological Relations and Resource-use in the Carnivores-Herbivores Community of Nagarahole National Park and (ii) Ecology and Management of Large Carnivores. Both projects are under the auspices of Indo-US Scientific Cooperation Programme [mp]. The projects were halted in mid-1990, following controversy over the death of a radio-collared tiger, then resumed on court orders, and finally put on hold again after the March 1992 incidents (see below, HUMAN PRESENCE, *Miscellaneous*). As per court orders recollaring was done during 1993.

COMMUNITY INTERACTION PROGRAMMES: Slide and films shows are held (about 30 every year) for villagers residing inside the park. Also, educational films on wildlife are screened for villagers residing in the adjacent areas, with about four to five villages being covered every month.

HUMAN PRESENCE:

Rights and Leases: The felling of diseased and dead Sandalwood trees is permitted in the Buffer, Tourism and Restoration zones. Removal of dead or fallen Rosewood is permitted in the Buffer and Tourism Zones, only under "special circumstances" [mp]. It is not clear who has these rights/concessions and what the "special circumstances" are. Tribals living in the park are permitted agriculture (40-50 ha), and fuelwood and NWFP collection [fv], though this is technically illegal (see *Habitation* below).

Habitation: There are 54 tribal settlements inside the park, with a total population of 6140* [qa '93]. According to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, such settlements in a fully constituted national park are illegal. However, they have existed there for centuries and the Forest Department does not plan to shift them out. There are also 5 families of non-tribals living in the park, cultivating about 10 ha [mp].

There are 45 villages in the adjoining areas with an estimated population of 55,283. Five 'proposed sites for townships' have been depicted on the toposheet in the south-east portion of the sanctuary. According to park authorities these sites are to be used for rehabilitation [qa '91].

Grazing: Over 5000 heads of livestock graze illegally inside the park [fv].

Offences and Illegal Activities: In 1983-84, one case of improper entry was recorded, 22 of illegal hunting, and 838 of destruction of habitat. Certain areas of the park are extremely susceptible to poaching, and organised ivory poaching expeditions are launched occasionally from neighboring Kerala [mp]. Most of the poaching however,

* The toposheet however shows that there are 40 settlements inside the park.

** Programme to rehabilitate the tribals outside the national park under certain beneficiary oriented schemes has been drawn up by the Park authorities, but the tribals are resisting the move [fv].

is of herbivores, for meat, and more rarely of big cats and Gaur [fv]. Some illegal bird trapping by tribals has also been reported [mp]. There are also reports of illicit cattle grazing, and fuelwood and fodder collection, by the people resettled in a 2000 ha area on the eastern boundary [fv]. These people had earlier been evicted from the submergence zone of the Kabani dam [fv].

Tourism: The park received 45,109 visitors during 1988-89 [mp], which has come down to 35,882 in 1991-92.

Use by Other Government Agencies: There are approximately 200 ha of PWD roads in the park. The Education Department runs several schools inside the park, and about 162 ha of the park are occupied by transmission lines of the Karnataka State Electricity Board (KSEB).

Miscellaneous: Between 1979-80 and 1983-84, six people were killed, and one injured by elephants in and around the park. Two hundred and thirty two cases of livestock lifting (in adjacent areas) were accepted for compensation during this period. In addition there were 290 cases of crop damage (in adjacent areas) that were accepted for compensation during this period.

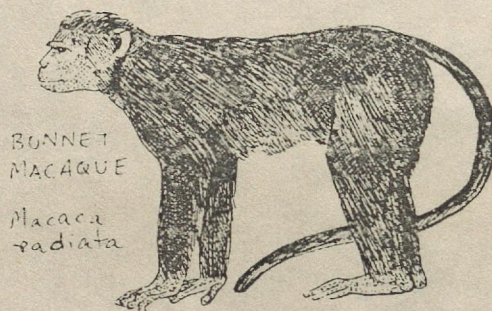
In mid-March 1992, a large group of villagers from adjoining areas forcibly entered the park, destroyed property, beat up some staff members, and set fire to a large tract (reportedly about 7000 ha.) of the forest [*Hindustan Times*, 21 March 1992]. They were protesting the death of a villager, whose body was found inside the park, alleging that a RFO had killed him. Park authorities maintained that the man was a victim of rivalry between two poaching gangs, and that powerful interests were using the opportunity to loot the forests. Some sources have alleged the hand of groups who are demanding that the district of Kodagu (Coorg) be made a separate state or political constituency, but these groups have denied any association with the incident [*The Hindu*, 18 March 1992; *Sunday Observer*, 22-28 March 1992]. An official inquiry is being conducted.

INFORMATION FOR VISITORS: The park is best visited between October and May, when the weather is pleasant and animals easier to spot [KFD-Nag2]. There are also various small tribal shrines in the park which are worth a visit. Vehicles have to pass through checkpoints while entering and there are eight manned entry points to the park. Entry is prohibited between 6.00 pm and 6.00 am. Private vehicles are allowed only in the Tourism Zone [q1, fv, mp]. Overnight accommodation is available in several resthouses, tourist lodges and dormitories in and around the park. There is a reception centre in the Tourism Zone, and a booklet on the park is available. Three vans and a minibus facilitate travel inside the park, and several watchtowers make wildlife viewing easier.

NGOs/INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED: There are two Honorary Wildlife Wardens. They are Shri K. Ullas Karanth and Shri P.M. Aiyanna (please see Appendix 8 for addresses).

CONTACT ADDRESSES:

- 1) DCF (WL) Hunsur
Wildlife Preservation Division
Hunsur P.O. 571105
Mysore Dist.
Karnataka
- 2) Local in-charge:
Range Forest Officer,
Wildlife Range
via Murkal,
Nagarahole-571258
Kodagu Dist.
Karnataka



APPENDIX A

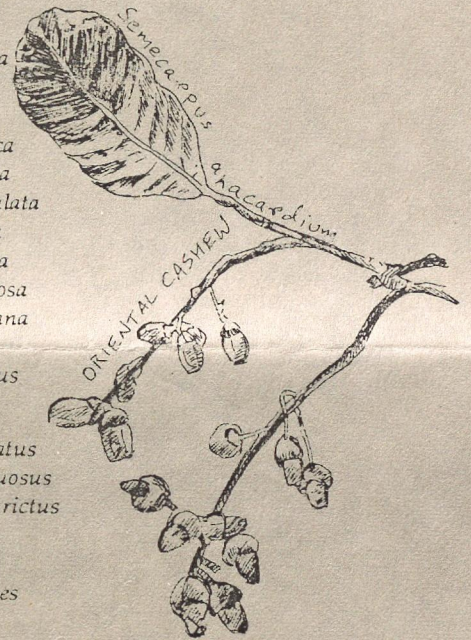
rees [mp, mp2, Q1]

Ailanthus triphysa
Albizia odoratissima
Albizia spp.
Anacardium occidentale
Anogeissus latifolia
Artocarpus heterophyllus
Artocarpus spp.
Bauhinia racemosa
Bombax ceiba
Bridelia crenulata
Bridelia spp.
Buchanania lanzan
Butea monosperma
Careya arborea
Cassia fistula
Chloroxylon swietenia
Chukrasia velutina
Cordia spp.
Dalbergia latifolia
Dalbergia paniculata
Derris indica
Dillenia pentagyna
Dillenia spp.
Diospyros melanoxylon
Dipterocarpus indicus
Emblica officinalis
Eucalyptus spp.
Ficus spp.
Ficus virens
Gardenia spp.
Garuga spp.
Gmelina arborea
Grewia tiliifolia
Haldina cordifolia

Other Plants [mp, mp2, Q1]

Acacia caesia
Acacia sinuata
Asparagus racemosus
Bambusa arundinacea
Bridelia spp.
Calycopteris floribunda
Chromolaena odorata
Clematis spp.
Coffea spp.
Cordia dichotoma
Curcuma spp.

Holigarna spp.
Hopea parviflora
Kydia calycina
Lagerstroemia microcarpa
Lannea coromandelica
Machilus spp.
Mangifera indica
Meyna laxiflora
Naringi crenulata
Ougeinia oojainensis
Pterocarpus marsupium
Pterocarpus spp.
Radermachera xylocarpa
Santalum album
Sapindus spp.
Schleichera oleosa
Semecarpus anacardium
Shorea roxburghii
Stereospermum personatum
Strychnos nux-vomica
Syzygium cumini
Syzygium spp.
Tamarindus indica
Tectona grandis
Terminalia alata
Terminalia bellirica
Terminalia chebula
Terminalia paniculata
Wrightia tinctoria
Xeromphis spinosa
Xeromphis uliginosa
Ziziphus mauritiana
Ziziphus spp.
Ziziphus xylopyrus



Cymbopogon citratus
Cymbopogon flexuosus
Dendrocalamus strictus
Desmodium spp.
Eleusine coracana
Entada phaseoloides
Globba spp.
Grewia hirsuta
Helicteres isora
Hemidesmus indicus
Heteropogon contortus



Holarrhena antidysenterica
Imperata cylindrica
Jasminum spp.
Lantana camara
Lantana spp.
Nicotiana tabacum
Oryza sativa
Phoenix humilis
Smilax spp.
Sorghum bicolor

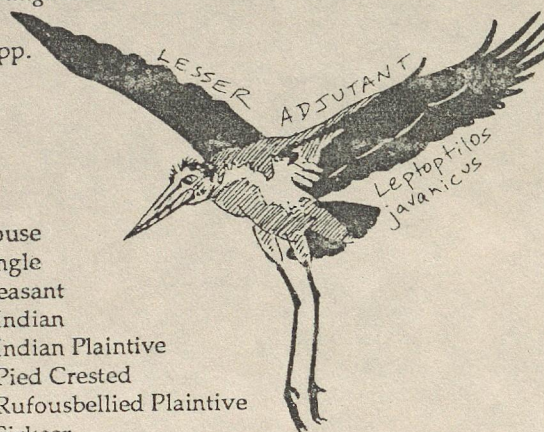
Spatholobus parviflorus
Themeda cymbaria
Themeda spp.
Themeda triandra
Ventilago spp.
Vernonia spp.
Vitis spp.
Xeromphis uliginosa
Zea mays
Zingiber spp.

APPENDIX B

Birds [KFD-Nag2, fv, mp]

Adjutant, Lesser
 Babbler, Common
 Babbler, Jungle
 Babbler, Large Grey
 Babbler, Quaker
 Babbler, Rufous
 Babbler, Rufousbellied
 Babbler, Spotted
 Babbler, Whiteheaded
 Babbler, Yelloweyed
 Barbet, Crimsonbreasted
 Barbet, Small Green
 Baya
 Bee-eater, Bluebearded
 Bee-eater, Bluechecked
 Bee-eater, Bluetailed
 Bee-eater, Chesnutheaded
 Bee-eater, Green
 Bittern, Chestnut
 Blackbird
 Bluebird, Fairy
 Bulbul, Redvented
 Bulbul, Redwhiskered
 Bulbul, Yellowbrowed
 Bustard-quail, Common
 Buzzard, Honey
 Buzzard-eagle, White-eyed
 Chat, Pied Bush
 Chloropsis, Goldfronted
 Chloropsis, Goldmantled
 Coot
 Cormorant
 Cormorant, Little
 Crake, Brown

Crow, House
 Crow, Jungle
 Crow-pheasant
 Cuckoo, Indian
 Cuckoo, Indian Plaintive
 Cuckoo, Pied Crested
 Cuckoo, Rufousbellied Plaintive
 Cuckoo, Sirkeer
 Cuckoo-shrike, Blackheaded
 Cuckoo-shrike, Large
 Curlew, Stone
 Darter
 Dove, Emerald
 Dove, Indian Ring
 Dove, Little Brown
 Dove, Spotted
 Drongo, Ashy
 Drongo, Black
 Drongo, Bronzed
 Drongo, Greater Racket-tailed
 Drongo, Whitebellied
 Duck, Spotbill
 Eagle, Black
 Eagle, Crested Serpent
 Eagle, Greyheaded Fishing
 Eagle, Tawny
 Egret, Cattle
 Egret, Large
 Egret, Little
 Egret, Smaller
 Falcon, Lager
 Falcon, Peregrine
 Finch-lark, Ashycrowned
 Flowerpecker, Tickell's



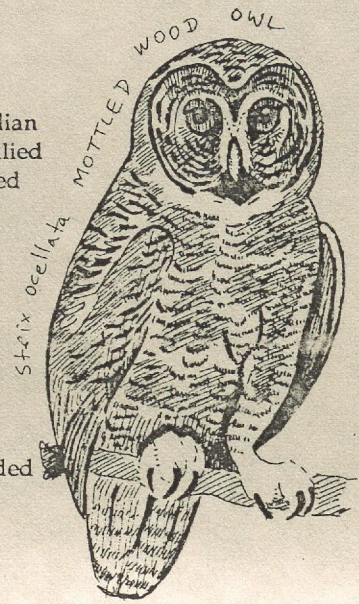
Flycatcher, Blacknaped
 Flycatcher, Brown
 Flycatcher, Nilgiri
 Flycatcher, Paradise
 Flycatcher, Redbreasted
 Flycatcher, Rufoustailed
 Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue
 Flycatcher, Whitebrowed Fantail
 Flycatcher-shrike, Pied
 Garganey
 Grebe, Little
 Gull, Brownheaded
 Harrier, Marsh
 Harrier, Montagu's
 Harrier, Pale
 Hawk-cuckoo, Common
 Hawk-eagle, Booted
 Hawk-eagle, Crested
 Hawk-owl, Brown
 Heron, Grey
 Heron, Little Green
 Heron, Night
 Heron, Pond
 Heron, Purple
 Hobby
 Hoopoe
 Hornbill, Common Grey
 Hornbill, Malabar Grey
 Hornbill, Malabar Pied
 Ibis, Black
 Ibis, White
 Iora, Common
 Jacana, Bronzewinged
 Jacana, Pheasant-tailed
 Junglefowl, Grey
 Kestrel
 Kingfisher, Common
 Kingfisher, Lesser Pied
 Kingfisher, Storkbilled
 Kingfisher, Whitebreasted
 Kite, Blackwinged
 Kite, Brahminy
 Kite, Pariah
 Koel
 Lapwing, Red-wattled
 Lapwing, Yellow-wattled
 Lark, Bush
 Lark, Malabar Crested
 Lark, Redwinged Bush
 Lorikeet, Indian

Magpie-Robin
 Malkoha, Small Greenbilled
 Martin, Dusky Crag
 Merlin
 Minivet, Scarlet
 Minivet, Small
 Moorhen
 Moorhen, Purple
 Munia, Blackheaded
 Munia, Red or Avadavat
 Munia, Spotted
 Myna, Brahminy
 Myna, Common
 Myna, Greyheaded
 Myna, Hill
 Myna, Whiteheaded
 Nightjar, Common Indian
 Nuthatch, Chestnutbellied
 Nuthatch, Velvetfronted
 Oriole, Blackheaded
 Oriole, Golden
 Osprey
 Owl, Barn
 Owl, Brown Fish
 Owl, Mottled Wood
 Owl, Scops
 Owlet, Jungle
 Parakeet, Alexandrine
 Parakeet, Blossomheaded
 Parakeet, Bluewinged
 Parakeet, Roseringed
 Partridge, Grey
 Pastor, Rosy
 Peafowl, Common
 Pelican, Rosy
 Pigeon, Blue Rock
 Pigeon, Green Imperial
 Pintail
 Pipit, Indian Tree
 Pipit, Paddyfield
 Pitta, Indian
 Plover, Great Stone
 Plover, Little Ringed
 Pratincole, Small Indian
 Quail, Jungle Bush
 Quail, Painted Bush
 Redstart, Black
 Robin, Indian
 Roller, Indian
 Sandpiper, Common



Flycatcher, Blacknaped
 Flycatcher, Brown
 Flycatcher, Nilgiri
 Flycatcher, Paradise
 Flycatcher, Redbreasted
 Flycatcher, Rufoustailed
 Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue
 Flycatcher, Whitebrowed Fantail
 Flycatcher-shrike, Pied
 Garganey
 Grebe, Little
 Gull, Brownheaded
 Harrier, Marsh
 Harrier, Montagu's
 Harrier, Pale
 Hawk-cuckoo, Common
 Hawk-eagle, Booted
 Hawk-eagle, Crested
 Hawk-owl, Brown
 Heron, Grey
 Heron, Little Green
 Heron, Night
 Heron, Pond
 Heron, Purple
 Hobby
 Hoopoe
 Hornbill, Common Grey
 Hornbill, Malabar Grey
 Hornbill, Malabar Pied
 Ibis, Black
 Ibis, White
 Iora, Common
 Jacana, Bronzewinged
 Jacana, Pheasant-tailed
 Junglefowl, Grey
 Kestrel
 Kingfisher, Common
 Kingfisher, Lesser Pied
 Kingfisher, Storkbilled
 Kingfisher, Whitebreasted
 Kite, Blackwinged
 Kite, Brahminy
 Kite, Pariah
 Koel
 Lapwing, Red-wattled
 Lapwing, Yellow-wattled
 Lark, Bush
 Lark, Malabar Crested
 Lark, Redwinged Bush
 Lorikeet, Indian

Magpie-Robin
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 Owlet, Jungle
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 Pigeon, Blue Rock
 Pigeon, Green Imperial
 Pintail
 Pipit, Indian Tree
 Pipit, Paddyfield
 Pitta, Indian
 Plover, Great Stone
 Plover, Little Ringed
 Pratincole, Small Indian
 Quail, Jungle Bush
 Quail, Painted Bush
 Redstart, Black
 Robin, Indian
 Roller, Indian
 Sandpiper, Common



update 26

From: david@giasbg01.vsnl.net.in
Subject: Forced eviction process in Nagarhole National Park.
Date: Tuesday, August 01, 2000 10:13 AM

BRUTAL ATROCITIES UNLEASHED AT TRIBALS DURING DISLOCATION PROCESS AT NAGARHOLE NATIONAL PARK BY FOREST DEPARTMENT.

> It has happened again. After the brutal forceful dislocation process of 51 families carried out by the Forest Department and the Police during midnight of June 12, last year, 15 people; - one among them Rani; - a young woman and also an anti-natal mother - were brutally beaten up by a troop of the Forest Department under the leadership of Mr. A.T Poovaiah; the Forest Range Officer, in a planned process of forceful dislocation of tribals from Rajive > Gandhi National Park, Nagarhole. Rani and two others by name Muthanna and Sannappa who are very seriously injured have been admitted to the Government hospital at Gonikoppal. Another one seriously injured by name Kumara is undergoing treatment at Government Hospital, Hunsur. Others were given primary treatments locally.

> The incident took place on the 23rd of this month when a large troop of Forest Department personnel under the leadership of Mr. A.T. Poovaiah; the Forest Range officer landed in Kolengere tribal settlement in Nagarhole in 5 jeeps, 2 pick-up lorries and a transport van to forcefully dislocate the 30 tribal families from the settlement to the new rehabilitation site at Veeranahosalli at the fringes of the National Park and demolish their existing habitats. It also remains a mystery that how come Mr. A.T. Poovaiah; presently a transferred Officer from the area, lead this brutal crusade to dislocate the tribals from Nagarhole National Park. The Tribals and the local people resisted the move of the Forest People automatically developing into a clash. The local dailies the very next day morning carried the false news to the effect that the local people instigated the clash with the support of NGOs like CORD, Kushalnagar and DEED, Hunsur; a highly false report cooked up by the Forest Department to defend their savagery committed in the settlement.

The historical conflict between the Forest Department and the Tribal inhabitants in Nagarhole National Park simmered during the recent years with the move the Government of Karnataka to implement the controversial WB aided Eco development Project in the National Park. In total violation of the operational directives of WB with regard to the indigenous/Tribal People and the existing Constitutional Rights and Privileges of the ST population of the country, and even more, neglecting the established Human Rights, the planning and implementation of the controversial project went ahead. The inhabitant tribals of the national park on the other hand, foreseeing their catastrophic plight with the lose of their habitats, their life support systems and traditional culture & identity mounted severe protests and resistance to the project. The tribal position was justified by World Bank Inspection Panel with their visit to the National Park on 1-3 September, 1998 and the subsequent Report that was presented to WB in December, 1998.

> In their response to WB, the India Management and Government of Karnataka have repeatedly maintained (of late the public utterance to this effect was by Mr. Chakravarthy, Chief Planning Conservator of Forests on 30th June, 2000, at National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore) that no forceful dislocation is or will be effected from Nagarhole National Park and that if at all any shifting process occurs, it would be with the expressed wish and full consent of the people concerned. While asserting so with the donor

> agency on the one side, on the other, Government of Karnataka through its project implementing agency, - The Forest Department - is arranging rehabilitation sites and applying indirect and direct force in shifting the resident tribals from Nagarhole almost totally against their wish. The first manifestation of this planned plot had been on the 12th of June, 1998 when 51 families were shifted

under terrorizing tactics and the second effort now demonstrated at Kolengere on the 23rd of this month. The question is: If there be the collective expressed wish and consent of the people for dislocation, then why such clashes taking place again and again? The truth is that of the 30 families in Kolengere settlement only 2 family heads under indirect threats of the Forest Department Officials have given their consent to move out. One is a forest watcher whose salary is withheld by the concerned officials for the last 2 months and threatening with transfer to the far away station at Kaimara (Hand post, H.D. Kote Taluk) if he didn't give his consent to move out. The other was forced by denying the deserved job in the Forest Department for his dependent. Are there any true willful expressions for dislocation from Nagarhole? If so, it remains obligatory on the part of the Forest Department and Government of Karnataka in the interest of public concern; and more importantly obliging to their own commitments to World Bank for obtaining funds, to disclose information as to how many resident tribal families inside the National Park have so far declared their uninfluenced willingness for dislocation with details of the located tribal settlements.

> And all these happen when the district has 3 Ministers in the ruling government- one among them from the affected section itself. We have protective Laws and Acts to safeguard the life and sustenance of the minority majorities of the country, but often neglected and violated tactfully by the lawmakers themselves. The situation in Nagarhole is brewing

> up for more tensions among the minorities especially from among the tribal

> people; since they are committed Constitutionally and politically to safeguard their traditional rights and their place in the national polity as a distinct people.

>

> At the outset, the Kolengere incident is a planned atrocity committed against the poor tribals of the habitat by the Forest Department of the state, even not, sparing the women and nursing mothers. There should be a proper inquiry into the incident and the culprits, whoever they are, should be booked under the Tribal (Prevention of Atrocities Act) of the country.

> Kindly send your protest messages and demanding appropriate actions against the culprits to:

- > 1. The Chief Minister of Karnataka, Vidhan Soudha, Bangalore, Karnataka
- > 2. The Minister for Environment & Forest, Vidhan Soudha, Bangalore, Karnataka
- > 3. The Minister for Home Affairs, Karnataka, Vidhan Soudha, Bangalore, Karnataka
- > 4. The Chief Secretary, Govt. of Karnataka, Vidhan Soudha, Bangalore, Karnataka.
- > 5. The Chief Conservator of Forests, Aranya Bhavan, Malleshwaram, Bangalore, Karnataka.
- > 6. District Commissioner, Kodagu District, Madikeri, Karnataka.
- > 7. The President, Zilla Panchayath, Madikeri, Karnataka
- > 8. Mr. Laz Lund, Task Manager, World Bank, India Office, New Delhi
- > 9. The President, World Bank, Washington D.C.
- > 10. The Inspection Panel, World Bank, Washington D.C.
- > 11. The National Human Right Commission, New Delhi.

>

> Your urgent action is the valuable support in our ensuing struggles.

> Therefore, please act immediately and express your solidarity with us.

>

> Yours in solidarity,

1. P.K. Ramu, Convener, Nagarhole Budakattu Janara Hakkusthapana Samithy.
- > 2. J.K. Thimma, Convener, Budakattu Krishikara Sangha, Virajpet Taluk.
- > 3. J.P. Raju, President Karnataka Rajya Moolanivasi Vedike.
- > 4. V.S. Roy David, Director, CORD, Kushalnagar, Karnataka.
5. S. Sreekant, Director, DEED, Hunsur, Karnataka.
6. G. Chennappa, Convener, Tribal Joint Action, Karnataka.

TOI

OCT 29 Bridge to cut Wynad-Mysore distance by 50 km

BANGALORE: Karnataka and Kerala will jointly construct a bridge across Kabini river after clearance from the Centre, Karnataka PWD Minister Dharam Singh and his Kerala counterpart M.K. Muneer said on Sunday. At a joint press conference here, Singh and Muneer said the proposed bridge at Byranakuppe would connect Wynad district of Kerala and Mysore district and open up a new inter-state route which will reduce the distance by 50 km. "The all-weather bridge estimated to cost Rs 6.50 crore will be taken up under the Inter-State Road Development Fund," they added.

Muneer, who is on a day's visit to the state, had wide ranging discussions with Singh.

Singh said the idea was originally mooted by the then Chief Minister M. Veerappa Moily in 1994. The then Kerala Chief Minister K. Karunakaran had also shown interest in this project which was estimated to cost Rs 1.85 crore, to be shared equally by both governments. "However, the project did not materialise even though the foundation stone was laid," he added.

According to Singh, the bridge falls under Rajiv Gandhi National Park which has been declared as a game sanctuary. "It needs the concurrence of the Union Environment Ministry," he added.

Both Singh and Muneer also agreed to approach the Centre to seek funds for upgradation and maintenance of 15 inter-state roads connecting the two states.

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TOI / SEPT 23 Nagarhole too should be under Project Tiger ambit M B MARAMKAL

NAGARHOLE: Karnataka has asked the Centre to extend the Project Tiger plan to Nagarhole National Park which was hitherto restricted to Bandipur National Park only, and bring both parks under a single authority.

Disclosing this after visiting the park on Saturday, forest department officials said this will help the Karnataka government to mobilise additional funds for developing habitat in the parks, specially in Nagarhole which hasn't been part of any wildlife project.

Officials feel Nagarhole is a fit case for the Union Environment and Forest Ministry to extend its Project Tiger plan. "Our parks are well maintained compared to other states."

A.M. Annaiah, Nagarhole's Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) has been advocating this for a long time. Increasing tiger population in the park is one of the compelling reasons for the state government to seek extension of the plan, he asserted.

"Compared to last year's census, the tiger population in the park has increased from 52 to 57. Further measures are needed to consolidate park habitat, and its inclusion in the Tiger Project plan will boost conservation, including maintaining of balance between predator and prey population," Annaiah added.

Besides 57 tigers, there are 28 leopards, 1,500 elephants, 1,000 bisons, 7,000 deer and over 250 species of birds which have made the park their home.

Disclosing the measures initiated by the forest department, the DCF said 28 anti-poaching camps have been formed and nine watch towers to prevent poaching and tackle forest fires. "We have also employed over 250 fire watchers to nip the devastation in the bud itself." He claimed forest fires in the park area have come down in the last three years.

Efforts are being made to rehabilitate tribals who are staying in the park and willing to come out of it under the eco-development project being implemented with the World Bank's help.

Conservator of Forests M.N. Jayakumar said the department has written to the government to create a buffer zone around Chamundi Hills to protect and preserve habitat. "Mushrooming of buildings, resorts, hospitals and ashrams around hills are threatening the very existence of flora and fauna of the picturesque hills."

14.17

From: Madhusudan A <anemadhu@ces.iisc.ernet.in>
To: Natural History of South Asia - General discussion and research <nathistory-india@lists.Princeton.EDU>
Subject: Re: Bridge in R G National Park (Nagarhole)?
Date: Sunday, November 04, 2001 1:19 AM

Dear all,

Echoing Basu's apprehensions, there would undoubtedly be greater disturbance if and when the bridge comes up. Right now this road connecting Mananthawadi in Wayanad district of Kerala and Mysore is in a bad shape especially the forest stretch of nearly 40 kms till the border town of Bavali and hence most of the traffic is concentrated on the Gundlupet- Sulthan Bathery road which cuts through part of the Bandipur tiger reserve. So, looking at it from this perspective it would certainly ease the traffic on this forest stretch of around 25 kms. But the greater evil would be the opening up the area to the town of Pulpalli and surroundings on the Kerala side which is a haven for poachers and smugglers. The greatest threat to Nagarhole's wildlife is and will be from the residents of this area. Right now they sneak into the park crossing the river Kabini by boats at different points and the bridge will only add to the problem. The poachers of Pulpalli will certainly be a happy lot.

From: Pradiptamohan Basu <prbasu@yahoo.com>
To: Natural History of South Asia - General discussion and research <nathistory-india@lists.Princeton.EDU>
Subject: Bridge in R G National Park (Nagarhole)?
Date: Tuesday, October 30, 2001 11:28 AM

Dear NatHist members,

Read in today's [29/10/01] Times of India (Bangalore) about the plan of constructing a road bridge connecting South Karnataka with the Wynad area of Kerala. The bridge will be located - as the newspaper states - within the territory of the Rajiv Gandhi National park (Nagarhole forest). I was wondering, what could be the impact of this proposed construction, if okayed by the ministry of environment, on the flora and fauna of that beautiful region!?

Regards -
P Basu

FROM: Navarath Enterprises <navarath@oif.vsnl.net.in>
Subject: Large Scale Smuggling of Sandalwood trees Discovered in the Nagarhole National Park
Date: Wednesday, July 17, 2002 4:46 PM

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Large scale Smuggling of Sandalwood trees
Discovered in the Nagarhole National Park
INCERT investigation team has now discovered that smugglers are systematically looting and plundering the Sandalwood trees from the Nagarhole National Park. In just about a week's time, thousands of invaluable sandalwood trees and teak trees have been illegally felled by the smugglers in several parts of the park. Sandalwood and Teak trees are being looted chiefly from the following areas;

1) Dayyada Katte 2) Erekatte 3) Valageri Katte 4) Billena Hosahalli and 5) Charnalli Kadu. In addition another patch of 66 acres in the Mattigodu forest range, outside the National Park near Beruthammara halli, which is between BR Kaval and Titmatti Chain Gate, has also been a target of the sandalwood smugglers in recent weeks. Hundreds of Sandalwood trees have been systematically felled by them in this patch as well. One has to drive down a stretch of 5 kms from Panchavalli, towards BR Kaval to see the devastation being caused to this fragile ecosystem.

Leading newspapers have already published a note about the ongoing sandalwood looting activities in their respective newspapers on 16th July 2002.

The details of the Sandalwood smuggling activities along with some fifty photographs showing the truncated sandal wood trees, discarded barks etc. have been uploaded to our website:

<<http://incert.tripod.com/nagarholenationalpark/>>

We request you to kindly visit our website and write letters to the following authorities and urge them to take immediate remedial steps to curb this large scale sandalwood carnage inside the Nagarhole National Park:-

1. Sri S.M. Krishna
Honourable Chief Minister of Karnataka,
Bangalore, India
Tel: (080) 225 3414(Off) (080) 225 2572(Res)
email : <cm@kar.nic.in>, <cmk@bangalore.it.com>
2. The Secretary (Environment and Ecology)
Department of Forest, Environment and Ecology
Government of Karnataka
Multistoried Building
Ambedkar Road
Bangalore - 560 001, India
Tel : (080) 225 4377
email : <psecfee@secretariat2.kar.nic.in>
3. Mr. S. K. Chakrabarty, IPS
PCCF and Chief wildlife Warden,
Karnataka Forest Department
2nd floor, Aranya Bhavan, 18th cross,
Malleswaram, Bangalore - 560 003, India
Tel : (080) 3345846 (Off) (080) 3445431 (Res)
email : <spccfwl@vsnl.com>
4. The Central Empowered Committee constituted by the Supreme Court of India, by its order dated 9.5.2002 in WP 202/95
& 171/96 at the following address:-
M.K. Jiwrajka,
Member Secretary, Central Empowered Committee, Room No-106, Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO
Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110008 Tel fax 011 4363976
Thanking you in advance,
Yours Sincerely, For INCERT S.Sridhar

5670015

RECEIVED
INCERT
17 JUL 2002 11:00 AM
M. K. JIWRAJKA
MEMBER SECRETARY
CENTRAL EMPOWERED COMMITTEE
ROOM NO. 106, PARYAVARAN BHAVAN, CGO
COMPLEX, LODI ROAD, NEW DELHI 110008
TEL FAX 011 4363976

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From: Navbarath Enterprises <navbarat@blr.vsnl.net.in>
Subject: Poachers have a Gala Time in the Nagarhole National Park. Seven Tuskers Killed in two Months
Date: Saturday, October 12, 2002 12:03 PM

The Nagarhole National Park has acquired the dubious distinction, not only as a smuggler's haven but also as a poacher's paradise in recent months. Three months ago, INCERT Investigation team had investigated and reported several cases of large scale looting of the forest wealth and removal of Sandal wood trees from this National park. INCERT and other agencies had also reported with graphic, photographic and videographic accounts, the brutal killing of elephants, maiming of tigers, and decapitating of deer in the and around the national park. The findings of the INCERT investigation team has been uploaded in the INCERT web site <<http://incert.tripod.com/nagarholenationalpark/>>

Rusty Saws and Unrestrained Cruelty

The INCERT investigation team has stumbled on the brutal slaying of seven pachyderms inside the Nagarhole National Park, in Banare Kere, Segadi Katte Kere, Eechur Kadu, Anegallu pare, Moorkal, Parthada Kada, and Kallala. (See appended table for details). Please visit our website <<http://incert.tripod.com/nagarholenationalpark/>> for poaching details and photographs of the truncated elephants. Our investigative reports have also appeared in leading newspapers. The poachers have exhibited their unrestrained cruelty, by sequestering themselves behind chosen bamboo clumps, and ambushing the pachyderms using deadly weapons, even as the unsuspecting tuskers approached the bamboo clumps with their majestic pride and dignity. No sooner the tortured trumpets of the fatally injured elephant died down, the poachers accomplished the task of tusk extraction in a jiffy, using a rusty saw. Their actions are profoundly repugnant to describe and even more distasteful, is the shameless growth in the demand for the ivory in many Asian countries. In a rather related development, news papers have reported the seizure of atleast four large sized tusks, in Bangalore, Shimoga and Mangalore during September 2002.

State Government, Officials:-

1. Sri S.M. Kristna, Honourable Chief Minister of Karnataka,
Bangalore, India. Tel: (080) 225 3414 (Off) (080) 225 2572 (Res)
email: <cm@kar.nic.in>, <cmk@bangalore.it.com>
- b. Shri. Gokul Ram, IAS, Principal Secretary, Dept. of Ecology, Environment and Forests,
Government of Karnataka (secocoenv@kar.nic.in)
- c. The Secretary (Environment and Ecology)
Department of Forest, Environment and Ecology Government of Karnataka
Multistoried Building, Ambedkar Road, Bangalore - 560 003, India
Tel: (080) 225 4377, email: <psecfee@secretariat2.kar.nic.in>
- d. Mr. S. K. Chakrabarty, IFS
PCCF and Chief wildlife Warden, Karnataka Forest Department.
2nd floor, Aranya Bhavan, 18th cross, Malleswaram, Bangalore - 560 003, India
Tel: (080) 3345246 (Off) (080) 3445431 (Res), email: <pccfwl@vsnl.com>
- e. Shri M.N. Jayakumar, IFS
Conservator of Forests, Mysore Circle, Karnataka Forest Department, Aranya Bhavan, Ashokapuram,
Mysore - 570 008, Tel: 95821 480875 (O) 482150 (R) 480675 (Fax)

Central Government, Officials:-

1. Shri T. R. Baahu, Union Cabinet Minister (Environment & Forests),
Government of India - (mef@envfor.delhi.nic.in, mef@menf.delhi.nic.in)
2. Shri P. V. Jayakrishnan, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests,
Government of India - (secy@menf.delhi.nic.in)

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Second tusker falls prey to poaching in Nagarhole

By Joseph Hoover
DH News Service

BANGALORE, Sept 6

Even as we prepare to celebrate Ganesha Chaturthi on Tuesday, there are tidings from the Nagarhole National Park that another elephant has been poached, the second tusker to fall prey to the ugly machinations of man and the callousness of the Karnataka Forest Department in the last fortnight.

While the elephant God is venerated by millions in the sub-continent, the elephant, in its earthly manifestation, is being mercilessly hunted down in Nagarhole, arguably the best habitat for the Asiatic elephant. The latest victim was a robust 26-year-old tusker at Sannabattadakolli, nestled between Bavali in the D B Kuppe Range.

Though the tusker is said to have been gunned down on August 30, its mutilated carcass was discovered by cattle grazers on September 3. The news was communicated to the Assistant

Conservator of Forests Mr Thimmegowda, who in turn alerted DCF Anniiah (Hunsur) and Conservator of Forests (Coorg Division) Anur Reddy.

According to a reliable Forest Department source, the bullet, fired from a muzzle loader, had entered the brain from the base of the neck killing it instantly. "The trunk was severed and cast aside. The tusks had been sawn off. It made a gruesome sight," said the source.

"I have been informed about the incident. Investigations are underway," said S K Chakravarthy, PCCF (wildlife).

That this ghastly crime has occurred close on the heels of a tusker being poached in the Kallahalla Range (August 24) has enraged wildlife activists.

"It is baffling that the Department has done precious little to arrest the growing trend of poaching. Only recently, 40 poachers were arrested in Nagarhole for snaring a tiger and other species in steel jaw traps. Following which an elephant was killed in the

Kallahalla Range. Now another tusker has fallen prey to the bullet. Obviously, the protection mechanism has collapsed. Strangely, the government has done nothing about it," said Chinnappa, president, Wildlife First.

On its part, the Forest Department has sought to put protection in perspective. But it is handicapped for lack of personnel. "One of the major reasons for such events is that 50 per cent of the posts for guards lie vacant in Nagarhole. We have succeeded in getting the ban on recruitment lifted. We are in the process of absorbing guards. But the problem will persist as these men would have to be trained for a year and a half.

"Keeping this in mind we are in the process of requesting the government to move staff from other regions to sensitive spots such as Nagarhole, at least until the new recruits complete their education," said S K Chakravarthy.

Until that happens, the toll, already 18 since 2001, is bound to grow.

involved in 10 with his 1-4 billion dollar...
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Deal on biodiversity struck

JOHANNESBURG, SEPTEMBER 1

Negotiators at the Earth Summit struck a deal here today on the issue of protecting the planet's depleting animal and plant diversity, even as talks on increasing the percentage of global renewable energy use remained logjammed, delegation sources said.

Working groups agreed on the text in a draft plan of implementation on "achieving a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss by 2010", officials said.

But Friends of the Earth spokesman Daniel Mittler described the compromise as a "weak text" with the UN Convention on Biodiversity a much stronger instrument which had not been ratified by the USA.

Mr Mittler said environmentalists were concerned that the USA now supported the text in the Earth Summit while "massively putting Brazil under pressure to drop its energy targets" in the negotiations on renewable energy.

German Environment Minister Juergen Trittin said today that the

negotiations remained logjammed on the issue of renewable energy.

A scheme aimed at bringing rainwater harvesting to remote villages stricken by months without rain and struggling to survive after their conventional water supplies have all but dried up was unveiled at the summit.

"The whole of Rajasthan used to have traditional systems of harvesting rainwater, but the methods fell into disuse," said Geoffrey Smith of Oz Green, an Australian environmental group that specialises in water.

"We want to empower villagers to draw on traditional methods such as building tanks on rooftops and piping to collect and store rainwater and find new underground catchment areas," said Swami Jasrajpuri of the International Sri Deep Madhavananda Ashram Fellowship, a Vienna-based yogic organisation that is heading the initiative.

"Rajasthan accounts for 10 per cent of India's land area, but gets only one per cent of the nation's water resources", Swami Jasrajpuri explained. **DPA, AFP**

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Nagarahole has the highest density of Asian Elephants. Fragmentation of this habitat poses serious threat to the species, says **VANRAJ**

NAGARAHOLE, now named Rajiv Gandhi National Park, forms a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. The Park is located in two districts of Karnataka-Kodagu, a land known for its scenic beauty, and Mysore, known for its palaces. The National Park which sprawls over 643 sq.kms, is a paradise for bird and animal lovers. It derives its name from a small river, "Nagarahole", which means "serpentine river" in Kannada. The Brahmagiri mountains, an integral part of the Western Ghats, form a permanent backdrop to Nagarahole in the South. The Wynad (meaning marshy land) Wildlife Sanctuary of Kerala also shares its boundary in the southern parts of Nagarahole. The river Kabini forms a natural boundary for the Park in the east, beyond which is the Bandipur National Park. The backdrop of the distant misty blue Brahmagiri Mountains, the natural sounds of the jungle, the gurgling of the streams and rivers, the twittering of birds make a visit to Nagarahole memorable. To appreciate nature, one



Safe terrain

has to see the grandeur and the magnificent ferocity of its jungle life. Derelict tanks, temples and other ruins indicate that Nagarahole must have once seen a number of thriving human settlements. A part of these great forests (Kakanakote) was once the exclu-

sive hunting reserves of the Maharajas of Mysore. A fascinating spectacle was the drive of wild elephants along the river Kabini. This led to 'Khedda' the method of capturing wild elephants. 'Kheddas' were held during the early 20th century to capture elephants.

The Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*), held as the embodiment of wild wisdom in India is gradually disappearing. It is estimated that about 300 sq.kms of forest area is needed to sustain each of these mega feeders. The ever-growing human population has encroached so much

on the forests that the fragmentation of the habitat poses a serious threat to the species. This majestic animal, portrayed so much in the, history and folklore of India, held sacrosanct in the two major religions of the continent (Hinduism and Buddhism) is getting



Tree debarked by elephants (above); Elephant family in Nagarahole Photos by Aravind N A

extinct.

With about 1500 pachyderms, Nagarahole has the highest density of the Asian Elephant. The complex of Nagarahole, Bandipur, Wynad and Mudumalai, covering over 2000 sq.kms, constituting the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, is probably the last hope for the wild elephants. The banks of the river Kabini during summer could be the best place for sighting, studying and photographing wild elephants. Elephants congregate

here in groups. The Park has a man made boundary which the pachyderms hardly respect. Efforts are made to contain the elephants within the Park. Driving of wild elephant herds and the tuskers back into the Park, that too at times in the pitch of darkness, is an unenviable task of the forest personnel.

Elephants are also a growing menace in the deciduous forests.

Recent studies in the deciduous forests of Nagarhole National Park show the types of damages caused by the elephants in dry deciduous forests. Here the elephant breaks the main stem with its trunk and then peels off the bark to consume it. Another method of destruction is uprooting plants and extracting the bark from the fallen trees. This is seen mostly in old teak plantations. They usually visit the forests in herds of 5 to 10 to consume the

bark. Along with elephants, herbivores like Gaur, Sambar, Spotted deer, and wild boar damage forests to a considerable extent. In moist deciduous forests, even though some signs of feeding are observed, damage is rather limited. In such cases as most of the trees are fully grown, they are unable to impose severe damage. It is, however, very clear that the reason for this unnatural behaviour is the growing human interference in the animal territory.

Nagarahole is one of the most important National Parks of India and Asia. It has emerged as one of the last safe asylums for the Asian Elephant, whose future has become uncertain. The precious tracts of deciduous forests of Nagarahole is also a safe place for the Royal Bengal Tiger which is on the verge of extinction in India and elsewhere. Nagarahole was initially constituted as a "Game Sanctuary" in 1995. Subsequently, the protected area was extended with the inclusion of the famed forests of Kakanakote and the adjoining forests of Mysore district. Now the protected area extends to over 643 sq.kms and is duly given a stable legal status of a National Park. The realisation of the colossal destruction of forests and the animals that India has witnessed has prompted the action of keeping some of the protected areas beyond the pressures of market economy. The wisdom of doing so also stems from the Indian tradition of treating the forests, rivers and mountains as abodes of God.

Deccan Herald
23/11/2001

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REHABILITATION OF TRIBAL PEOPLE/ FRESH PROPOSALS SENT

Relocation within Kodagu recommended to Govt.

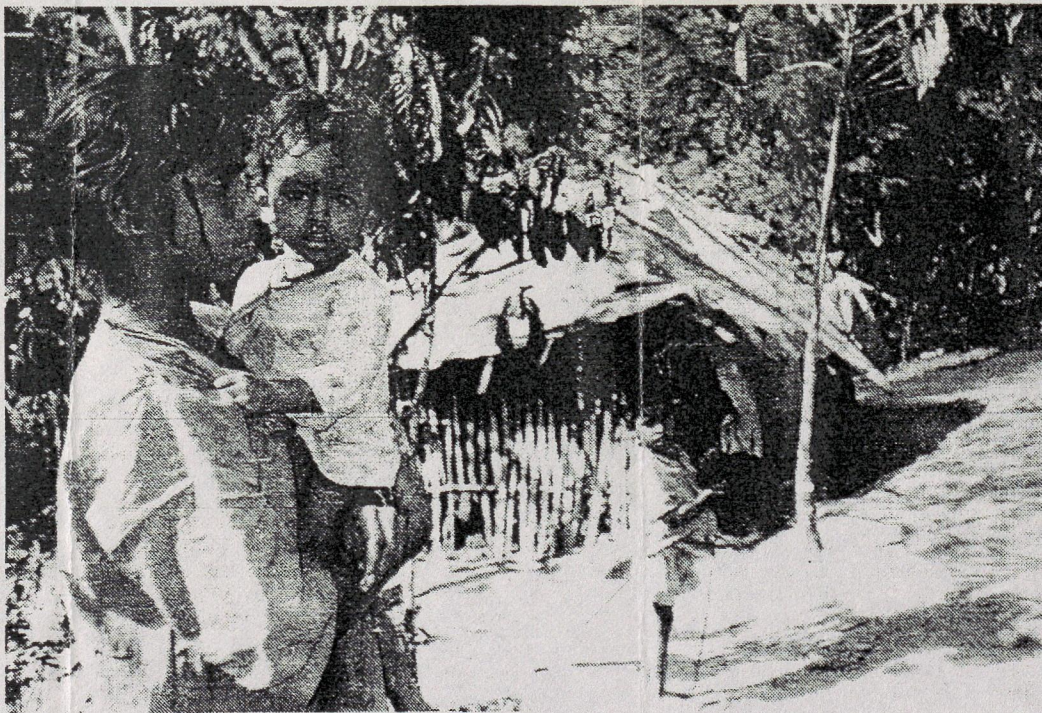
By K.Jeevan Chinnappa

MADIKERI, JAN. 6. The integrated rehabilitation of the tribal people living inside and on the fringes of the Nagarahole National Park and other areas in Kodagu District has been hanging fire for many years. Nothing much has been done to bring them into the mainstream society.

However, a proposal sent to the Government by the district administration recently marks an important development. Some headway has been made in this regard, thanks to a joint exercise conducted by the Revenue Department, Forest Department and other government departments to prepare a report for proposed action, including rehabilitation.

A proposal was sent to the Mysore Divisional Commissioner recently by the Deputy Commissioner, G.V.Ramachandra, to de-reserve an area of 8,281.65 acres of land (survey number 303) at Bhadragola (Majjigehalla) in Virajpet taluk. Significantly, many tribal people in Kodagu have preferred their relocation within the district. It is learnt that the proposal has been routed through the State Government to the Centre for its approval.

As per the latest census, Kodagu has a tribal population of 40,300 in 154 colonies. Virajpet has the highest tribal population of 27,500 from 2,234 families settled in 87 colonies. Somwarpet has a population of 7,300 from 1,037 families in 53 colonies and Madikeri 5,500 from 425 families in 14 colonies. Madikeri has Kudiya, Marata, Kuruba, and Nayaka tribal communities. In Somwarpet, there are Yerava, Marata, Nayaka, Kadu Kuruba, Jenu Kuruba, and Soliga sects while there are Yerava, Soliga, Marata, and Jenu Kuruba sects in Virajpet taluk.



A tribal girl holding a baby in front of her hut in Kodagu.

Of the 3,696 families, 2,398 have housing facilities. There are 154 health sub-centres available with an equal number of primary health centres.

For the 154 tribal colonies in Kodagu, there are 104 schools. Roads have been laid in 122 colonies while 32 are yet to get the facility. As many as 143 colonies have drinking water supply.

The study reveals that there are seven unemployed tribal graduates in Madikeri taluk, eight in Somwarpet taluk, and one in Virajpet taluk.

The efforts of the district administration to identify over 700 acres of "paisari" (revenue) land at West Nemmale in Virajpet ta-

luk for rehabilitation has run into rough weather. The villagers, some of whom have "encroached" the paisari lands, are unwilling to part with the land as they have built homes and cultivated them.

They prevented a survey of land recently. Although Mr. Ramachandra has assured them that those who have applied for regularisation would not be harmed, people are skeptical about it.

The report recommended that the tribal people should have complete hold over the minor forest produce (MFP).

The small holdings of the tribal people should be made more productive and they should be motivated to take up innovative

cultivation methods such as creation of farm ponds, field bunding, fencing, vermin compost pits, irrigation borewells, and so on.

With regard to health, the report emphasised that priority should be given to construct primary health centres and sub-centres equipped with diagnostic facilities and referral support. Tribal ANM's should be appointed and the norms of qualifications for their recruitment should be relaxed.

Promotion of herbal gardens, community participation through participatory exercise, and micro planning and mobilisation of community resources is essential for providing health care.

The Government and the panchayat bodies should be involved in this.

The report moots the idea of the supply of foodgrains such as ragi, wheat, and rice through the public distribution system, particularly mobile ration shops.

For education, the report stresses the need for learning as well as physical education. Teachers should be selected from

among the educated tribal people or those based in rural areas. After school hours, the children should be taught sustainable agricultural practices and vocational training with a proper monitoring mechanism.

With regard to funding the rehabilitation, the report harps on the need for a study by the Centre, the State Government and the zilla panchayat. Referring to the Bhuria Committee recommendations, the report says the issues of declaring tribal self-rule and scheduled areas should be taken up with the Centre.

The Tamil Nadu example is highlighted to appoint tribal people in the Forest Department on a permanent basis.

Tribals in the Nagarahole National Park have been protesting against implementation of the World Bank-sponsored Eco-Development Plan, which will push them out of their homeland. The ongoing construction of a forest resort in the park area by the Taj group of hotels has further fuelled the controversy. P M VIJENDRA RAO considers the pros and cons of relocation of the tribals



A demonstration by the tribals of Nagarahole in protest against their relocation
Photographs by M R Manjunath

Turmoil in tribal homeland

WHILE everyone is for conservation of eco-systems round the world, opinion is sharply divided on the question of tribals, who have inhabited forests for ages. While some argue that tribals are part of eco-systems and that any eco-development project should avoid displacing them from their homes, there are others who argue that tribals have lost their tribal characteristics and their continued presence in the forests would only harm the environment.

Those who take the former position contend that, while tribals may have not been completely immune to pressures from the so-called civilised world, it is an instinct in them to protect the forests, and that they pose no danger whatsoever to the environment; in fact they have a key role to play in the conservation effort. Some proponents of this position also point out that it is not the tribals but smugglers and poachers, who are frequently hand-in-glove with forest officials, and the so-called eco-development projects, particularly eco-tourism projects involving big companies, which pose a threat to environment.

It is in this context that one has to view the protests by tribals in Nagarahole

against the eco-development projects sponsored by the World Bank and the Wildlands Resort project (now renamed Get-away Tusker Lodge), which has been handed over to the Taj group of hotels by the Karnataka Government.

The World Bank-funded £ 70 million Eco-Development Plan (EDP), meant for implementation in seven national parks (protected areas) in India, only added a new dimension to the raging controversy of relocation. The Nagarahole National Park, spread over an area of 643.39 sq km in both Kodagu and Mysore districts, was one of the parks chosen for the EDP. Several tribal organisations were instantly incensed by the plan. They wrote to Jessica Mott, Senior Natural Resource Economist (Agriculture and Water Division, South Asia), World Bank, saying the EDP, though sounds good on paper, will not as such serve the purpose if implemented in such a way as proposed by the forest officials. "There are 300 villages around the national park. Most of them are inhabited by landless tribals and the majority of the rest are landless dalits and rural poor. There is no concrete plan to meet the needs of these landless families. The nominal land holding community will

get the benefit of the EDP and will become richer and richer, while the huge majority of the landless tribals and others will be deprived of their existential factors like food, fuel and fodder," the joint letter of different organisations pointed out.

They also resisted the forest department's plan for rehabilitation of the tribal families, saying that the latter had drawn up their own plan and that the same had been submitted to the government.

Under the prevailing circumstances, they said, if the Bank is really concerned about eco development, the tribals and their aspirations and the wildlife, the only way for it is to initiate a dialogue with the tribals.

The World Bank, on its part, wrote back to say that the objective of the EDP was to conserve biodiversity in seven globally significant protected areas by increasing the collaboration between local people and government managers. "The project design is not a blueprint of tangible investments; rather it is a set of agreed processes and criteria that would be used for the project duration. A major element of the project is the extensive consultation and



A banner on a tree near Murkal declares that tribals are the children of forests

> Continued on Page 20

No honey, no money

SHIVA, 27, says he earned Rs 20,000 last year through collection and sale of honey. Not a luxurious sum, but enough to keep the home hearth burning during lean months, when honey becomes scarce and the tribals have nothing else to bank upon for a livelihood.

Shiva, married with three children, is annoyed that his income could be much higher, had it not been for "the vengeful foresters" who often pounce upon him (and other tribal men during their nocturnal honey-collecting mission) and grab the honey-pot only to spill it on the ground. There are also occa-



Shiva, who speaks eloquently about the injustices meted out to the tribals

sions when forest officers have simply carried away the fruits of their labour. There are also times when the men have been relieved of the sickles they carry for severing honeycombs from tree branches by foresters, who harass them no end before returning them.

However, the "vigilant men in uniform" do precious little to check poaching of wild boars, deer and other animals within the protected forest area for meat by those (non-tribals) living on forest fringes, says Shiva.

Shiva, like many others in the hadi inside the Nagarahole Park, is outspoken in his own inimitable way.

Shiva, like many others in the hadi inside the Nagarahole Park, is outspoken in his own inimitable way.

Reticent youths

But not so are youths in another hamlet, not far off from this, who are simply hostile to visitors. Their suspicion of any outsider is so deep that it borders on xenophobia.

A group of three to four youths asked this correspondent and the photographer accompanying him any number of questions, before ascertaining their identity. Once the identity was established (with the production of the visiting-card), they refused to open up. "You may be journalists, but we won't talk to you unless you are accompanied by our leaders (meaning, NGO functionaries)," was their refrain. They would not even allow their hutments to be photographed.

Once in a week or so, the forest department officials visit the hadis to remind them that they have to pack up and settle outside the forests, says

Shanti, a woman of the Jenu Kuruba tribe, even as many under-nourished children, who are enrolled in a local ashram school but who have skipped classes, hover around her.

Not many of the young faces are healthy and clean. Shanti's own baby has festering sores from head to toe. She complains that the doctor has not visited her hadi for weeks — not an uncommon phenomenon. The village women refer in jest to the nurse from the nearby primary health centre who is never there during an emergency maternity case, but later on instructs the patient not to disclose her ab-

Urban influence

But it is not a rare sight to find jeans-clad tribal youngsters roaming about the jungle — the most obvious indication of urban influences — with seemingly no constructive avocation. The forest department cannot provide jobs to all the able-bodied tribal men, definitely not all round the year.

But there are ready jobs available to most of them at private estates in the vicinity. There are times when the employer himself comes to their door and hauls them to the work-spot and rewards them with wages one-and-a-half times those offered by the forest department (which is about Rs 30 per day per male and Rs 2 less for female). Their workspots outside the forests are another perennial source of exposure to strong urban influences.

Viewed in this background, their passionate attachment to their habitat strikes an outsider as an anachronism. But any debate on tribal relocation, undoubtedly, has to take into account an indigenous people's right to live in their own homeland and choose their own way of life. Any developmental or conservation effort cannot be effective, unless the people who will be directly affected by it are actively involved in the decision-making process.

PMVR



Members of a tribal family in front of their hut in a hadi in Nagarahole

Turmoil in tribal homeland

participatory decision-making involving local people, with a particular focus on forest dependent and disadvantaged communities. The project processes and criteria incorporate Bank directives (as highlighted by the NGOs) such as protection of customary rights of indigenous people, informed participation, and mitigation plans for adverse impacts."

Confrontations

The letter also noted that "the project documents acknowledge that during the past 20 years, the government's interactions with local people in and around protected areas have sometimes been confrontational, and that the establishment of protected areas has sometimes had negative impacts on tribal groups. Government officials and others have recognised the problems with this past approach and therefore proposed the EDP. The transformation to a more participatory, less confrontational approach, even with the assistance of contractual partners, however, is likely to be gradual."

The letter also sought to assure that those concerned that under the proposed Bank/GEF (Global Environment Fund) project design, the forest departments would not cause or undertake involuntary resettlement of people in protected areas, and would ensure that any proposals for voluntary resettlement would be prepared and implemented in accordance with the criteria agreed with the Bank and after prior approval by the Bank.

The exchange of these letters was followed by a meeting between the representatives of the Bank and the tribals, where the latter alleged lack of transparency on part of the Bank.

It was even complained that the micro-plan (a sort of trial balloon set afloat by the Bank prior to implementation of the Eco-Development Plan and which has been taken up without the consultation of either the district administration or the zilla panchayat) itself was being implemented by the forest department in a "haphazard manner," with the focus on non-tribals.

The tribal organisations further argued that they had already proposed a "People's Plan," evolved by the tribals themselves which could be implemented without external funds.

Unaware

Says Sreekant, Secretary, DEED (an NGO in Hunsur), that the World Bank representatives pleaded their ignorance of the People's Plan. The Eco-Development Plan

funds are generated combinedly by the World Bank (40 per cent), the Central and State Governments (15 per cent each) and the Global Environmental Fund (30 per cent as grant). If the People's Plan is implemented, it will not call for World Bank funding.

According to Sreekant, what is being attempted through the Eco-Development Plan is the usurping of community property by the State, which will also eventually lose its control over it, to make it global property. The World Bank has maintained that it would clear from the park, only if beneficiaries of its micro-plan say they don't want it.

Population

There are a little more than 56 tribal hadis with 1,850 families (a population of 9,000) in the Nagarahole National Park and are inhabited by Jenu Kurubas, Beta Kurubas and Yeravas. Additionally, there are about half dozen non-tribal families inside the park. There are another 90 tribal villages (24,000 population) living outside the park within a radius of four-five km.

The major pressures on the

park, according to the forest department, are in the form of collection of firewood, timber and minor forest produce, besides poaching for meat and ivory.

The department says part of the reserve forest areas near the project area have to be developed for the purpose, as there are no common lands available for development of fuel, fodder and small timber plantations, to meet local biomass needs.

The NGOs, which say it is unacceptable, also point out that the forest department has already made a mess of its plans like promoting horticulture, dairying, pisciculture and so on.

At a time when the relocation of tribals itself had become a raging controversy, the Karnataka Government has added fuel to it by leasing out its aborted project of Wildlands Resort to the Taj Group of hotels for completion and operation. In doing so, it has provided a stick to the NGOs and tribals to beat it with. If the presence of tribals upsets the eco equilibrium in the park, how come the resort is allowed to come up, is the pertinent question raised by the NGOs.

Environmentalists argue that what is being attempted through the World Bank-sponsored project in Nagarahole is the usurping of community property by the State, which will also eventually lose its control over it, to make it global property

The decision to lease out the existing structures to a private operator was taken much earlier, but given effect to only in June 1994. It was in October last that the tribals offered stiff resistance to the construction by the Taj group of hotels. After a protracted battle, the former managed to stall the work.

To the court

Meanwhile, the rival parties have even approached the court, where the matter lies now. Pending a legal solution, the Taj group resumed construction in December 1996, only to find that the tribals were prompt in opposing it once again.

For the first time in any wildlife sanctuary, the tribals observed a bundh in Nagarahole on December 29.

The issue gains special significance in the wake of the recent apex court ruling cancelling the forest land lease given to Span Motels (in Kullu-Manali), owned by former Environment Minister Kamal Nath.

Also relevant to quote here would be another Supreme Court order issued later that "ongoing activities in any forest in any State" should be stopped forthwith. No activity should be carried without the prior permission of the Centre under Section 2 of the Forest Conservation Act (several NGOs spearheading the agitation

at Nagarahole have cited this ruling in their appeal to the Prime Minister to intervene in the dispute).

The holiday resort issue has occupied the centre-stage of the dispute between the government (read the forest department) on the one hand, and the tribals and NGOs, on the other. But the crux of the problem continues to be the relocation of tribals.

The forest department has sent its relocation proposal the Union Government.

Relocation plan

As per the proposal of the Forest Department, 843 tribal families living in 27 hamlets in the park lying in Kodagu district, and another 505 families in 24 tribal hamlets in the Mysore district part of Nagarahole (Kakanakote) are proposed to be shifted to Beerathammanahalli, Muddanahalli, Sollepura and Veeranahosalli in an area of 3,050 acres of forest land, situated on the forest fringe. The said area would be transformed into regular settlements over a five-year period.

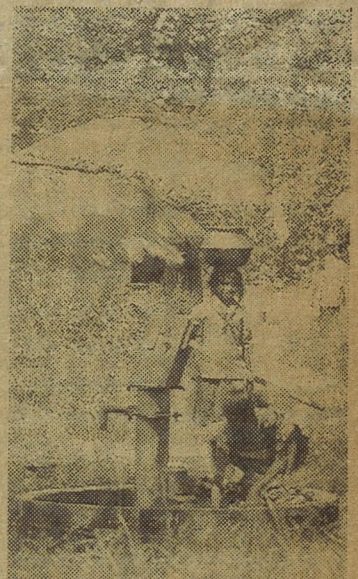
The objection of the tribals to this plan stems from the fact that the 3,050 acres of land is degraded and away from their habitat. They are also disillusioned with the miserable plight of those tribals relocated earlier from the Bandipur National Park and the Kabini project area.

The anxiety of the tribals is only to be understood, as it was only four years ago that seven tribals in Dadadahalli hamlet (in Heggada Devana Kote taluk) died due to malnutrition. The Forest Department has been maintaining that it has only invited voluntary relocation, and that there will be no coercion.

The tribals, on the other hand, would have none of it and are demanding the implementation of the Dilip Singh Bhuria Committee report that provides for tribal self-rule.

The issue brings one back to the debate whether tribals form a part of the eco-system or not. Opinion is sharply divided on it.

The argument that tribals have always been an integral part of the forests is countered by pro-relocation school of thought that they (or, at least, many of them) have



A rare sight: a borewell in a hadi

no longer retained their tribal characteristics.

This counter-argument itself is countered by NGOs who ask, "Have you relinquished your claim over your ancestral property just because you are not like your father?"

Disempowerment

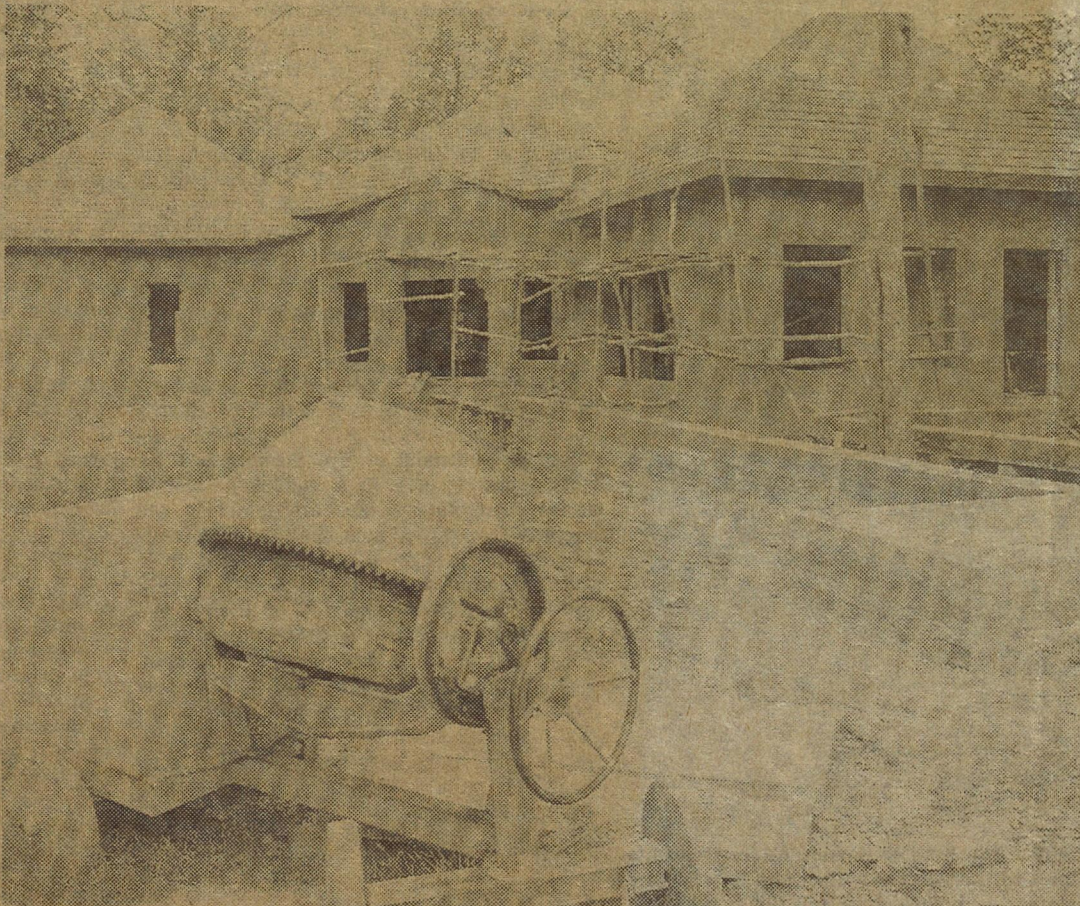
Anil Agarwal, Director of Centre for Science and Environment, has been quoted as having said that the major problem of forest-based people is not poverty, but their disempowerment by wildlife laws and programmes and the erosion of their environmental right to use their habitats.

While the objective of eco-development is sound enough, what is being contested is the notion that poverty is the sole reason for dependency on forest-based resources and that its elimination would result in changed lifestyles. More than the changing lifestyles and mindsets of the local people, it is important to give them a stake in the protection and management of the forests and environments they live in, an idea which is alien to the eco-development concept.

According to an estimate made under the Joint Forest Management Programme, 200 families in Nagarahole would be needed for the management of the entire park.

Cultural reality

According to noted environmental activist Pradip, "It is an instinct in them to protect the forests. They know they cannot live without the forests. For them, the eco-system is a cultural reality, not a physical reality. The so-called environmentalists won't understand it, for, they have never lived there."



The half-constructed resort at Murkal (left); tribal children in a hadi

Tribals submit alternative plan for Nagarhole

From K. S. Dakshina Murthy

BANGALORE, June 25

A World Bank-funded eco-development plan for the Nagarhole forests costing Rs 56 crore can be undertaken with just Rs three crore in the kitty, according to an alternative proposal submitted to the Government by tribal activists.

Not just the costs, hundreds of tribal families who have lived in the forests for centuries need not be displaced if the alternative plan is implemented. Though the World Bank plan too does not insist on displacement of tribal families, it encourages a voluntary relocation plan which is perceived as a threat by the 6,888 adivasis who inhabit the forests.

According to the Karnataka Tribal Joint Action Committee, the World Bank aims to conserve bio-diversity through development. In effect, this means that the tribals would be resettled outside the forests with the promise that they would be encouraged to cultivate and encouraged to take up income-generating activities like dairying, poultry farming, fishing etc.

Though attractive on paper, activists say tribals who left the forests earlier enticed by such promises had a nightmarish experience. In the '70s, for instance, 18 tribal hamlets in the forests were ousted to make way for the Kabini river project. None of the ousted received any compensation. They could neither return to their homes in the forests nor

could they find a decent means of livelihood outside. Most of them turned into "coolies", or beggars and some even took to stealing for survival.

The World Bank-sponsored plan is similar to that of the State Forest Department excepting for a few additional facilities to enable them to settle outside the forests. But, the previous experiences when tribals were left high and dry make the current plan too a suspect.

The World Bank project for Nagarhole is part of an all-India programme covering seven national parks and sanctuaries. The World Bank has set aside nearly Rs 300 crore (67 million dollars) for the programme.

Activists argue that though the World Bank does not encourage forced relocation, the eco-development plan is fraught with danger as it does not make any provision for tribals to live within the forests. For, in the absence of a plan for their livelihood, the tribals will be "squeezed out" of the forests as there are no other viable options.

More importantly, the massive sum allocated for the eco-development plan has given rise to vested interests in the forest departments who would prefer to keep the programme going even if to the detriment of the tribals.

In this context, the tribals have submitted an alternative plan which costs a mere Rs three crore to implement. The plan essentially visualises dividing the Nagarhole forests into three regions.

Adivasis' crusade gains momentum

HINDU 25/1/99
By K.Jeevan Chinnappa

MADIKERI, Jan. 24.

The movement launched by the Adivasis (tribal people) and the NGOs supporting them in the Nagarhole National Park (Rajiv Gandhi National Park) in Kodagu and Mysore districts, to protest against the World Bank-sponsored eco-development project is in the news again. If the recent meeting of the Adivasi organisations from the seven national parks across the country—where similar projects are to be implemented—to forge a common platform to stop implementation of the projects is any indication, it must be said the movement has gained momentum.

The three tribal organisations in Kodagu — Nagarhole Budakattu Janara Hakku Sthapana Samithi, Karnataka Rajya Moolanivasi Vedike and the Budakattu Krishikara Sangha — have been in the forefront of the movement for quite some time. What has lent credence to their struggle is the coming together of the representatives of the seven national parks to launch a united effort to achieve their goal.

The first three-day conclave of the Adivasi organisations held recently at Hunsur was attended by the representatives of the Adivasis from Pench and Khana national parks in Madhya Pradesh, Gir in Gujarat and a number of NGOs. The participants resolved to fight for their livelihood and heritage rights inside the national parks, and at the same time preserve the forest and its wealth, which would be obviously a setback to the eco-development project. The conclave was organised by Mr. J.L.Subramani of the Nagarhole Budakattu Janara Hakkusthapana Samiti.

The Adivasis allege that the Union and the State governments, through their respective Forest departments, were out to destroy their livelihood, heritage and culture. They even wanted those displaced to be brought back into the forests as their lives were in a shambles now.

Representation has been made to the World Bank Chairman, through the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, on this issue. They have set a deadline to the Union Government to complete a "proper and judicious" rehabilitation of thousands of Adivasi families, which have been evicted from their traditional homelands "with false promises." If the governments fail to meet the deadline, the Adivasis will start a nationwide "Back to forest" campaign, they said in a memorandum to the World Bank.



An Adivasi carrying firewood in the Nagarhole National Park.

Incidentally, the inspection panel of the World Bank, which has said that it had found prima facie evidence that the bank's policies pertaining to the indigenous peoples and their involuntary settlement might cause harm to their interests. This has come as a shot in the arm to the Adivasis. The managers of the project in India have been asked by the World Bank to interact with the Union and State governments on taking measures to address the objections raised by tribal people and report within six months.

The NGO representatives such as Mr. Roy David of the CORD in Kodagu, Mr. Srikanth of the DEED in Hunsur and Mr. Nanjundaiah of the FEDINA-VIKASA in Heggadadevanakote, have been spearheading the cause of tribal people. The recent conclave was attended by the representatives from the Ekta Parishat from Madhya Pradesh, the Saurashtra Paryavaran Samrakshan Parishat from Gujarat and the SETU from Gujarat and the Shaswat from Maharashtra, besides Adivasis from the national parks. They are unequivocal in demanding the State governments to declare the tribal areas as "Scheduled Areas" for ushering in tribal self-rule.

On the other hand, the Indian Institute of Tribal Education (IITE) at Thithimathi in Kodagu and an NGO, Living Inspiration for Tribals (LIFT) from Rangasamudra, also in Kodagu, have been advocating the idea of relocating the tribal people in the Nagarhole park. The IITE has proposed a three-year plan for the rehabilitation of the tribal people outside the park area. They feel the lives of such people even after 50 years of Independence has not improved.

Mr. M.B.Prabhu of the IITE, who met the Union Minister for Forests, Mr. Suresh Prabhu, and the State Forest Minister, Mr. D.Manjunath recently at Nagarhole Park has urged them to relocate the tribal families. This, he argues, will not only enable them to avail of the benefits under various development schemes of the Government including education and medical benefits and help them overcome hunger, poverty and illiteracy. The increased dependence on the forest by the tribal people for livelihood can result in the destruction of forests. Whereas, those opposing the relocation plan contend that it will amount to driving them away from their homeland, where they have their temples and burial grounds.

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REGIONAL

Govt. yet to implement order on acquiring forest area

By M.Madan Mohan

HUBLI Aug 1

The Government appears to be dragging its feet in enforcing the orders passed by the Chief Conservator of Forest (Centre) of the Southern Zone of the Government of India over taking possession of the forest area and the structures given to a private party for building a hotel complex in Murkal in the Nagarhole National Park.

The coordination committee of the Jan Vikas Andolan, a non-governmental organisation, has sent a message to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, about the failure to enforce the order even after the fixed time limit of 45 days.

While urging the Prime Minister to take steps to enforce the order, the Andolan has said that the hotel complex, to be built by Taj Resorts in the midst of the national park, would disturb the wildlife, affect the culture of the tribal people and set a dangerous precedent.

The Prime Minister has been urged to file the orders of the Forest Department in the Supreme Court in the pending Special Leave Petition (8798/8799/97) and render justice to the tribal people and protect the forests.

The Government's stand on the issue was untenable and deplorable. How the forest officials connected with this issue had overlooked these aspects was a matter of concern, the committee has said and has urged the Prime Minister to initiate action against the officials for the violation of the Forest Conservation Act.

It may be mentioned here that the Chief Conservator of Forest passed the orders on May 28, for taking possession of the forest land and structure leased to Taj Resorts (M/s GH and GR Ltd) at Murkal and had said that it should be done in 45 days.

In the orders passed under Section 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980, the officer is believed to have not only disagreed with the proposal for the diversion of forest area of 7360.68 sq.m. for building a hotel complex in the Nagarhole Forest area, but also was of the view that the diversion of the land was not in the interest of the conservation and preservation of forests in the ecologically fragile area of Nagarhole National Park.

"It is a case of deliberate violation of the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 and the responsibility for the same needs to be fixed," the Chief Conservator of Forest has said in a communication sent to the Principal Secretary, Forests, Environment and Ecology of the Government of Karnataka, with copies marked to the Inspector General of Forests, Government of India; the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) and the Nodal Officer in the Office of the PCCF, Karnataka.

The State Government has been asked to fix the responsibility for the violation of the Act and report the action taken or proposed against the officials and officers concerned within 60 days. The violation report, as per the guidelines issued under the Forest (Conservation) Act, should also

be sent in 60 days so that the matter could be examined to initiate action against the persons concerned as per Sub-Sections 3 "A" and 3 "B" of the Forest (Conservation) Act for contravention and abetment of the provisions of Section 2 of the Act.

It may be mentioned here that an old saw mill of the State Government in Murkal was closed in 1985 and it was decided to use the existing infrastructure for running a forest lodge. Accordingly, a number of new buildings were constructed by the Karnataka Forest Development Corporation between 1986 and 1989, and major renovations were done later. A new hotel complex was established in this period and it has been leased to a private company, M/s. GG and GR Ltd, in 1992 for 18 years.

Although the State Government's proposal was for diverting 7,360.698 sq. metres of the forest area by taking only the plinth area into consideration, the Chief Conservator of Forest has come to the conclusion that the forest area used for the hotel complex was much more than what has been mentioned. The contention of the State Government that only the existing infrastructure of saw mill was utilised for the purpose of running a forest lodge was incorrect.

Plan not finalised

The Chief Conservator of Forest considers that the proposed tourism zone around Murkal complex is an afterthought to justify the setting up of a hotel complex. The management plan for

the Nagarhole National Park has not been finalised. Neither the tourism plan for the park has been prepared nor the assessment of the impact of the proposed hotel complex has been done.

In the absence of the approved management plan for protected area (National Park/Sanctuary), the management is regulated by classifying the area as a core zone, buffer zone and tourism zone and the classification cannot be done arbitrarily. The core zone having an area of 192 sq. km is notified by the Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka, by a notification on May 31 and the tourism activity was confined to two areas of buffer zone, which are located far away from Murkal complex.

The Chief Conservator of Forest has expressed his unhappiness over the opinion given by the Chief Wildlife Warden, who is a statutory authority under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, "as a matter of routine" that the hotel complex will have no adverse impact on the wildlife and its habitat. The matter has not been critically examined under the provisions of the Act of 1972 and the guidelines issued by the Union Government for eco-tourism.

The site of the hotel complex is close to the boundary of core area along the Hunsur-Nagarhole Road. Building a hotel on the site will lead to influx of a large number of tourists and people to provide ancillary facilities for the hotel complex.

It is said that the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has issued guidelines to regulate

eco-tourism in the protected areas where it is permissible, which will be subservient to and in consonance with the principle that these areas are primarily meant for conserving the genetic and natural resources. A separate tourism zone is required to be delineated for a protected area and accommodation for tourists should preferably be located outside the national parks and sanctuaries.

The location of the new hotel complex at Murkal so close to the core area is inconsistent with the guidelines issued by the Union Government for eco-tourism in protected areas, says the Chief Conservator of Forest.

It is ironical that on the one hand the State Government has a plan to relocate the tribal people living in the Nagarhole National Park but has no hesitation in leasing out the forest area for a luxury hotel complex.

As far as the no objection certificate given by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board in 1997 with some conditions, for the project, it is not clear whether the measures taken to comply with the stipulations have been assessed and also whether the consent of the Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) was taken before issuing the no objection certificate.

The State Government's stand on the use of the forest area earmarked for non-forest activities before the Forest Conservation Act came into force, is inconsistent with the provisions of the Act and the guidelines.

Neither

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION
OF NATURAL RESOURCES (NCPNR)

Coordinating Office :

Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS). "Ashadeep".

Jayanagar Cross. Saptapur. Dharwad - 580 001. Karnataka, India

No.228/SPS-233/98

16th July, 1998

Shri.S.Swatantra Rao,
Principal Secretary, Forest,
Ecology and Environment (FEE)
M.S.Building, Dr.Ambedkar Veedhi,
BANGALORE-560 001.

Dear Shri.Swatantra Rao,

Sub: Request for urgent taking over of the forest lands
within Nagarahole National Park (NNP) at Murkal
leased to the Taj Resort (M/s.Gateway Hotels and
Gateway Resorts Ltd.)

- Ref: 1) Our telegram to you and GOI dt.13.07.1998.
- 2) Letter of CCF (Central) to Principal Secretary,
Forest, Ecology & Environment (FEE), Government
of Karnataka dated 28.05.1998 and News Report
in Indian Express (June 98).
 - 3) Our Meeting with Shri.D.Manjunath, the Hon'ble
Forest Minister of Karnataka on 27.05.1998.
 - 4) Our letters to the Ministry of Environment and
Forests (MOEF), Government of India and Meeting
with Prof.Soz, Hon'ble Minister for Environment
and Forest on 21.10.1997.
 - 5) Our meeting with PCCF (Wild Life) and Chief
Wild Life Warden in August 1996.
 - 6) Book "Nagarahole for Whom ? Report of Study
Team on Nagarahole National Park and Tribals"
Published by NCPNR et. al., (April, 1997).

Thank you for giving ^{an} appointment to meet with you to
day about various environmental issues including the above
topic, when we met at the meeting of the State Level
Committee for Eastern Plains Project yesterday at Aranya
Bhavan. We hope you have already received the following
telegram sent on 13.07.1998 (Ref-1).

" WE URGE YOU TO URGENTLY TAKE OVER THE FOREST LAND
NEAR MURKAL WITHIN NAGARAHOLE NATIONAL PARK LEASED
TO TAJ RESORT AS DIRECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF

INDIA IN THE LETTER OF CCF (CENTRAL) DATED MAY 1998(.) IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO TAKE STRINGENT ACTION AGAINST OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN LEASING OF FOREST LANDS WITHOUT PRIOR PERMISSION OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AS PER FOREST CONSERVATION ACT AND OTHER IRREGULARITIES INVOLVED IN THE CASE(.) LETTER FOLLOWS.

- HIREMATH, KANGOVI AND SGALANKI
SAMAJ PARIVARTANA SAMUDAYA (SPS)

We are glad to learn that the Government of India in the Ministry of environment and Forests (MOEF), has taken a firm stand that the leasing of forest lands to the Taj Resorts. (M/s. Gateway Hotels and Gateway Resorts) is violative of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (Ammended in 1988) and have asked the State Government of Karnataka (1) to take possession of the forest lands leased to the Taj Resort within 45 days and also (2) to fix responsibilities for violation of Forest Conservation Act by the concerned officials and report the same to the Government of India.

As you know, there has been wide spread opposition to leasing of forest lands to the Taj Resort from many groups from all over India. during the last several years. We in NCPNR and Jan Vikas Andolan have been opposing such diversion of forest lands and urging both the State Government and Central Government (ref. 3, 4, 5 and 6) to cancel the lease agreement with the Taj Resort as it is not only violative of the Forest Conservation and other Acts but also detrimental to the Wildlife and the lives of tribal people living within this ecologically sensitive and important Nagarahole National Park. Infact, many well known environmental organisations like the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, Bombay Natural History Society, Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal, Chamoli and Samaj Parivartana Samudaya (SPS) - all recipient of the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar and members of NCPNR have supported the stand of the tribals of Nagarahole National Park in National Workshops held in Ooty, Tamilnadu in August 1996 and Nagpur, Maharashtra in December 1996 and written to the Government of Karnataka and Government of India.

We have also published the Book "Nagarahole for whom ? Report of a study team on Nagarahole National Park and Tribals" (April 1997) and sent the same to the various authorities we have met.

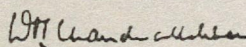
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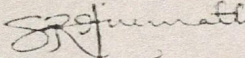
We, therefore, urge the Government of Karnataka to take immediate action (as it has been about 45 days already) the possession of the forest lands leased to the Taj Resort and take action against the officials responsible/ supporting the lease of forest lands so that it will act as a deterrent for such violation of the provisions of Forests Conservation Act by Forest Officials.

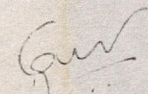
We look forward to your positive response for preserving the ecology and environment in the sensitive "Nilgiri Biosphere" (in which Nagarahole National Park is located) including the interest and culture of the tribals living in this park.

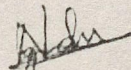
With Best Regards,

Yours sincerely,


D.M. Chandrashekar
(Former Chief Justice
of Karnataka)
Chairman, SPS.


S.R. Hiremath
President
NCPNR


Dr. Vishnu Kamath
Board Member
JVS


Nagendra Mali,
Project Officer,
SPS.

C.C.

Shri.C.P.Oberoi, Inspector General of Forest (IGF),
Government of India, Paryavaran Bhavan, C.G.O.
Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110 003.

Shri.J.N. Sexena, CCF (Central), MOEF, Southern Zone,
Regional Office, Kendriya Sadan, IV Floor, 17th Main,
II Block, Koramangala, Bangalore-560 034.

Shri.B.S.Adappa, Principal Chief Conservative of
Forest (PCCF), Aranya Bhavan, 18th Cross, Malleswaram,
Bangalore-560 003.

NGOs' hand suspected in Nagarhole fire

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, April 8.

The Minister for Forest, Mr. D.Manjunath, today denied that there was a major fire in Nagarhole National Park. He said the ground fire was the mischief of some representatives of non-government organisations.

He told presspersons here that the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr. S.K.Chakraborti, who rushed to the spot on Wednesday, reported that the fire was restricted to the dry grass prevalent in a small patch of the park forming part of the Western Ghats. This had neither disturbed the animals in the forests nor was any valuable tree lost in the fire.

A similar case was reported from the Bhadra Sanctuary in Shimoga district recently and the Government had stated that the fire was the handiwork of some vested interests. Even in the Bhadra Sanctuary there was no big loss to Government and only the dry grass had been set ablaze by the miscreants.

The Minister, who would be inspecting the Nagarhole Park next week, said efforts were on to identify the NGOs and the persons who attempted to set fire to the national park.

Asked why NGOs would indulge in such acts, the Minister said it was apparently to ensure that the tribal people remained "captive" with them. The NGOs allegedly portrayed the poor living conditions of the tribal people to their foreign sponsors, through photographs, video-graphs and literature and obtained large sum of

funds in the name of improving the living standards of the tribal people. The funds received were obviously diverted and did not reach the beneficiaries. "The NGO activists who earlier moved around in bicycles now have airconditioned cars," the Minister said.

The Government, in an effort to improve the living conditions of the tribal people, had constructed 50 houses in the area adjoining the Nagarhole National Park. Efforts were being made to construct a health dispensary and a school for the tribal people. Of the 3,500 tribal people in some of the forest areas of the State, particularly the Bhadra and the Nagarhole forests, the living conditions of the majority of them were stated to be pathetic. As per a Government scheme, the tribal people would be given two hectares each if they agreed to move out of the forest zone. The Government was committed to their improvement irrespective of the hurdles put by the NGOs.

On whether the people of Kodagu were involved in the fire at Nagarhole as was being made out by a certain section, the Minister said the local people would not indulge in such acts. They loved forests and believed in their conservation. "The fire is the handiwork of some NGOs. I do not rule out a collusion between the NGOs and the Forest Department personnel. More forest watchers will be posted in the belt will be increased during summer to keep a watch on fires," he said.

Referring to the problem at the Bhadra Sanctuary, Mr. Manjunath said while the Centre had

suggested that the Bhadra Sanctuary could be converted into a national park and had even ordered a survey, the State Government favoured the Bhadra forest should remain a sanctuary. If it was converted into a national park then the tribal people would have to be evicted. It was only to ensure that the tribal people remained in their settlements that the Government had written to the Centre to retain Bhadra as a sanctuary. The tribal people were spread over the periphery of the 63,000-hectare Bhadra sanctuary.

The Minister said he would be calling on the Union Minister for Forest, Mr. Suresh Prabhu, in New Delhi on April 16. The State Government would seek the Centre's aid for several forest related projects. It would submit a proposal for the rehabilitation of forest dwellers apart from several schemes for the development of forests. Mr. Suresh Prabhu, who was in the State recently, visited Nagarhole and Bandipur forests and was stated to have appreciated the manner in which the forest wealth was protected.

Mr. Manjunath said the forest encroachment was yet another serious problem that the Forest Department faced. It was not only in the coffee-rich Chikmagalur district but all over the State. A joint survey had been ordered into the encroachment of forests in Chikmagalur district. The personnel of the survey wing of the Forest Department, the surveyors of the Department of Survey Settlement of the State Government and the personnel of the Survey of India would conduct the survey.

RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL PARK

27/4/97

Mindh

Eco-development plan making good progress

By S.Bharath Kumar

MYSORE, APRIL 24. Despite a delayed start, the eco-development project in the Rajiv Gandhi National Park has made a fairly good progress in the last 18 months. The concept, which was evolved after the "Earth Summit" held at Rio De Janeiro in Brazil in 1993, revolves around preventing exploitation of natural resources within the national park and streamlining a programme of conservation with a holistic approach.

This project is being funded by the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It has identified seven sensitive areas in the country. The project aims at protecting the forest ecosystem, for which the Rajiv Gandhi National Park was selected in the State. National parks in Rajasthan, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat have also started similar programmes.

Preserving the bio-diversity of the forest ecosystem and ensuring alternative livelihood for people residing in and around the national park, forms the crux of the project. Disclosing the details of the programme to *The Hindu*, Dr. C.Dyvaiah, Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), said 50 per cent of the project cost of Rs.39 crores for a period of five years would come as a grant by the GEF and the balance on a soft-loan basis to the Union Government by the World Bank.

The project made a modest beginning in 1997-98. So far it was able to attain the main objectives in evolving micro-level planning in all the 96 villages around the national park, he said.

The three main components of this project are to manage a protected area of 643 sq.km of the national

park (accounting for 20 per cent of the cost), the eco-development of 96 villages (20 per cent) and research, education and awareness programmes. So far nearly Rs. 3.72 crores has been spent on the project.

This project has helped in creating better forest roads and elephant-proof trenches. Solar fencing for a stretch of nearly 25 km encompassing the periphery of the park has been completed. Dr.Dyvaiah said village-level forest committees had been constituted for which the socio-economic profile of each village was being evolved. This exercise had become necessary as the project planned to minimise inter-dependency between people and forests.

Basic amenities such as chulas and bio-gas would be provided in these villages, which would ultimately enable the implementing agency to divest dependence of people on the forest eco-system for their survival.

Active participation of the villagers in evolving village-specific micro-plans is another important component of the project. Community works will also be taken up, which in the long run are expected to make up for the shortfall in reducing the tendency of these people to use forest produce.

Replying to a query on the 1000-odd tribal people residing in the park and their role in this project, Dr.Dyvaiah said efforts were being made to impress upon them to accept the Union Government's programme of rehabilitation outside the park. As many as 30 villages had been covered by various development programmes, and micro-plans for three villages had been approved.

NGOs refute charges about forest fire

Kundli 18/4/99

By Our Staff Correspondent

MYSORE, APRIL 17. The National Front for Tribal Self-Rule and DEED Convenor, Mr. Srikanth, has demanded the State Government to hold an inquiry into the recent fire accident at the Rajiv Gandhi National Park in Nagarhole.

In his letter to the Chief Minister, Mr. J.H.Patel, copies of which were released to the Press, he refuted the allegation made by the Minister for Forest, Mr. D.Manjunath, that the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were behind the fire accident at the national park. He has pointed out that the two categories of NGOs working, as mentioned by the Minister, were the ones working at the behest of the Government for procuring funds from the World Bank and those involved with the welfare and development of tribal people by creating an awakening among them.

Mr. Srikanth has expressed concern over the Minister's allegation on the second category of NGOs, who, he said, were genuinely working for the betterment

of the tribal people. It was unfortunate that the Minister had made such false statements. When the NGOs were striving hard for the cause of the tribal people and in preventing private hotel managements to procure forest lands, attempts were being made to sully their image.

The Minister's allegation showed that he was unaware of the plight of the tribal people. He was going by the versions of the Forest Department officials. A high-level inquiry should be ordered to find out the truth. This would bring to light the misdeeds of some officers in the park area, Mr. Srikanth said.

Mr. J.P.Raju, Convenor of the Budakattu Krishikara Sangha, in a letter to the Chief Minister, has threatened to launch an agitation if an inquiry was not initiated into the allegations levelled against the NGOs by the Minister. It would have been appropriate if the Minister had ordered a probe into the fire accident at the national park instead of casting aspersions on NGOs which were working for the welfare of the tribal people, he added.

To move out or to stay is their dilemma

Hinder

By Our Staff Reporter

3/13/99

MADIKERI, March 30.

They are the people with freak looks, close to Mongolian. They have high cheek bones, short and flat noses, small and deepest eyes, curly and knotted hairs, thick lips and are medium sized with dark complexion. To these striking characteristics belong the tribal people of Nagarahole National Park who have made the jungle their home since ages.

The tribal people or adivasis, popularly referred to as "budakattu janaru" have remained an exploited lot for centuries. The adivasi traditions and culture have been recognised as touchstone of value systems of world civilisation. At Nagarahole they live in thatched huts, exposed to attacks from wild animals. Their cup of woe is full in monsoon. Now, adivasis have become an integral part of the eco-system.

Caught in the vortex of restrictions by the Forest Department on one side which does not allow them to hunt game and collect fuel wood, and the indecision on their part whether to move out of the forests or not on the other, the tribal people are now a harried lot. Abject poverty, illiteracy, blind beliefs and superstitions, diseases have plagued them for long. The Government is aware of the difficulties in relocating them.

The Nagarahole National Park (now rechristened as Rajiv Gandhi Park) in Karnataka is spread over 643.39 sq. km. in Kodagu and Mysore districts. An acclaimed bio-reserve for hardwood, the park is the home for a variety of beasts including tigers and elephants. Langur, hyena, gaur, fox, spotted deer, civet, wild boars and fowls are abundantly seen here. According to available documents, the Jenu Kurubas, Betta Kurubas, Yeravas and Paniyeravas of Nagara-

hole are said to be living there since the Seventh Century. According to 1988 census, there are 6,888 adivasis living inside the park.

Unfortunately, the existence of the tribal people who have nurtured an unbreakable bond with the nature is at stake. They feel that efforts are on to push them out of their "homeland" by the Government in the garb of initiating eco-development of the park area. A few non-governmental organisations have taken up cudgels against the authorities giving a new hope to the tribal people who are living in constant fear of displacement.

Goaded by the NGOs, the tribal youth organised themselves into different bodies. The Nagarahole Budakattu Janara Hakkusthapana Samiti, Budakattu Krishikara Sangha, Karnataka Rajya Moolanivasi Janara Vedike and FEDINA-VIKASA were born. The adivasis see the efforts by the World Bank sponsored Eco-Development Project as a definite move to oust them from their traditional homeland and a direct assault on their culture.

"We have our temples here. Our burial grounds and sepulchres of ancestors are here. We cannot leave behind our medicinal plants", says Mr. J.L.Subramani, Convenor of the Nagarahole Budakattu Janara Hakkusthapana Samiti. If any development of the adivasis is to take place it should happen at the place where they live and not by shunting them out of forests, he argues. But, understandably, providing a school, health centre, ration depot and other amenities, in a bid to bring them to the mainstream is not possible inside the forests, particularly after the forest and environment conservation assumed global significance.

Ironically, the previous experiments of relocating the tribal people in different places to ease

the pressure on the park zone has ended in failure. It is said that between 1975 and 1984, 34 adivasi hadis (colonies) were dislocated by the Forest Department from the Nagarahole forests. Nearly 2,000 adivasi families that were cultivating over 5,000 acres of forest land had to leave. But, in the process, lands were allegedly grabbed by others.

The alleged take over of lands cultivated for centuries by the adivasis by the Forest Department in the Eighties in several colonies in Kodagu such as Nanachi, Gonigadde, Madenooru and Ganagooru are cited as brutal assaults on the tribal people. They fear any move to oust them would endanger their cultural identity. They feel that they have been alienated by the department. Quick to react to these developments are the members of the present generation, unlike the older generation which is unruffled by the goings-on.

The friction now appears to be more between the NGOs supporting and opposing the relocation plan than the Government or the World Bank agency. The Rangasamudra-based Living Inspiration for Tribals (LIFT) and the Thithimathi-based Indian Institute of Tribal Education, both in Kodagu, have been supporting the relocation plan. The are out to rehabilitate a few tribal families on an experimental basis.

On the other hand, the Kushalnagar-based Coorg Organisation for Development (CORD) in Kodagu, Hunsur-based DEED and Heggdavanakote-based FEDINA-VIKASA in Mysore district have been championing the cause of the tribal people to stay put.

Ultimately, it is up to the Government — which is reportedly ready with a draft relocation plan and funds — to tread carefully, but only with the consent of the adivasis.

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The work is being carried out by only 25 per cent of the required staff strength, making it vulnerable to various illegal activities

Staff shortage hits protection work at Nagarahole National Park

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
FEB 27

HAS the protection work in the world famous Nagarahole National Park deteriorated of late making the park vulnerable to poachers and smugglers?

The recent smuggling incident at Kallahalla range, where teak worth over Rs 25 lakh was smuggled right from under the nose of forest department officials is a case in point. A recent visit to the park by members of the 'Project Tiger Steering

Committee' (PTSC) strengthens these fears.

Nagarahole National Park was recently brought under India's ambitious plan to conserve tigers in the wild — 'Project Tiger'. The park would henceforth be called the 'Nagarahole-Bandipur' Tiger Reserve. The PTSC team visited the park to assess the situation in Nagarahole and gather sufficient data for future course of action to implement Project Tiger programmes.

The findings of the Committee were shocking, to say the least. The team found that protection (vigilance) work at Nagarahole was being carried out by only 25

per cent of the required staff strength. This has made one of the best parks in the world vulnerable for various illegal activities like illicit felling, bam-

boo-cutting and poaching. The team has further pointed out that the World Bank-GEF funded Eco-Development Project

at Nagarahole — initiated two-and-a-half years ago — had done more damage to the park than improving its habitat. The EDP had drawn forest staff involved in protection work for programme-implementation.

Earlier, the Nagarahole National Park had a staff shortage of upto 50 per cent in certain ranges, as is the case in any other park. Two-and-a-half years ago, the World Bank pumped in Rs 35 Crore to conserve the bio-diversity in the region through eco-development programmes. The forest department had furnished the

necessary manpower to implement the programme and the staff were drawn from the Nagarahole Park to assist implementation of the project. Sources said that the department had overlooked the Centre's direction which holds that the main objective of the department should be protection and that "no protection staff should be used for eco-development projects." This resulted in damage to the park and the protection work was neglected since the last two-and-a-half years. Director of PTSC Valmik Thapar, who was part of the visiting team, told this newspaper

that such a lapse was visible. "We are submitting a report to the Centre," he said.

"Protection is the key word for eco-development. Eco-development is not carrying out romantic activity in rural areas and it is sad to see the forest department officials acting as 'village coddlers' than attending to field problems concerning protection," Thapar said.

"There is no point in sinking crores of rupees in the name of eco-development. We need the forest department personnel to work in the field rather than take up and eco-development programmes."

DATELINE

BANGALORE

POACHING / TREES SMUGGLED OUT OF NAGARAHOLE TIGER RESERVE

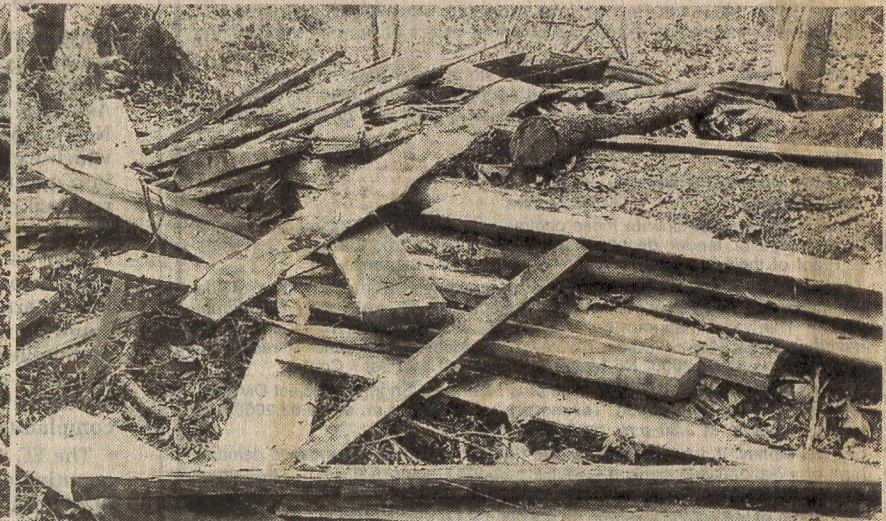
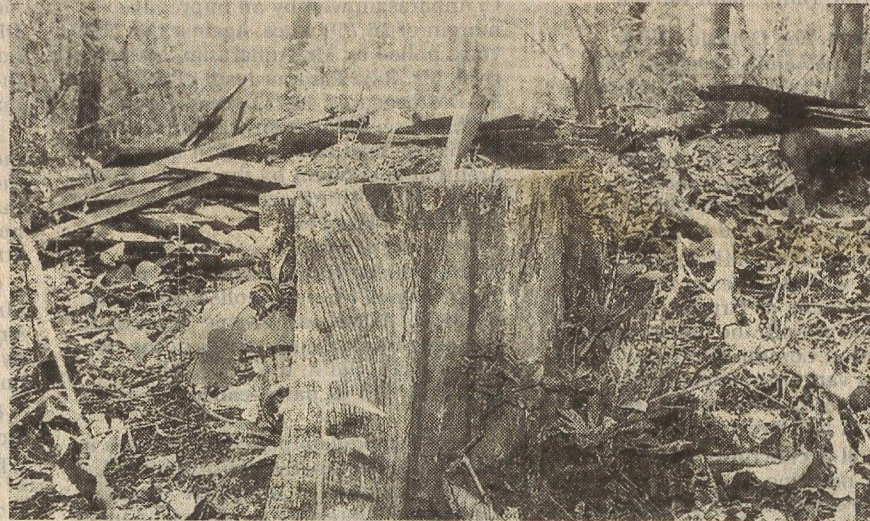
Plunder of precious timber comes as a shock

By K.Jeevan Chinnappa

NAGARAHOLE NATIONAL PARK (KODAGU), FEB. 25. Close on the heels of the good news that the Nagarahole National Park is being declared a Project Tiger Reserve by the Union Ministry of Forests and Environment, the news of plunder of precious trees from a cluster in one of its ranges has come as a shock.

As many as 12 pristine teak trees and another jungle wood variety have been smuggled out from the Kolangere section of the Kallalla range of the Nagarahole National Park by smugglers. The tragedy is: The place of devastation is hardly 700 feet from the patrolling road. Compounding the inglorious act is the hiding of sawn timber in a old "Ane Kappa" (elephant pit), hardly 50 meters away from the patrolling road. And, it is said that this could have not been done without the connivance of the Forest Department personnel. This correspondent visited the spot on Thursday and found a huge quantity of sawn timber left behind as waste. Large quantities of cheap liquor bottles and meat masala packets corroborate the theory that smugglers had pitched a camp there almost for months. A huge saw pit dug up by the plunderers speaks volumes of the slackness of the Forest Department. A vast forest area has been cleaned up of trees. This could very well be the tip of a iceberg.

Mr. K.M.Chinnappa and Mr. Thammu Poovaiah, both members of the Coorg Wildlife Society were at hand to measure the stems of the smuggled trees. An estimated quantity of 35 cubic metres (around 1,240 cft.) have been taken away by the smugglers. Going by the market value of Rs. 1,400 per cft. for first quality teak, the value could well be around Rs.



A teak tree (left) felled, and a deep pit (right) dug up by smugglers to saw off teak timber at the Kallalla range of the Nagarahole National Park, now a tiger reserve, in Kodagu.

18 lakhs. The sawn timber seized from the elephant pit could itself be valued between Rs. three lakhs to four. The waste should take the total value to around Rs. 25 lakhs.

Mr. Thammu Poovaiah pointed out that girth of as many as seven trees measured over two metres indicating they were mature trees. The value of the timber, however, pales into insignificance when the issue of safeguarding precious forest wealth of the nation is concerned.

The transgression by smugglers could not have gone without the notice of the Kallalla range forest personnel, says Mr. Chinnappa. But for the alertness of Mr. K.M.Chinnappa, who is a retired Range Forest Officer (RFO) of the Nagarahole Park, the pillage would not have come to

light on February 23, leading to a startling discovery of the tree plunder, said to be first of its kind in the park's history.

The Kallalla RFO, Mr. S.R.E.Bukhari told THE HINDU that following recovery of a piece of sawn timber on the patrolling road on December 23 last, a search was carried out, and 27 sawn pieces that had been dumped in the elephant pit were recovered. A visit to Murkal close by revealed the sawn pieces deposited in a ramshackle room. That the RFO and his men were unable to trace the specific location of pillage is surprising. The bordering Nittur-Mallur village is just four km away from the spot. It is presumed that all the timber was carried on headloads. The location was identified only after the Forest Mobile Squad combed

the area on February 23. The squad was alerted by the Deputy Commissioner, who had received a complaint from the Budakattu Krishikara Sangha (BKS), a tribal organisation in the park. The BKS altered the Wildlife Assistant Conservator of Forests here on December 29. An enquiry was conducted by him in January but to no avail. Owing to this, the BKS brought the matter to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner on January 14. What the Forest Department personnel could not see, the Jenu Kurubas (tribal people) could.

The Assistant Conservator of Forests of the Squad, Mr. R.N.Naik told THE HINDU that the Mobile Squad conducted an intensive search and unravelled the area of devastation. Mr. Naik said an FIR

was filed at the court here on February 24. Investigation would be taken up by the squad and the culprits booked. According to the value estimated by the squad, it could be just around Rs. three lakhs. Trees estimated up to 12 cubic metres only were stolen.

The Kallalla RFO opines that felling and smuggling could have occurred during the monsoon, but this has been turned down by Mr. Chinnappa, who has the minutest details available of the flora and fauna in the park. The felling has definitely taken place in December, he says. If the trees were to be cut down in monsoon, the waste timber should have gathered fungus. By examining the saw marks, at least, three groups of people could have been engaged for sawing.

Kunder 17/2/2020

Nagarahole park to be declared Tiger reserve

By S.Bharath Kumar

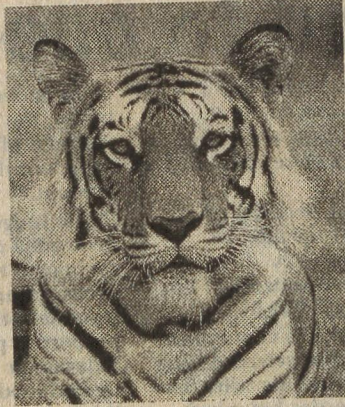
MYSORE, FEB. 16. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has decided to declare the Nagarahole National Park as a "Project Tiger Reserve", making it the third such reserve in the State. The other two project tiger reserves are the Bandipur National Park and the Bhadra National Park. A communique to this effect was in receipt of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Karnataka, today.

Official sources told *The Hindu* that the declaration would give the much required fillip for tiger conservation in the State. The issue had witnessed a protracted debate.

The Nagarahole National Park, after being declared as a game sanctuary encompassing nearly 646 sq.km of area, gradually blossomed into one of the country's finest national parks.

The undulating terrain with several perennial and seasonal streams and tanks, and the rich tropical forest eco-system with lush green swamps and numerous water resources, make this park a veritable habitat for a variety of wildlife.

The Bandipur National Park was one among the first nine to have been declared as a "Project



Tiger Reserve" in the country. This park, with an area of 880 sq.km, is endowed with a moderate climate and diverse geographical features and supports a variety of flora and fauna.

Sources said that with the Nagarahole National Park being brought under the Project Tiger, the conservation programme of tigers would assume greater importance, considering the long contiguous habitat. Also, the continuity in the vast forest expanse with similar habitats at both the Bandipur and Nagarahole parks would simplify the entire process of managing and conserving the tigers.

The Nagarahole National Park

situated within the districts of Mysore and Kodagu, does have a viable tiger population. The 1999 census has revealed that the park houses nearly 65 tigers, while the Bandipur park has as many as 80 tigers. The Nagarahole park will be the 26th tiger reserve in the country.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, while declaring this as a project tiger reserve in its communique to the State Forest Department, has insisted that both the Bandipur and the Nagarahole Tiger reserves should come under a single unified administration.

Sources pointed out that if both the national parks undertook development works like the eco-development project, it would enable expediting the process of effective conservation of tigers in both the areas. At Nagarahole, the eco-development programme is being funded by the Global Environment Fund and the World Bank under the India Eco-Development Project, while a similar project at Bandipur is being funded by the State.

The declaration of the Nagarahole National Park as a project tiger reserve will result in the common projects like the Project Tiger, the Nilgiris Biosphere and the Beneficiary Oriented Tribal

Development Scheme coming under the same umbrella. Having such common schemes for both the areas would also ensure speedy and effective implementation.

With both the parks recognised as the best and ideal habitat for Asian elephants, the project tiger programme would now receive added attention, thus meeting the objective of constituting tiger reserves.

Official sources said that both the national parks would retain their individual identity, despite the fact that the project tiger programme would now be implemented simultaneously at both these parks under a unified administration. The funding pattern would be separate for both these tiger reserves, thus disputing the claim that under a unified administration separate funding would not be possible.

It is now for the State Government to work out the modalities in carrying out the directions of the Union Forest Ministry. The dual benefit expected out of a unified administration is the possibility of redeployment of staff from one park to another and also giving additional impetus in tiger conservation programmes, sources said.

Nagarhole

Hindu 2/2/2000

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION / UNREST IN THE FORESTS

Tribal people growing conscious of their rights

By Vijaykumar Patil

NAGARHOLE, FEB. 1. Despite the commendable progress made in science and technology in the five decades after Independence, the country inevitably has an uncompleted agenda of achieving self-sufficiency, which only a minuscule section of the largest democracy of the world has achieved.

At the same time, these preceding decades have been marked by rampant human rights violations. The worst victims of such violations are the poor and socially-economically weak, especially women and children belonging to these sections.

Still worse is the situation of the adivasis. If what has befallen the adivasis in the Western Ghats, including the Nagarhole and Bandipur national parks, is any indication, a human rights activist will coin it as "a very bad souvenir."

The concentration of tribe people is said to be the largest in India in the world, next to Africa. There are 416 tribal communities with a 6.78 crore population comprising about eight per cent of the country's population as per the 1991 Census. The tribal people in the State consist of 54 communities comprising 4.97 per cent of the State's population.

Prominent and original adivasis in the State are the *Jenu Kuruba, Betta Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba, Soliga, Irula, Koraga, Halararu, Hakkipikki*, etc. These people mostly live in the hills and are found mainly in the Western Ghats in Mysore, Kodagu, South Kanara, Chikmagalur and Chamarnagar districts.

A brief retrospection shows how certain development programmes initiated by the State and Union Governments have become a "curse" to the 6,680 adivasis families in the Bandipur and Nagarhole forests.

As a result of the Centre converting forests into national parks through the Wild Life Protection Act (1972), adivasis in Bandipur and Nagarhole were affected and 3,000 families from Bandipur and 3,680 from Nagarhole were evicted in 1972-94.



Adivasis of Nagarhole...uniting for a common cause.

Most of the evictions allegedly took place during night hours in contravention of the law.

Meanwhile, there were evictions from the forest areas following construction of big and small irrigation dams such as the Kabini, Nugu, Taraka under which 18 tribal hadis were submerged. Under what is called a rehabilitation package, the Government provided 1,400 acres of land and 150 houses to 500 families in Hunsur and H.D.Kote, under different schemes.

The minimum education and health facilities, which the Government claims to have provided, are only in namesake. Even when allotting lands, the beneficiaries have been farmers from non-tribal groups. Incidentally, the then State Government conducted a survey of affected families and classified only eight members as belonging to a tribe.

As a consequence, most of the adivasis lost their traditional homes in the forest and became houseless. They lost their natural resource base and traditional rights

over them and turned into "direct and indirect" bonded labourers.

In the process, the food gathering and hunting community has been converted into a serving and hired labour one. Their evictions from the forest transformed their forest-based economy into a labour economy. Now they suffer from insecurity and loss of identity and dignity.

There were reports of various atrocities ranging from arson, physical assault to rape of tribal women allegedly by men in uniform. Such incidents, which are contained in police records, are pending before courts.

On its part, the Government, according to the Conservator of Forests, Dr. C.D.Dyavaiah, speaking on the latest move to relocate and resettle tribal people in the Nagarhole National Park under the World Bank-aided eco-development programme, that the country has been left with only four per cent of reserve forests with wildlife and other natural resources.

Under the rehabilitation package, the

Government is providing Rs.1 lakh towards five acres of land, a house and assisting tribal people in rehabilitation under the Beneficiary Oriented Tribal Development Programme (BOTDP). Still, 1,550 tribal families are living in the Nagarhole Park, of which 51 were rehabilitated in Nagapura (Veerahosahalli) near the Gurupura Tibetan settlement, in June 1999.

Rehabilitation has not been forced upon them but implemented following concurrence on part of the tribal people. Two hundred more families will be rehabilitated in the next financial year.

But, Mr. Srikant points out that of the 51 families, 28 are employees of the Forest Department. Even this has been done after forcing out 75 families which had occupied the houses in response to the rehabilitation package.

Therefore, though the objective of protecting the depleting forest cover is a national priority, can it be at the cost of a community? The Governments in the State had not bothered to implement the recommendations of the Bhuria Committee, which were accepted by the Deve Gowda Government at the Centre, and which could have solved most of the problems not only of the tribal people but also those pertaining to villages.

The most significant development at the turn of the Century, as far as the fight against human rights violations is concerned, is that the illiterate tribal people are growing conscious of their constitutional and traditional rights and are organising themselves to fight against injustice.

Their opposition to the establishment of a five-star resort in Moorkal in Nagarhole is a testimony of this, thanks to the roles played by NGOs and the United Nations in creating awareness of human rights among them. A recent meeting held among the tribal leaders and NGOs working in and around Nagarhole observed that there is a growing unrest among the tribal people who have lost faith in the Government.

Nagarahole: There is some cause for cheer

By Alladi Jayasri

NAGARAHOLE, MAY 16. April-May in the 640-sq.km Nagarahole or Rajiv Gandhi National Park is that time of the year when all its denizens must stand up and be counted. Noted for its assemblage of seven large ungulate species and three large predatory carnivores — the tiger, leopard and dhole or wild dog, Nagarahole is an inspiring story of how a forest that was being poached and timber-logged out of existence turned into good news for the equally endangered tiger in a matter of two decades.

Volunteers are currently engaged in "line-transecting". They pan out in pairs in straight lines drawn across the forest, and their job is to record all the herbivores (particularly the tiger's prey, such as the gaur, sambar and chital). Calculations made using the compass and a range-finder tell whether the prey-predator ratio in a 100 sq.km area is proper.

This annual exercise began in the mid-Eighties. After studies on the tiger, Dr. K.Ullas Karanth, wildlife biologist and tiger specialist, concluded that interventions in the interest of the tiger must include knowledge of predator-prey equations and how the right balance can be achieved.



The number of tigers is at a healthy level in Nagarahole.

Fifteen years on, there is some cause for cheer. Nagarahole is a habitat that the tiger loves, and scientific interventions pay in forest regeneration. Line-transecting, radio telemetry studies, camera-trapping, and the archaic pug-mark studies, scat and hair analysis, have generated enough information that say the tiger in Nagarahole is certainly not in its death throes. The number of tigers has

remained at a consistent 12- 13 per 100 sq.km, and managers have ensured that the herbivore population of 60-70 hoofed animals to sustain the tiger is maintained. Over two decades of a passionate pursuit of the tiger has taught Dr. Karanth many things. Tropical forests and their fauna are under increasing pressure to meet the resource needs of growing human populations, and crying for benign

intervention from science. And difficult though the task is, conservation of herbivores (ungulates and primates weighing more than 5 kg.) is crucial, because apart from being economic, nutritional and aesthetic resources, large herbivores directly or indirectly affect forest structure, its regeneration and consequently, other animal species.

Herbivores are found in relatively low densities, and have unique habitat needs, apart from having crop-raiding tendencies and the fact that they are often consumed by local people. Wildlife managers have long known this, and have in the past two decades particularly, claimed significant success in increasing large herbivore densities in nature reserves. Dr. Karanth says curbing forest fires, logging, poaching and livestock grazing, while developing water resources are the traditional "treatment" methods used.

Wildlife managers have, till recently, lacked the necessary professional skills to collect quantitative data using valid or scientific methods to substantiate these claims and formulate management strategies.

This has formed the main thrust of Dr. Karanth's twenty-year tryst with the tiger in Nagarahole.

This is how Dr. Karanth paints the big picture: Nagarahole's assemblage of

large herbivores include the muntjac, chital, sambar, the four-horned antelope, gaur, wild pig, the Asian elephant, and the two primates, bonnet macaque and the hanuman langur.

Having decided that the viable wildlife management strategies require ensuring a forest clear of human populations, and safe from forest fires, apart from ensuring a prey base that keeps the tiger population at healthy levels, he set about obtaining baseline estimates of the population structure, density and bio-mass of the nine species of large herbivores in the area.

Dr. Karanth says these estimates also facilitate ecological comparisons among species and habitats, and could help in evolving large herbivore populations in other tropical forests.

In the process of establishing standards and practices in wildlife management, he has also set an agenda for drawing upon the vast, but unmarshalled constituency of "volunteer naturalists", who are already ensuring that the annual exercise of counting tigers, determining prey-density becomes a spontaneous exercise in updating vital information necessary to wildlife management, and pitching in with time and interest to recover forests for wildlife.

Steps to prevent fire in Nagarahole National Park

By K.Jeevan Chinnappa

NAGARAHOLE NATIONAL PARK (KODAGU DT.), MARCH 29. As in the past, this summer too, the gates of the Nagarahole National Park (now a Tiger Reserve), have been closed to visitors since March 15. This is mainly to prevent forest fires which normally occur from March to May.

As usual, "firelines" are being burnt in the Nagarahole range of the National Park in Kodagu. Broad strips are being cleared in vulnerable areas of the forest, criss-crossing at suitable intervals, and burnt. This is called a fireline. Even in the case of outbreak of fire, it will not cross the fireline, thus helping to stop it from spreading.

Various reasons have been proffered for the cause of forest fires, but, it is not known definitely why they break out. The custodians of forests keep their fingers crossed in summer as fires may be reported from any corner of the forest. The hostility of the people towards the stringent implementation of the forest rules, (when they find themselves evicted from encroached forest areas) has resulted in the deliberate setting of fire to forests. People setting the Nagarahole range forest afire in protest against the killing of a poacher in the early 90s and the subsequent huge loss of forest wealth is hard to erase from memory.

Dr. N.A.Prakash, Professor of Forest Biology and Wildlife, College of Forestry, Ponnampet, says that poachers may throw beedi or cigarette stubs that can set off a



A fireline made to prevent the spread of forest fires in the Nagarahole range of the Nagarahole National Park in Kodagu.

fire in a jiffy. They may also kill game and roast it over a fire but leave the spot without extinguishing the flames.

He does not, however, attach much credibility to the theory that lightning or rubbing of bamboo trees against one another can start a fire in summer. It is also said that villagers cause fire in the forests to burn the withered grass and ensure a flush

The watchers are ordinary tribal people who live in the forests. They lack sophisticated communication equipment to convey the message of a fire immediately after noticing it. By the time the news is conveyed and the team arrives at the spot, the fire may have devastated a large area.

The Nagarahole Range Forest Officer, Mr. Poovaiah, says that there are 43 fire watchers on duty in the Nagarahole range of the National Park. Some of them have been given a 20-litre sprayer cans to deal with emergency cases of forest fire. A strict vigil is being maintained in Nagarahole both in the core and the tourism zone. The two vehicles used for taking the tourists around and a jeep are now being used to keep a vigil in the range.

The Madikeri Deputy Conservator of Forests, Mr. B.P.Ravi, says that fire can wreak havoc not only on the precious forest wealth but also endanger wildlife. It will also cause loss of soil fertility and destroy bio-diversity. Mr. Ravi has appealed to the people to cooperate with the Forest Department to contain fire outbreaks.

The gates of the Nagarahole National Park will be opened only after the park receives a couple of good showers, Mr. Poovaiah says. The Nagarahole range has about 15 to 17 tigers with a good population of spotted deer and elephants. According to a census, there are 65 tigers in the park area, apart from the regular game such as wild boar, sambhar, gaur, langur, reptiles, barking deer, peacocks and so on.

carpet of green grass for cattle to graze after the forest receives a couple of good showers.

How well are our guardians of the forest equipped to tackle and extinguish forest fires which have now become an annual occurrence? There are no high water-towers to splash water from top or powerful telescopes to keep a watch on forest fires.

Plunder of forest wealth continues

By Jeevan Chinnappa

Hindu
9/4/2000
MADIKERI, APRIL 8. The plunder of forest wealth on the Kodagu side of the Nagarahole National Park continues unabated. Apart from the report on tree felling in the Kallalla range of the park (*The Hindu, February 25*), destruction of trees, including teak, from various sections of the range has come to light.

According to information available with *The Hindu*, seven cases of tree felling in the range were lodged with the wildlife wing of the Forest Department at Hunsur on Friday. Four personnel — the Range Forest Officer, S.R.E. Bukhari, the Forester, Honnappa, and two guards — were suspended for dereliction of duty resulting in the smuggling of 12 teak trees.

It has been found that 28 teak trees were cut down and smuggled from one section on the Kallalla-Veeranahosalli border. An estimate put the value of the trees at over Rs. 35 lakhs.

The Deputy Conservator of Forests, Forest Mobile Squad, Mr. C.A. Devaraj, was informed by the office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangalore, of a petition by the Kodagu Ekikarana Ranga (KER) about the incident. Mr. Devaraj said that he visited the section for investigation, and found the girth of two trees cut down by the poachers to be exceeding two metres. The rest had a girth of less than one metre.

The KER came to know about the incident from tribal organisations such as the Budakattu Krishikara Sangha and Budakattu Janara Hakku Sthapana Samiti of Nagarahole and the tribal people of Kolangere and Murkal Hadi.

The Virajpet division officials from Ponnampet range seized 10 teak logs near Mallur village in March. The logs are suspected to have been stolen from a section in the Kallalla range. Meanwhile, the tribal people are holding a senior official of the wildlife wing of the department at

Hunsur responsible for the pillage. The KER has identified the sections in the range from where teak was stolen.

The petition by the organisation states that lower level officers and personnel were being made "scapegoats". It adds that at least 1,000 branches of teak were stolen from the sections such as Kallalla, Mathigod and Veeranahosalli in the range.

It is believed that the smugglers, who is said to have good knowledge of the forest, are from Kodagu District. The department is gathering evidence to nab the culprits, it is learnt.

The modus operandi of the smugglers involved cutting down the trees, digging a pit for sawing the timber and transporting the logs. The allegations levelled by the tribal people that the Forest Department personnel were involved in the incident gains credence as areas from where timber has been smuggled are close to the roads used by the latter for patrolling.

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Madi 28/6/2000

Poacher killed in encounter

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, JUNE 27. A poacher was killed in an exchange of fire with the Forest Department personnel at Maralukandi, five km away from the Thithimathi range of the Nagarahole National Park in Kodagu, shortly after midnight on Monday. Two poachers have been apprehended.

The poacher killed was identified as Malayalee Shashi (30). He was one of the members of the five member team that sneaked into the forests from Sulugodu village, near Gonicoppa, in Kodagu.

The Kodagu Superintendent of Police, Mr. Seemant Kumar Singh, who was monitoring the case after it was registered at the Ponnampet police station on Tuesday morning told *The Hindu*, that the Forest Department team was being led by Mr. Alexander, the Range Forest Officer, wildlife wing, Thithimathi range.

The team heard gun shots while patrolling on Monday midnight. They flashed the torch in the area, upon which the poachers opened fire at them. The team retaliated fire and soon silence pervaded the area. Since it was dark they could not pursue the incident.

V. Palanki

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28/5/2000

Tiger conservation strategies a success in Nagarahole

By Alladi Jayasri

NAGARAHOLE, MAY 27. The regeneration of parts of the Nagarahole forest in the last two decades thanks to interventions in moving forest-dependent communities out of the forests, preventing forest fires, and cracking down on wildlife poaching, disproves the popular perception that preservation of wildlife is inimical to economic development.

The Nagarahole experiment which commands benign intervention by science, as well as a fairly good record of enforcement by the Government, also makes out a strong case for the sustainable landscapes on which to build site-specific and enduring tiger conservation strategies.

It also highlights the fact that the two concerned human groups — the champions of livelihood rights of people living in tiger habitats and the advocates of the tiger's right to survive — share the same goal.

Tiger conservationists and wildlife managers today acknowledge that the tiger as the focus of conservation is the best thing that could have happened to forests. The focus had been so far on reducing human and livestock population densities within protected areas. Preventing or regulating of biomass removal through hunting, grazing and wood harvesting and burning is another widely-adopted intervention in forest recovery.

The tiger biologist Dr. K. Ullas Karanth, who has studied the dynamics of tiger and prey populations from 1986, says the Nagarahole experiment, in fact, is remarkable for interventions that have led to increased prey densi-

ties in two ways: firstly, they have increased survival rates of ungulates through depression due to hunting pressure. Secondly, they have increased the ungulate reproduction rate due to improved habitat conditions.

In 1967, a Wildlife Protection Wing was formed, although the anti-hunting laws were weak, and poorly enforced.

It was only in 1974 that the anti-poaching laws became more stringent, and Nagarahole was upgraded as a national park. From 1970 onwards, serious initiatives and interventions were put in place to restore Nagarahole to its pristine glory as a forest.

These included demarcating a core zone area and regulating forest product exploitation after prodding from conservationist groups. It has taken the best part of two decades to remove human settlements and co-opt these communities in forest regeneration work.

In retrospect, the population densities of ungulate species have increased significantly. Dr. Karanth puts this down to on-ground anti-hunting measures and habitat protection. He started out in 1986 estimating the initial tiger population to be around 20 including five cubs at the beginning of population recovery. Consistent monitoring of tigers and the interventions on their behalf have now raised tiger density to around 12 per 100 sq. km, while prey density is around 60 to 70 animals including gaur, chital and sambhar.

Dr. Karanth and his associate, Mr. Madhusudhan, who documented hunting patterns practised by different groups of local people, have determined that un-

gulate survival rates are depressed due to the following reasons: Active searching on foot at night and shooting using spotlights; daytime shooting or netting with the help of dogs; night-shooting at spots that attract ungulates; wire-snare and baited explosives to trap animals on forest trails; vehicle movement along public access roads close to the park; stealing predator kills; and predation by domestic dogs kept by people living in the park.

The measures initiated by the park staff to control these paid off, whether it was through anti-poaching patrols on the beat round the clock, or mobile patrols on elephant back to go where gunshots were heard, or an ambush on routes used by poachers.

After the movement of human settlements out of the forest began, with initiatives from the Government and encouragement from NGOs, there was a dramatic reduction in hunting pressure. The conversion to monocultures of teak was reversed.

Today, Nagarahole boasts of a healthy tiger-predator ratio. The reversion of "hadlus," where tribal people cultivated rice, to natural swamp grass has increased the carrying capacity of the area for ungulates.

Water holes have helped most ungulates, while short-grass clearings have benefited chital. So has the elimination of cattle grazing. Manmade fires have been suppressed through direct and indirect methods.

The reduction of the intensity of market-linked exploitation of forest products has recarved Nagarahole both as a forest and as a tiger habitat.

Hindu

3/6/2000

3 predator species at same density level in Nagarahole

By R.Krishna Kumar

MYSORE, JUNE 2. The Nagarahole National Park has emerged as one of the few protected areas in the country that can boast of harbouring three species of predators at the same level of density. Dr.Ullas Karanth of Wildlife Conservation Society of New York says it is rare to find three different species of predators with an identical population range in a single forest area as in the Nagarahole National Park which is today home to a healthy and a viable tiger, leopard and dhole population.

Dr. Karanth attributes this to the presence of prey species of different size. Studies have proved that Kaziranga has the highest density of large prey at 16.9 animals per sq. km. followed by Pench with 11.0 animals per sq. km. Nagarahole with had 8.7 animals per sq. km. and Kanha with 4.5 animals per sq. km. The larger prey species favour the presence of tigers which prefer them to the smaller prey species. The larger prey constitutes the Indian gaur, wild buffalo, nilgai, sambhar and barasingha. The figures for medium sized prey species for Nagarahole is 41.4 animals per sq. km. whereas it is 41.2 for Kaziranga, 52.8 for Pench and 52.2 for Kanha.

It is the presence of large, medium and small prey animals alone that can support large predators such as tigers, medium-sized predators such as leopards and small predators like dholes. In the absence of adequate large number of prey species, the leopards tend to predominate in the region while the tiger population tends to dip. If the protected areas have an abundance of small prey animals such as the muntjac to the exclusion of other prey animals, then one can safely



Tigers are supported only by the presence of large, medium and small prey.

assume that the area will not harbour a viable tiger population whereas leopards and dholes can survive. However, studies carried out at the Kanha and Kaziranga national parks have also proved that in the absence of large prey species, even

tigers have a tendency to shift their preference to medium-sized animals supported by the smaller ones. In such a scenario, the number of leopards comes down as in Kanha and Kaziranga. But in Nagarahole, there is a sufficient prey base

of all sizes to favour the co-existence of all the three types of predators making it one of the few such spots in the country, according to Dr. Karanth. Long-term studies conducted by wildlife biologists in the Nagarahole National Park have

proved the prevalence of a prey density which can be rated as among the highest in the country. The Nagarahole national park today compares with Kaziranga in Assam and Kanha and Pench in Madhya Pradesh in terms of abundance and size of prey species which is crucial to maintain a viable predator population.

The prey density estimation is an exercise undertaken by wildlife biologists to arrive at the prey density figures for prey animal species by employing the line-transect method.

This involves sampling by recording the number of clusters of animals sighted, the size of the clusters, distance of the animals from the point where it was sighted using a range finder and the angle of sighting, which is measured with a compass.

The line transects in Nagarahole were laid more than 10 years ago by Dr.Ullas Karanth and have been carried out regularly by a team of volunteers. This involves walking along the transects twice a day recording details of the animals sighted.

The exercise is carried out for nearly three weeks after which the data is fed into a computer for statistical analysis. The line transect method is one of the most reliable and statistically rigorous methods of arriving at the figures for prey density and is employed worldwide by wildlife biologists.

Prey density estimation at Nagarahole has also given wildlife conservationists a reliable benchmark or yard stick with which the health of the national park and its eco-system can be compared.

The statistics of the prey base is also a pointer to estimate if the conservation practices adopted in a national park have been working favourably.

NATAKA/REGI

^{22/3/00} RFO suspended in teak smuggling case

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, MARCH 21. The Range Forest Officer (RFO) of the Kallalla range, Nagarahole National Park, has been suspended for dereliction of duty in connection with the smuggling of teak from that range recently, according to information received here on Tuesday.

With this, the number of forest personnel who have been suspended has gone up to four. Earlier, the Forester and two senior guards were suspended in connection with the case. Sources from the wildlife wing of the Forest Department on Tuesday confirmed that a suspension order was served on the Kallalla RFO, Mr. S.R.E. Bukhari on Monday (March 20). The order was issued by the office of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangalore.

Following this development, the RFO of the Nagarahole range of the national park, Mr. Ajjikuttira Poovaiah, assumed additional charge on Monday. Mr. Poovaiah confirmed his assumption of charge of the Kallalla range of the park. Nagarahole National Park was recently declared a Tiger Reserve, the third in the State.

It may be recalled that *The Hindu* had reported the smuggling on February 25 last. A member of the Budakattu Krishikara Sangha (BKS), a tribal organisation in the Nagarahole range of the national park, had alerted the Kodagu Deputy Commissioner through a petition on the smuggling on January 14 last, after an enquiry conducted by the Assistant Conservator of Forests concerned on December 29 last made no headway.

The Deputy Commissioner had, in turn, asked the Forest Mobile Squad to conduct an enquiry following which the exact spot of smuggling was identified. As many as 27 logs of sawn teak were recovered from a nearby elephant pit. Twelve teak trees, estimated to be worth over Rs. 25 lakhs, were reportedly stolen by the smugglers. The PCCF (Wildlife) and other officials from the wildlife wing in Hunsur visited the spot.

The Deputy Conservator of Forests, Forest Mobile Squad, Mr. Chowrira Devaraj, told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that efforts were still on to trace the smuggled timber. A search conducted on a tip-off that stolen timber had been found near a river in the park, close to the area from which it was felled, had turned out to be a hoax, he said.

NGOs urge Govt. to stop plunder of forest wealth

By Our Staff Correspondent

*Mysore
8/9/00*

MYSORE, APRIL 7. Wildlife conservationists and NGOs in Karnataka are a disillusioned lot. They perceive the State Government to be apathetic to the "flagrant violation" of laws pertaining to forest and wildlife management and the rampant non-forestry activities within the protected areas.

At a time when the forest cover in the country is being eroded at an alarming rate and there is an urgent need to protect the existing forests and surviving species, the Forest Department seems to be helpless in combating the problems.

Hence, a group of NGOs has submitted a petition to the Forest Minister, Mr. K.H.Ranganath, and drawn his attention to the "illegal activities" and demanded action to curb such activities.

The petition submitted to the Forest Minister has given details of large-scale removal of teak and other timber from the Nagarahole National Park which was widely reported in the Press. The petition points out that some of the smuggling is taking place inside the Moorkal and Kallengeri forest areas in the Kallahalla range.

The NGOs said these incidents had been brought to light by the tribal people and the office-bearers of the Nagarahole Tribal Rights Committee and the Kollengeri Tribal Welfare Association. Giving specific incidents, the NGOs said timber felling has been reported from the Kollihadi plantation area, Vaddara Modu plantation area, the right side of Karmodu Sidde Gowda's land, and Tattikere plantation area in Veerahasahalli area; Mettikupe and other areas in Kalahalli region; near Arekatti, Badrikatte, Bidurukatte and other places in Veerana Hosahalli wildlife range; the right side of the Lakshmana Teertha stream, right side of Kumbarakatte in Marhigodu range and other places.

The NGOs said despite fervent appeals and representations, no action has been taken against the guilty except for making a scapegoat of a low-level Forest Department employee. The complicity of the higher-level forest officials in all the above cases needs to be thoroughly investigated, say the NGOs.

They have alleged that based on a complaint by the President of the Tribal Agriculturists Association, a squad headed by Mr. Mo-nappa arrived on the spot on February 23 and seized 13 teak stumps and confiscated two lorry loads of teakwood. But on the

night of February 24, several vehicles arrived at the spot and the teakwood logs were shifted to the elephant camp at Moorkal, according to the petition.

The Minister was also told that while shifting the logs from the spot, the trenches that were dug earlier to hide the wooden logs for sawing were also covered up and leaf litter evenly spread over them to obliterate any sign of illegal activities. Further, when a senior official went from Mysore to inspect the spot, he was taken directly to Tittimatti, via the Hebbala camp, and the spot where the wooden logs were confiscated was not shown to the officer at all, the NGOs have alleged.

Highlighting the illegal quarrying activities in the Bannerghatta National Park, the petition spoke of the devastation and havoc on the flora and fauna due to dynamite blasts inside the park. While the quarrying is impeding the free movement of elephants, the blasts are forcing the elephant herds out from the park to safer areas which culminate in man-animal conflicts in the region. Five wild elephants had been killed during January and February this year as a result of the above, say the NGOs.

Though the High Court of Karnataka has banned quarrying and even the Supreme Court has issued directives against non-forest activities, there are over 40 illegal quarries operating in and around Bannerghatta National Park which have not ceased their operations despite assurances from the State Government.

It has also been pointed out that the forest guards inside the sanctuaries and national parks have not been provided with modern weapons, ammunition and communication facilities. The NGOs have urged the Forest Minister to take suitable action to curb such activities and bring the guilty to book.

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27/06

Rehabilitated tribal people get land possession certificates

25/7/24
Hunsur
By Our Staff Correspondent

HUNSUR, JULY 24. The first batch of tribal people rehabilitated from the Nagarhole forest were given possession certificates for five acres of land and a house allotted to them, by the Minister for Social Welfare, Mr. Kagodu Thimmappa, at Veeranhosahalli near here on Monday.

Though the houses were allotted to the tribal people outside the Nagarhole forest, some sections of the local people were unhappy over the allotment of land to "outsiders". Some tribals alleged that the power provided to the settlement was not adequate and the water supplied through a single handpump was not sufficient to meet their needs.

Echoing the same feelings, the Hunsur MLA, Mr. Papanna, urged the minister to look into these problems. He said the Government should provide proper irrigation facilities to enable the tribal people to cultivate lands allotted to them. The Government should implement all projects and programmes meant for the development of the rehabilitated tribal people. Referring to the NGOs, which were opposed to the relocation of the tribal people outside the forest, he said such

organisations were misleading the tribal people and wanted them to stay inside the forests. He urged the State Government to start a consumer society for the benefit of the tribal people as most consumer goods were, at present, not available.

The minister urged the tribal people to sow two acres of the land provided to them in the present season. The Government would provide them with food items for one year till they became self-sufficient. The minister assured the local people that the Government would consider their request to provide them land or make an alternative arrangement.

Regarding the sale of children by tribal people, Mr Thimmappa said a committee would be constituted to visit all the tribal hamlets for a fortnight after August 15 to identify families which were involved in such sales. Some middlemen had been already identified and steps would be taken against them.

Nearly 1,550 tribal families were identified for rehabilitation outside Nagarhole at a cost of Rs 15.5 crores to be shared between the State and the Union Government. Out of these, 50 families were given possession certificates today. Another batch would be

provided these benefits shortly, and the land along with the house could not be alienated by the tribal people. The Government had waived all taxes on the land, which could be pledged by the tribal people in any commercial bank for agricultural purposes.

27/28
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Mundu 6/9/2000

'Tribal people being evicted forcibly from Nagarahole'

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, SEPT. 5. The representatives of the adivasi (tribal) organisations from Tamil Nadu and Kerala, who visited the Nagarahole National Park recently, have accused the Forest Department of coercing the tribal people in the park to leave as part of the relocation plan to facilitate the World Bank-sponsored Eco-Development Project.

In a statement here on Tuesday, the tribal organisations — Tamilakam Amaippukalin Kootamipu (TAK), the Tribal Association for Vth Schedule Campaign and the Adivasi Munnetra Sangham of Tamil Nadu and Kerala — alleged that the Government, through the Forest Department, tried to evict 30 tribal families from the Kolangere Hadi (settlement) in the Kodagu side of the park recently, to Nagapura at Vee-
ranahosalli in Hunsur taluk.

The tribal representatives said they were convinced that the Government's move to relocate them forcibly was in violation of the operational directives of the World Bank and the undertaking given by the Forest Department that no force would be used to

evict the tribal people. Such a move would deprive the constitutional rights and privileges accorded to the indigenous and tribal people in the country with regard to their traditional sustenance and cultural identity, they said.

The tribal representatives, Mr. Jagannathan of the TAK, Mr. A.Ranganathan of the Tribal Association for Vth Schedule Campaign, and Mr. Ravi of the Adivasi Munnetra Sangham, who visited the Kolangere Hadi along with the local NGO representatives, condemned the alleged atrocities on the tribal people of the "hadi" who, they said, were beaten up by the Forest Department officials when they resisted eviction. Any move to shift the tribals by resorting to force would only prove counter-productive, they added.

They said that the tribals were committed to live in the park and they were opposed to the Eco-Development Project.

On the other hand, the tribals had come out with a viable and less expensive conservation and development plan, based on their traditional knowledge and experience.

The Government should start a

purposeful dialogue with the tribal people to sort out the issue, they added.

Expressing support to the struggle of the adivasis of Nagarahole, they said that a network of organisations would be formed soon to resist the deprivation and marginalisation of the tribal people.

Mild tremors in Bijapur Dt.

By Our Staff Correspondent

BIJAPUR, SEPT. 5. Bijapur District and surrounding areas experienced mild tremors measuring 5.3 in the richter scale around 6 a.m. today.

The Deputy Commissioner Rakesh Singh said that no casualties were reported from any part of the district and important structures, including the world famous Gol Gumbaz, which developed a crack during the Latur earthquake, were safe.

According to sources in the Department of Seismology, the epicentre was located near Koyana in Maharashtra.

PA 030 ✓

Govt. sanctions Rs. 2 cr. to tackle elephant menace

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By Our Staff Correspondent

Hunsur
20/1/2001

MYSORE, JAN. 28. The State Government has sanctioned Rs. two crores to dig elephant-proof trenches adjoining the Nagarahole National Park to prevent wild elephants from straying into the agriculture lands.

Disclosing this at Chikkodanahalli in H.D.Kote taluk on Saturday, the Minister of State for Finance, Mr. M.Shivanna, said although the forest department had sent a proposal for Rs. four crores to tackle the elephant menace, the State Government had agreed to release Rs. two crores.

The Minister was speaking at a function organised to launch the eco-development projects in the villages abutting the national park.

There was also a proposal to erect solar fencing along the boundary of the national park to prevent wild animals from leaving the forest and raiding agriculture tracts. The digging of elephant-proof trenches and erecting solar fences would effectively curtail the problem of crop raiding by wild animals, Mr. Shivanna said.

Referring to the conflict of interest between the Forest Department and the people of tribal communities living in the forests, he said there were complaints of harassment of the tribal communities. He called for a survey of revenue and forest lands. Ef-

orts would be made to rehabilitate the tribal people and enable them to join the mainstream, he said and added that the Government was committed to extend all possible assistance in this direction.

The beneficiaries from the villages were given pressure cookers, gas stoves, iron ploughs, etc., under the Union Government-sponsored programme. Under this, the State Government had also contributed Rs. 35 lakhs to the Forest Department. The programme envisaged collection of Rs. 8.75 lakhs from the villagers to ensure their involvement in the completion of the project.

Regarding the complaints of many villages having been excluded from such programmes, the minister directed the officials to prepare a list of such villages and include them in the scheme. These villages would be in addition to the already identified 32 villages, Mr. Shivanna said.

He also promised the public that H.D.Kote taluk would be developed with good roads and other civic amenities. A project to construct 1,000 houses under the Ashraya scheme would be launched in the taluk, he added.

The member of the Mysore Zilla Panchayat, Mr. H.C.Shivanna, the DCF of Hunsur Range, Mr. A.M.Annaiah, and the veteran freedom fighter, Mr. Narasimhegowda, were present.

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Living 'on the edge' in quiet desperation

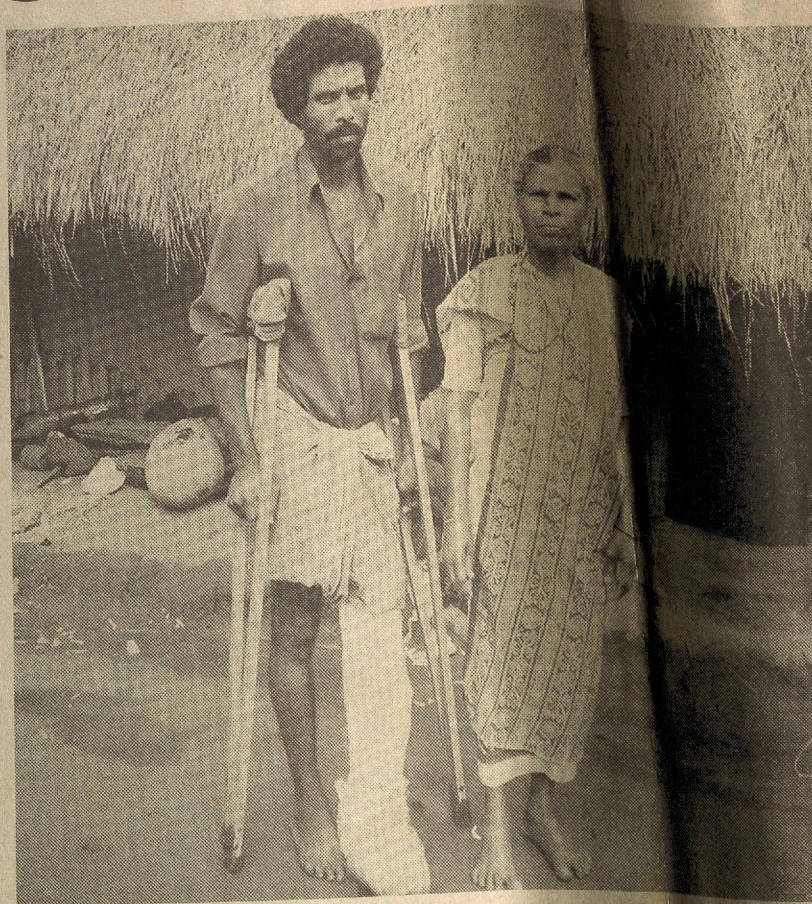
By K.Jeevan Chinnappa

MADENOOR (KODAGU DT.), JULY. 18. The tribal people of the Jenu Kuruba clan have made the forests their home over the ages. They have no dreams to fulfil and no legacies to cherish. They remain isolated somewhere in the remote corner of the jungle at Madenoor, in the Nagarhole National Park range in Kodagu.

The very sight of vehicles approaching their Hadi (settlement) unnerves them. When a couple of presspersons visited the Madenoor Hadi, in search of the tribal people — Budakattu Jananga as they are referred to — it unravelled another pathetic story.

Raju, who is a Panjari Yerava, was back from the hospital. He was at home — a bamboo hut with a straw roof. According to Raju, he and his family underwent a traumatic experience on June 14, when a group of men from neighbouring Sulugodu village attacked them. Raju was beaten black and blue, and his wife and daughter raped by the marauding men. Raju's family is still in state of shock.

Raju's wife says the men, some of whom Raju can identify, came to their hut at 4 p.m. on June 14 when her husband was away at work. They assaulted and raped her and her 14-year-old daughter after barging into the hut. Later, Raju's wife and daughter ran out to call Raju. The men left, but came in a larger group again in the night and beat up Raju until he lost consciousness. His wife and daughter were taken away by the gang. Raju's parents too were beaten up when they tried to intervene.



Raju, a member of the Jenu Kuruba clan, who was beaten up at Madenoor in the Nagarhole National Park range in Kodagu District, and his mother Gange.

Other members of the Jenu Kuruba tribe said the same group went around other hutments the next morning (June 15) in Madenoor terrorising the

residents, who fled fearing attacks. Ashoka, one of them, said men, women, children and elderly people from over 125 Jenu Kuruba hutments

took cover in the forests fearing attacks by their "masters" on June 14 night. Raju's wife and daughter admitted that they were raped by the two men in the initial assault. They said they had informed the police giving all details. The injured Raju spent four days at the Gonicoppa Government Hospital, and he was later shifted to the District Hospital at Madikeri.

The Deputy Superintendent of Police, Virajpet, Mr. G.G.Hegde, told *The Hindu* that a case of "atrocities and outraging the modesty of women" had been booked against five persons, who were now absconding. They were arrested initially on charges of assault, but let off on bail. When the complaint was registered initially, no mention of rape was made, he said. It was only after some tribal leaders from Hunsur were consulted on the issue, that the rape factor came up and subsequently a case was booked again.

A doctor had initially examined the victims at Gonicoppa, but the issue of rape had not figured in the complaint. Later, a medical examination by a lady doctor at the District Hospital here revealed that there was no evidence to show that rape had been committed. The DAR and civil police have now been posted to protect the victims.

Mr. Hegde said that Raju's, his father Mara's, and Raju's wife's statements matched. On the other hand, Gange's, Raju's mother, and Raju's daughter's statements recorded by the police did not match.

The court had now granted permission to re-arrest the five culprits, but only two of them had been charged with rape Mr. Hegde said. Permission

to confiscate the guns of the alleged accused had been sought from the Deputy Commissioner. Video and audio statements of the families members of Raju have been recorded, he said. However, Raju's wife and daughter had stated to presspersons that their statements had not been videographed.

Mani, who is the only Vokkaliga Gowda to have settled down at Madenoor, recounts minor skirmishes in which the landlords as well as some Malayali residents had attacked the tribal people in the past. He said Raju had picked up a quarrel with one his cousins, Kali, living nearby as some landlords frequented her house. The landlords nursed a grouse against Raju on this score. There are just five families of Panjari Yeravas at Madenoor, living amidst the Jenu Kurubas.

The tribal people live in constant fear of elephants "visiting" their huts, destroying paddy crops cultivated by them on fragmented pieces of land. Pouring rain, cold, and the silence of the jungle, are what they have to contend with. They have no cattle to plough the lands. Monsoon renders collection of firewood impossible. There are more than 300 Jenu Kurubas with over 90 children in different age groups. The children lurk behind trees or huts when they spot visitors. Some of the men have taken to drink.

The older generation is against moving out of the forests as part of relocation plan. Amid a lot of talk on relocating them, the life of the tribal people has remained unchanged, and, perhaps, it will continue to be so for many years to come.

14.17

KAN 34 ✓

Minda 29/10/01

Dharam, Muneer hold talks on bridge across Kabini

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, OCT. 28. Kerala and Karnataka today discussed ways of improving the infrastructure of road traffic between the two States including the construction of a vital bridge across the Kabini at Byranakuppe.

The two States agreed to approach the Centre to get clearance under the Wildlife Conservation Act and other laws as the proposed bridge would be built in the Rajiv Gandhi National Park, which is a game sanctuary.

The Kerala Minister for Works, Dr.M.K.Muneer, held talks with the Public Works Minister, Mr.Dharam Singh, here this morning.

Also present were Mr.K.Muralidharan, MP and President of the Kerala Pradesh Congress. Karnataka was represented by Mr.K.K.Misra, Principal Secretary, Public Works, Mr.L.V.Nagarajan, Managing Director, Karnataka Road Development Corporation, and Mr.Tallur, Secretary, Public Works.

It was noted at the meeting that in June 2001, the then LDF government in Kerala had committed to meeting 50 per cent of the cost of the proposed bridge through the then Minister for Works, Mr.Joseph.

Mr.Tallur said the foundation stone of the bridge was laid in 1994, and it was then estimated to cost Rs.1.86 crore. The cost had now shot up to Rs.6.5 crore.

The bridge would provide an all-weather link between Wynaad

District in Kerala and Mysore District, and reduce the distance between Pulapally and Mulkolly villages in Kerala and Mysore. If the bridge were to be built, one could travel directly from Mysore to Kozhikode through Sultan Battery.

Mr.Dharam Singh said the Legislature Committee on Forest and Ecology in July 1995 recommended the construction of the bridge. The panel was then headed by Mr.N.Thippanna, former MLC.

The meeting was told that there were 12 roads linking the two States passing through the districts of Mysore, Kodagu, and Dakshina Kannada.

The two parties agreed that the condition of the roads should be improved.

Mr.Dharam Singh explained the various steps taken by Karnataka to improve the quality of roads. He mentioned the ambitious World Bank-aided programme to upgrade over 2,000 km. of State highways.

The Road Development Corporation had completed the construction of 120 bridges out of the targeted 153.

Mr.Nagarajan said that big contractors possessing modern construction machinery had been entrusted with the work of maintaining 7,300 km. of State highways.

They had been given a contract for three years each. In the past, local and small contractors had been engaged for the purpose and their work was unsatisfactory.

Update 27/28

14.17

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**Poachers kill
elephant**

MADIKERI, NOV. 5. The carcass of a male elephant, suspected to have been killed by poachers, was found in the Srimangala range forests of the Nagarahole National Park on Saturday. The poachers had removed the tusks of the elephant.

The Conservator of Forests (Kodagu Circle), Mr. P. Anur Reddy, who confirmed that the jumbo had become a victim of poachers, told *The Hindu* on Sunday that the Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and a doctor visited the spot to conduct the post-mortem. The carcass of the elephant was found near Kerala border, in Srimangala-Kutta area.

KDP meet focuses on tribal people

AV 34 ✓
14.17

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, SEPT. 11. The issue of identifying land in Kodagu District, for the rehabilitation of tribal people from the Nagarahole National Park, dominated the monthly KDP meeting held here on Tuesday.

The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. G.V. Ramachandra, announced that he would write to the Union and State governments on the need to dereserve the Majjigehalla forest areas and take steps to evict encroachers from government land at West Nemmale village in Virajpet taluk, for relocating 950 tribal families living in the park. There were 1,690 tribal families living in the park and on its periphery. A committee headed by the Chief Executive Officer of the zilla panchayat (ZP), Mr. Baladev Krishna, would prepare an action plan for relocating the tribal people and submit a report to him in one month. He appealed to elected representatives and the people to cooperate with him in evicting encroachers in West Nemmale.

He said the Chief Secretary, Ms. Teresa Bhattacharya, would visit Kodagu in a few days to discuss important issues such as a

tribal people relocation plan, drought relief and computerisation of land records in the district.

The Chairman of the ZP Standing Committee on Health and Education, Mr. Arun Machaiah, who supports a relocation plan, said that the Majjigehalla farm, which had been leased to the Orange Society (the lease has expired), could be an ideal for the relocation of tribal people. The Government should write to the Centre to dereserve land vested with the Forest Department by the Revenue Department, sometime ago.

The Headquarters Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. K. Krishna Gowda, said there were 1,690 tribal families living in the Nagarahole National Park area as per a joint survey conducted by the Forest and Revenue departments. Forty-five of those families from the Madenoor Colony would be shifted to Veeranahosalli (now Nagapura) in Hunsur taluk. As many as 39 houses had been built at Nagapura, and six more would be completed in 15 days, he added.

Mr. Krishna announced that a sub-committee headed by him had been constitu-

ted by the Deputy Commissioner for preparing an action plan for the relocation of tribal people. He said that unless land was identified, it would be difficult to prepare an action plan.

Mr. Krishna Gowda said a small extent of government land had been identified at Kedamullur, Arji and V. Badaga villages in Virajpet taluk, and at Kalur, Kunjila, Hachinad in Madikeri taluk. In Somwarpet, over 300 acres was available. Over 700 acres of government land at West Nemmale village in Virajpet taluk was encroached upon by local people, and if measures were initiated to evict them, it could be granted to tribal people. The Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Takeraj, endorsed Mr. Gowda's views, and said a fresh survey was needed to identify government land.

When Mr. Arun Machaiah alleged that the Forest Department was harassing tribal people living at Thattekere Hadi (settlement) in Virajpet taluk by asking them to leave, the Assistant Conservator of Forests, Virajpet Division, said the areas were being claimed by the wildlife wing of the department at Hunsur. He said that if alternative

land was made available to the department, the land required for rehabilitation could be secured without difficulty. Mr. Machaiah asked how tribal people living on the fringes of the national park could be asked to leave when the ZP had spent over Rs. 1.5 crores for providing civic amenities to them.

Mr. Raghunath Naik, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry, said police cases were registered against tribal people for resisting eviction.

The Chairperson of the ZP Standing Committee on Social Justice, Ms. H.B. Jayamma, criticised the officials of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) for their "lack of interest" in the relocation plan.

To a question from Ms. Jayamma on the action initiated against persons who allegedly attacked a member of a tribal community at Madenoor and raped his wife and daughter, Mr. Krishna Gowda said Rs. 31,000, 25 per cent of the compensation, had been paid to the five victims. The rest would be paid if the accused were convicted of the charges.

UP forest official booked after catching poachers

By Tariq Hasan
Times News Network

PILIBHIT: In the first week of February, Rajesh Nigam, a ranger of the forest department posted in the Pilibhit Reserve Forest, was arrested and charged under Section 364 for "abducting with the intention of murder of two persons".

Inquiries by this correspondent, however, reveal that Nigam's only crime was that a day earlier he had detained two poachers who had killed several birds inside the forest. These two persons had somehow managed to escape from the forest department custody and then using their "influence" turned the tables on the forest department staff.

Rajesh was kept in jail for more than 15 days and is today shattered and demoralised. He is paying the price like many others of his ilk for protecting the country's natural heritage from the hands of poachers, smugglers and the timber mafia.

Barely a few weeks before this incident, another ranger of the Pilibhit forest department, S.P.

Singh, was accused by the local authorities of being in possession of "illicit timber". In this case too, Singh was reportedly being hounded by politically influential people who ravaged the forest wealth and forest land.

Senior forest department officials were aware that the charges against Singh were trumped up and he was being framed. They have up till now somehow managed to save him, but it is only a matter of time before he is prosecuted or penalised.

It is quite clear that be it the divisional forest officer (DFO), who lost his life recently in Bihar fighting against the forest mafia, and the forest guard killed inside the Corbett National Park barely seven months ago, or the two forest rangers here, the guardians of India's forest wealth are indeed "on the run".

For the last few years, a major tussle is taking place in the Pilibhit Reserve Forest, one of the country's last few remaining patches of the Terai region. The forest department is fighting a losing battle against thousands of settlers, mostly from east India,

who are encroaching upon prime forest land in a systematic and organised manner with the "active connivance" of local politicians and the revenue staff.

According to Afifullah Khan, a wildlife scientist at Aligarh Muslim University and secretary of the Wildlife Society of India, "The only thing the forest department has been trying in vain is to simply start the process of the demarcation of forest land through boundary pillars so that there is no further encroachment of forest land. The forest department has also been demanding mutation of forest land in revenue records."

Khan pointed out that it was "shocking" to note that even this basic move by the forest department had not been supported either by the local or state authorities. Khan said he was convinced that the forest department was "not interested" in unnecessarily uprooting the settlers and would in fact help in the rehabilitation of those families who had migrated here more than 30 years ago when a dam was being constructed.

Times of India 25-3-2002

Deccan Herald 20-3-2002 Forest department control ground fire at Nagarahole

DH News Service

MYSORE, March 19

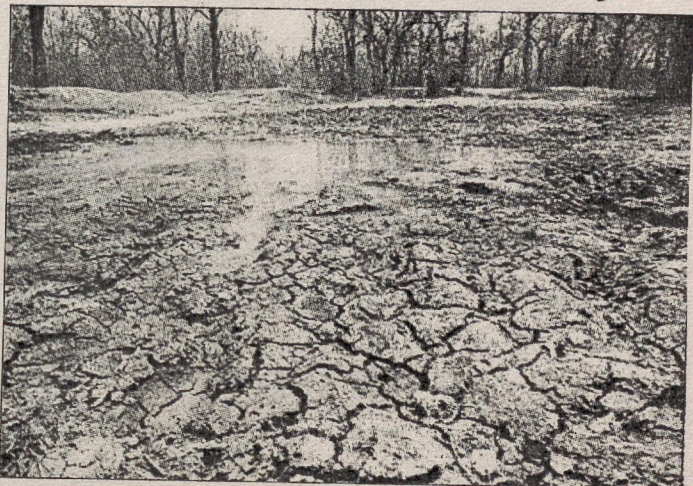
The ground fires noticed at two ranges of Nagarahole forest division are under control now. Forest sources said that fire protection teams from the department, with the help of villagers, have adequately contained mild fires near Balle and two other forest ranges - Metikuppe and D B Kuppe - in the division.

There are no fresh incidents of ground fires reported from the division.

Sources maintained that the damage was minimal since the fire protection teams responded quickly and prevented the fires from spreading.

It may be recalled here that a major part of the forest, which supports an abundance of plant and animal species, was destroyed in a fire in 1999. The damage was reported to be heavy as the forest authorities were not "fully prepared" to combat the ravaging fires.

However, the forest officials



A dry water-hole at the Rajiv Gandhi National Park. With most of the pools drying up, animals like elephants, gaurs are forced to migrate to the ranges close to Kabini backwaters.

had maintained that the fire was of low intensity and the damage was negligible. Nevertheless, satellite images contradicted the claim and confirmed that the fire was a major one. The images were also released to support the claim.

Since then, forest officials have become extra cautious. The department's ground staff will be monitoring all the ranges to fight the fires whenever noticed. They will be on guard for at least two months.

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Nagarahole park closed

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, FEB. 28. The famous Nagarahole National Park (Rajiv Gandhi National Park) will be closed for visitors from Friday till April 15, according to a statement received from the office of the Conservator of Forests on Thursday. Both the tourist zones will remain closed as forest fires could pose risk to the visitors during summer. This is an annual feature. The park will be reopened once the forests received good rainfall. Incidentally, the entire national park area was recently included under the purview of the Kodagu Forest Circle. The Forest Department has requested the public to cooperate with the authorities.

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25/7/50
Forest fire, a handiwork of anti-social elements?

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, MARCH 24. Most of the fire incidents in forests in various parts of Kodagu District in the recent months have been found to be the handiwork of anti-social elements.

Nearly 884 hectares of forests in the Nagarahole National Park were destroyed in the fire. However, the loss was not significant as the fire was limited to ground, where dry foliage and withered grass were burnt, P.Anur Reddy, Conservator of Forests, Kodagu Circle, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

He said 354 hectares of forest were destroyed in the Metikuppe Range, 332 hectares in the Vee-ranahosalli Range, 178 hectares in the Kallalla Range, 12 hectares in the Antarakatte Range, five hectares in the D.B.Kuppe Range, two hectares in the Nagarahole Range, and one hectare in the Anechowkur Range of the Nagarahole National Park.

Forest fires put animal lives at stake in national parks

By R.Krishna Kumar

MYSORE, MARCH 28. The devastating fires that frequently ravage the Bandipur and Nagarahole national parks during summer is hastening the degradation of forests, slowing down the regeneration process, and may alter the composition of flora and fauna if steps are not taken to check them.

Experts in the field of forestry and wildlife conservation told *The Hindu* that only hard and fire-resistant species may evolve over the years if the fires break out regularly and incinerate the flora and fauna.

If the floral composition is altered, it will have a direct bearing on the wildlife in the national parks as the population pattern is governed by abundance or absence of food among the animal species. Bandipur and Nagarahole are home to a variety of wild-life species, including tigers, elephants, leopards, Indian gaur, dholes or wild dogs, chital or spotted deer, sambar, four-horned antelopes, the barking deer, jackals, and a wide variety of birds.

Already fire resistant species such as Lantana, which is a form of weed, is sprouting in Bandipur and is not consumed by any of the herbivore animals.

The frequent outbreak of forest fires will only augment the growth of Lantana and suppress other plants preferred by herbivorous animals. Forest fires



Ground vegetation and trees ravaged by fire in Bandipur.

destroy the organic matter that contribute to the humus content of the substratum. If this is lost, the soil tends to deteriorate and the value of the site is diminished in the absence of vegetation.

Animals lose natural cover against predators, abandon their habitat, and have been observed to wander in a random manner having lost their orientation.

During this year's fire, a herd of elephants was trapped in a small area

which was engulfed by fire in all directions, and the Forest Department personnel had to clear one portion and drive the pachyderms across to a safe area failing which they risked being roasted alive.

Big fires destroyed large tracts of forests in Moyar Range, including the Himavad Gopalswamy Betta.

Already vegetation in the large tracts of dry deciduous section in the Bandipur National Park is displaying stunted growth and may force the migration of

herbivorous creatures. It is feared that any alteration in the food chain will have a domino effect and the entire complex link, which has evolved in the ecosystem, may collapse.

The Forest Department officials have pointed out that Eupatorium odoratum, a kind of weed has spread all over the Bandipur Tiger Reserve, except in the degraded buffer zone. However, this particular species has not proliferated. But the Lantana, which was found in small patches in a few parts of the national park, has over the years proliferated. Today, Lantana is found in all ranges of Bandipur, including Kalkere, Begur, Gundre, Chowdally, and Idasanahatty. Lantana and Eupatorium are replacing the grass vegetation and may pose a threat for the fodder of the herbivores in the future.

The Lantana is said to be responsible for crown fire that engulfs the upper portion of trees.

The growth of these weeds is abetted by forest fires. But, being bone-dry during summer these weeds are highly inflammable in summer and thus compound the problem. Moyar, Kaniyanapura, Bandipur, and Beerambadi reserve forests have a long history of forest fires on account of tall grass which grow in these ranges. Though systematic forest fire-fighting operations commenced in 1874 and 1875 in N.Begur Range, the results were stated to be disappointing. Similar fire-fighting

exercises were taken up in Metikuppe and Kakanakote in 1878, and again in 1888 but to no avail. Large portions of forests have burnt out in devastating fires that break out in Bandipur every year except on a few occasions when the area receives early rainfall.

Fire management

Karnataka is one of the few States in the country which has a culture of taking fire-fighting measures. In Bandipur as also in neighbouring Nagarahole forests, fire-watchers are deployed along susceptible areas and local villagers employed every year to put out the fire. Mobile squads are pressed into service and fire lines are drawn by burning a strip of 10 metres width on either side of the "D lines" at various locations during winter itself.

Yet, the traditional methods of fire control now evoke scepticism with increasing pressure on forest resources without a proportionate increase in allocation of funds for fire-fighting operations or recruiting more personnel. The Forest Department is woefully short of human resources, and Bandipur, which is spread over 850 sq. km., deploys only around 12 persons to manage each of the nine ranges.

Unless the scenario changes with input of resources and modern fire-fighting equipment, the animals will continue to bear the brunt of fire while forests will continue to degrade.

3 research projects planned in Nagarahole

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, APRIL 8. The Coorg Wildlife Society (CWS) and the College of Forestry, Ponnampet (CoF-P), under the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, have submitted three research proposals to the Forest Department here, seeking to conduct research on forest biology and forest management plan, and take up silviculture, under the World Bank-sponsored India Eco-Development Project in the Nagarahole (Rajiv Gandhi) National Park.

As part of research in forest biology, a study of the avifaunal diversity of the Nagarahole National Park is proposed to be conducted at a cost of Rs. 60,000. The research on forest management plan pertains to the assessment of the effects of fire on regeneration and soil properties, at a cost of Rs. 50,000.

Under the third proposal, research on ecological study of weeds is planned to be taken up at a cost of Rs. 50,000. The three projects are to be completed in three months.

The CWS and the CoF-P have jointly initiated preliminary work in this regard after obtaining clearance from the Conservator of Forests, Kodagu Circle, P. Anur Reddy, recently. The Principal Investigator for the three projects will be the Executive Vice-President of the CWS.

The objectives of the study on avifaunal diversity are to update the checklist of birds in the Nagarahole National Park, and to

study the bird diversity in natural and man-made habitats, and in management zones. The results of the study will help lay stress on the importance of bird-habitat management. The effects of the conversion of forests into plantations will be known, and the findings will help formulate guidelines on bird management.

Stratification will be done for identification of the habitats within the zones of the park. Bird counts will be done through the "line transect" and "point count" methods. As many as 10 samplings will be studied in each habitat.

The co-Principal investigators of this project are N.A. Prakash, C.G. Kushalappa, both from the CoF-P, and Narasimhan of the CWS.

Effects of fire

The research on the effects of forest fires on regeneration and soil properties aims at investigating the causes of periodical fires in the park, and their effect on the regeneration of plants and the growth of grass. The effect of fire on soil properties, both physical and chemical, will be analysed. The results of the study may play a vital role in improving fire management practices in the park. They will help understand the causes of fire, and develop suitable fire-fighting strategies. The results may also help garner the attention of the Government and the public to obtain timely assistance to put out fires.

A preliminary survey will be conducted

in the park to study the extent of the area damaged in fire, frequency of fires, causes of repeated fires in specific areas, vulnerable spots, and vegetations susceptible to fire.

Factors responsible for fires, such as climatic conditions, and quantity of accumulation of combustible materials, will be studied. Questionnaires will be distributed among forest staff and public in the surroundings, to elicit their opinions.

The co-Principal investigators of the project are K.T. Prasanna, G.M. Devagiri, M. Mahadeva Murthy, and B.M.Thammaiah, all from the CoF-P.

Study of weeds

The objectives of the third proposal, to conduct an ecological study of weeds in the park, are to assess the dominance of exotic weeds, identify indigenous vegetation, including creepers, climbers, epiphytes, and mistletoes which can pose problems; and, study the harmful and beneficial effects of such weeds on natural regeneration.

In some cases, species that are considered to be weeds may be of use in the ecosystem in which they exist.

In general, weeds are considered an important biological agent affecting the productivity of crops. For instance, Lantana is a major problem in plantation forestry, as it chokes other vegetation. The co-Principal investigators of the project are C.S.P. Patil, A.S. Devakumar, and M.N. Ramesh, all from the CoF-P.

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Arrest of scribes: Villagers support forest official

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, MAY 1. Residents of Nagarahole are opposed to any action against the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Annaiah, who is in charge of the Nagarahole National Park, for arresting three journalists for trespassing into the "core area" of the park on April 25. A group of residents led by R. Ram, who owns the WaterWoods Resort just outside the National Park, told *The Hindu* that the DCF was fully justified in arresting the journalists and their vehicle driver. They had not taken any permission for entering the core area, and permission could be given only by Mr. Annaiah under the rules.

Mr. Ram, who has been running his wildlife resort for three years, said the DCF was known for strictly following the rules and had a reputation for protecting and caring for the forests and wildlife. During his tenure, he had curbed cattle grazing inside the national park, which his predecessors could not do. "Cattle inside the park can infect the Indian Bison (gaur) with two deadly diseases, rinderpest and foot and mouth disease, and this action of Mr. Annaiah will save hundreds of wild bison," he said.

Even resorts could take tourists inside the national park during stipulated hours, but not into the core area, and Mr. Annaiah personally checked vehicles, passengers, and their permits, Mr. Ram said.

WB may extend eco-project in Nagarahole park

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, MAY 31. The World Bank team, which visited the Nagarahole (Rajiv Gandhi) National Park recently, has indicated that the Eco-development Project sponsored by it may be extended for one more year. The project is to conclude next month.

Confirmation is expected to be received by a letter soon, P. Anur Reddy, Conservator of Forests, Kodagu Circle, told *The Hindu*.

The World Bank team has agreed to extend the services of two agriculture consultants appointed by it for the project.

The Eco-development Project began in 1998 after a delay for about two years. Among the reasons for the delay was NGOs' objection to the project on the grounds that its implementation would necessitate relocation of tribal people from the park. A sum of Rs. 39.49 crore was earmarked for the project in the Nagarahole National Park, which was one of the seven protected regions in the country selected by the bank. The other areas chosen were Buxa in West Bengal, Palamau in Bihar, Pench in Madhya Pradesh, Periyar in Kerala, Ranthambore in Rajasthan (all tiger reserves), and Gir in Gujarat.

The World Bank team led by the Senior Bio-Diversity Specialist, Kathy Mackinnon, and Consultant to World Bank, Subimol Roy, paid a three-day visit to the Nagarahole National Park from May 17. It held talks with the eco-development council set up under the project at Haralahalli, near Hunsur, and spent nearly three hours interacting with the members, Mr. Reddy said.

The team was happy that

more women were participating in the council's activities. It also expressed satisfaction over the activities of the eco-development council at Chandanakere hadi (tribal settlement), where a majority of tribal people were involved. The team was of the view that additional steps should be taken by the council to promote income-generating schemes.

The tribal people have been provided with kerosene, "choolas", and LPG connections and solar equipment. Mr. Reddy, along with the Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Hunsur, and K.A. Kushalappa, consultant for the project, accompanied the team.

The team visited the Veerannahosalli rehabilitation area at Hunsur. It interacted with tribal people, including the 45 families shifted recently from Madenoor in Virajpet taluk of Kodagu District. Madenoor hadi was in the news sometime ago for the alleged rape of a tribal woman and her daughter by people from a neighbouring village.

The team was unhappy that many research projects had not been completed. It pointed out that scientific papers were yet to be submitted by individuals and organisations.

Mr. Reddy said the World Bank team had a meeting with the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and the Principal Secretary, Forests, in Bangalore on May 20.

It also met the Secretary, Union Ministry of Forests and Environment, in New Delhi on May 24.

The managers of the seven Protected Areas covered under the Eco-Development Project gave a presentation on the progress made, he added.

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It is high time the forest department and the government woke up to the problem of poaching before the forests are completely bereft of wildlife.
SUNIL KUMAR M takes a look at the plight of some of the 'protected' areas which are home to rare lifeforms

Dwindling numbers

Photo by Shiva

Last fortnight's incident involving a tiger caught in a 'jaw trap' in the Nagarhole National Park and the arrest of a gang of poachers from Madhya Pradesh has brought to the fore, the sorry state of Karnataka's protected areas. Even though the Forest department did a good job by nabbing a record number of 46 poachers in one go, the incident reflects the problems in protecting our wildlife.

Forests occupy about 32,403 square kilometres (sq kms) in the State and about 3.75 per cent or 7,204.28 sq kms of this area has been set aside as protected area (PA) under the Centre's Wildlife Act of 1972. The State has 26 PAs of which 21 are wildlife sanctuaries (4732.10 sq kms) and five are national parks (2472.18 sq kms). These PAs are home to some rare and endangered species of flora and fauna, unique landscapes and has several undiscovered lifeforms. A sizeable population of the large charismatic mega fauna such as tigers, elephants and bison exist in Karnataka's forests and hence draw poachers, in addition to tourists.

The annual worldwide trade in illegal wildlife products is an estimated US \$ 20 billion and next only to narcotics. International traders, having exhausted sources elsewhere, are now exploiting third world countries where protection of wildlife is low. Sophisticated dealers control the growing illegal wildlife trade throughout India including Karnataka. The trade is not restricted to

large fauna such as the tiger and elephant. Many smaller species including deer, birds, squirrels, hares, frogs, turtles, otters, corals, fox, cats and snails are killed to supply for an ever increasing demand for skins, bones, or body parts used in spurious medicines, ornaments, exotic culinary dishes or the fashion industry. Live animals continue to be traded for supply to zoos, circuses, and for the pet trade. Unlike northern States, elephants have more often fallen prey to a poacher than tigers in Karnataka.

For example, in June 2000, three juvenile elephants were reportedly shot dead in the core area of the Bandipur National Park. Two carcasses with tusks missing were first found in the Maddur range of the park. Poaching came to light following an exchange of fire between a gang of poachers and forest officials. The poachers however could not be apprehended. The discovery of the third carcass was made a few days later,



Tusker (top); confiscated skins of jackals and jungle cats (above)

Methods of poaching

SMALL poaching gangs of 4-5 people track elephants, sometimes keeping watch on waterholes and at other times using dogs to separate sub-adult males from a herd for easy shooting using firearms. After the elephant is killed, the poachers very efficiently remove the tusks, many a time by hacking at the base with an axe and taking it out of the socket and sometimes pouring lime or acid to help soften the basal tissues before using an axe. In many cases the trunk is cut off first as it hampers the recovery of the tusk. In some cases in Karnataka, the entire head of the elephant has been chopped off before the tusks are retrieved. Often they set fire in the forest so that they can cut off one part of the forest from the officials and distract their attention.

Poisonous substances such as pesticides and chemicals are usually placed in carcasses of domestic buffaloes and cows. During summer, small forest pools are poisoned by poachers, or depressions dug and filled with water for this purpose to kill large animals. Jaw traps are used to trap animals such as tigers and leopards.

Birds are caught using nets or directly by catching the young ones from their nests.

during a combing operation following the killing of the earlier two elephants. With the price of ivory fetching more than 300 dollars per kilo, it is obvious that illegal traders and poachers find enough gain in committing such crimes. Notorious among the poachers has been Veerappan who is said to have killed more than 100 tuskers.

Regular poachers are interested in larger animals as it fetches a huge price in

the international market. Smaller animals such as deer, giant squirrels, jungle cat, fox, and snakes are killed for their meat or skin. The skins, bones and meat are sold in the nearby shandy. On Makara Sankranti day, villagers in the old Mysore region hunt in groups for hares, fox and cats for rituals. Similarly, during Uttari festival, ritual hunting is done in Kodagu. Ritual hunting also occurs in Bagalkot and 20 other locations in the State, says S Sridhar of the Institute for Natural Resources, Conservation, Education and Training (INCERT).

Continued on Page II



Skins and body parts of wild animals confiscated from tribals (above); burning of elephant carcass (left)

Forest Dept a bystander as CBI takes over poaching case

AJAY SURI
 NEW DELHI, JUNE 26

THE Uttaranchal Forest division, which stumbled upon the leopard-poaching case allegedly involving Tehelka officials, has been reduced to a mere bystander in the case, with the CBI taking over.

Uttaranchal chief wildlife warden A.S. Negi said so far no one from the CBI has approached them for any assistance — the first where trapping and killing of leopards was caught live on videotape.

What shocked the Forest Department is one of its top officials was involved — Uttaranchal DFO Paramjit Singh, who has been interrogated twice over the last few days. It's here that CBI is likely to collect more evidence than their raids on the Tehelka office, sources said.

To the Department's consternation, one of the two accused Meharban, arrested by Saharanpur police, was in fact working as an informer for Paramjit Singh. Meharban, is an ex-employee of the Dehradun-based Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

Investigations show it was Meharban who had introduced Paramjit to Pankaj (allegedly working for one of Tehelka's share-holding companies) with a request that "a TV channel" wanted to shoot the poaching of leopards.

Meharban received Rs 15,000 and a Sony video camera from Pankaj. Negi said the incident had alerted them and they were taking "all possible measures" to keep the state's forests safe from poachers.

Indian Express 27-6-02

CONSERVATION

Sanctuary under threat

NAGARHOLE National Park, near Mysore, is one of the brightest jewels of the Western Ghats. This park, bordered by the Bandipur and Wynad sanctuaries, was flagged by *National Geographic* early this year as an ecological treasure, in its new series on global hotspots — which began with the Western Ghats of India.

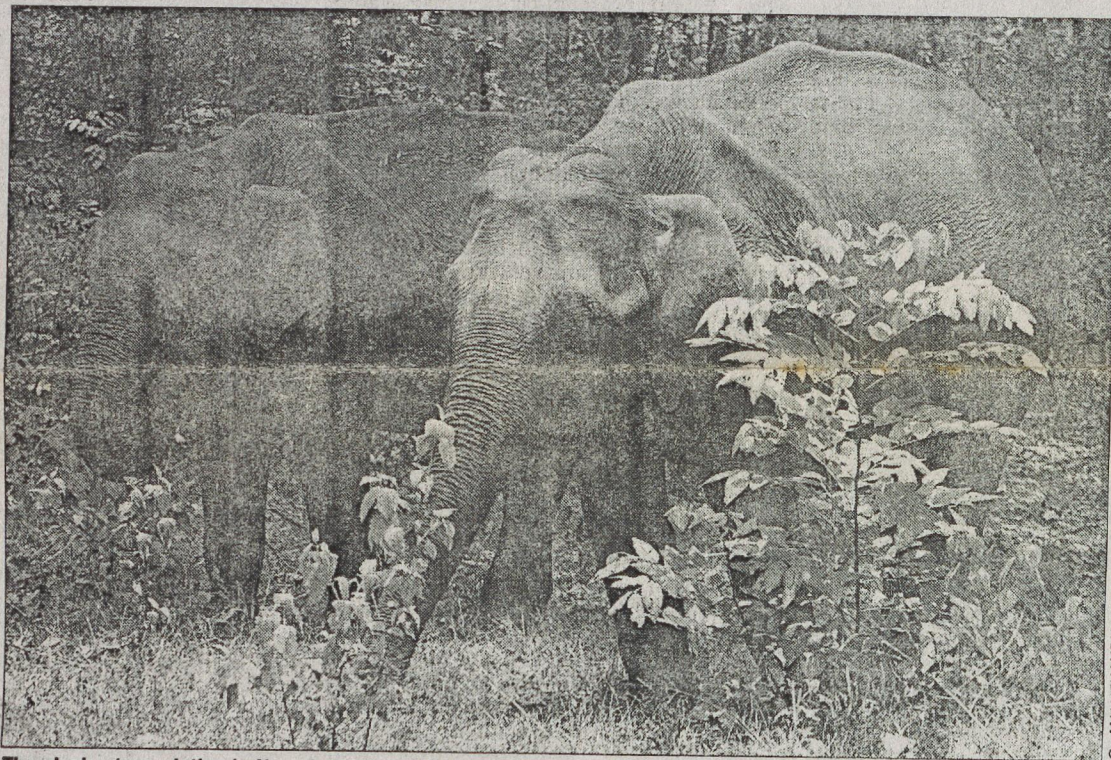
But not all is well in paradise. The shocking episode of a group of poachers roaming through the forest in Nagarhole in May and early June to trap tigers, has jolted the forest administration and shaken the numerous campaigners who have given this park the reputation of being one of the best protected in the nation. The apparent faith of conservationists in the park's security was shattered by the discovery of a tiger wounded in a steel jaw leg trap in early June, and the evidence came from visitors who filmed the majestic animal reportedly limping. Wildlife First, an NGO working vigorously to protect Karnataka's Wildlife, and Nagarhole in particular, has sought a CBI probe into the incident to uncover all the links of the poachers.

Nagarhole, a natural idyll, like most of the ghats, has found a place in the international consciousness. The recent Western Ghats spotlight of *National Geographic* reached an estimated one crore readers, many of them opinion leaders. This national park is one of the best protected areas in the Western Ghats and harbours high densities of several endangered Asian animals like tigers, leopards, dholes (wild dog), elephants and gaur, among others, says Ullas Karanth, Director of the Centre for Wildlife Studies, Bangalore, which has been researching the status of the tiger in Karnataka's forests.

The free run that the poachers had just weeks ago, and the initial slow response of the Nagarhole park staff, has rung alarm bells among wildlife lovers nationwide.

Established in 1955 on a relatively modest scale and expanded two decades later to span 644 sq. km, Nagarhole has become famous for sustained conservation efforts, rehabilitation of encroachers, and most important, keeping its wildlife population protected.

Dr. Karanth points out that the high level of protection in Nagarhole has ensured that "no species has been lost through extinction recently". Resettlement of 600 tribal families voluntarily, with help from



The elephant population in Nagarhole could be at risk, if the vigil is relaxed.

the Central and Karnataka Governments, and motivation through NGOs like Living Inspiration for Tribals and Wildlife First, has gone a long way in consolidating the habitat for all animals. Most importantly, for the Tiger. The gang of poachers who struck in the park are sure to turn international attention on India's measures to protect the Tiger, but the park is the laboratory for a wealth of research data on the threatened species.

The Karnataka Tiger Conservation Project (KTCP) of 1998 which received international sponsorship, marked a new point in conservation efforts for Nagarhole, that had gained momentum in the 1980s under the dynamic retired forest ranger, K. M. Chinnappa. This conservationist, with a sterling record of protecting forest resources, helped build a network of local activists. The Centre for Wildlife Studies in its report on the Tiger Conservation project, estimates the number of tigers in the sample area in Nagarhole during the year 2000 at 37. The number of tigers in the sample area during the two previous years was 32 and 19.

The close attention that Nagarhole has received both within the country and internationally has benefited it greatly. The fact that there is an abundance of herbivores like spotted and other deer in the National Park is a reflection of

G. ANANTHAKRISHNAN
talks to wildlife expert
Dr. Ullas Karanth on
the conservation efforts
at the Nagarhole
National Park.

low "human predation." "If protected effectively from human hunters, most moist deciduous forests in South India should have high herbivore densities... that they do not is a testimony to the widespread impact of local poachers," adds Dr. Karanth, who has been the principal investigator for the Wildlife Conservation Society (India Programme), New York, and scientific advisor for Wildlife First, of which K.M. Chinnappa is President. The WCS has also supported a successful community conservation education programme, the Nagarhole Wildlife Conservation Education Project (NAWICOED), which in turn has encouraged more such education efforts. These programmes point to the effectiveness of activism and a responsive Government together conserving the resources in various sanctuaries and national parks.

Prophetically, just before the

of several birds (of which there are a reported 270 species), and fauna, big and small.

A National Park like Nagarhole provides an ideal environment in which to educate the visitor on the importance of conservation. However, an introduction of some value about nature or the ecosystem of the ghats is yet to become part of the itinerary.

Given the seriousness of the poaching threat, and the recent instance of poaching, a session on this issue is certainly called for. For those who stay in the rest houses, there could be a video film screening on Nagarhole and its importance. The film by Shekhar Dattatri for Discovery channel is perhaps the best way to get to know the park's importance in a single sitting.

A room in one of the forest rest houses (permission required) like Gangotri or Cauvery cost between Rs. 750 and Rs. 1,000 per day. Foreigners are required to pay a higher tariff. While on room rates, there are private jungle resorts and lodges with daily rates of Rs. 1,200 to Rs. 2,000 per person, in the Kabini area.

The economics of such tours, say conservationists, do not work in the Park's favour. In fact, they are a drain on its resources, creating a deficit of over Rs. 12 lakhs a year, despite the huge income that tours generate for their promoters. The lack of any substantial link between the tourist-generated finances and the local population gives rise to resentment among the local settlers — something which can only be remedied through innovative schemes that transfer some of the funds for the residents' rehabilitation.

Dr. Karanth is also wary about unbridled tourism in such an ecologically sensitive area, while recognising the goodwill for conservation that the high profile fauna of the ghats generate. "The focus should be on park protection, not on turning the already understaffed forest department into a tour operator.

The primary need is to restrict tourism to those 10 per cent who come there for serious wildlife viewing... the rest who come to make merry and trash the park should be actively discouraged. We have only about one per cent of that land that effectively protects nature, and this should not be turned into a recreational ground like it is in other countries with 30-40 per cent area under natural landscapes," he says. ●

14-17

Poachers' arrest shows tigers still under threat

By R. Krishna Kumar

MYSORE, JUNE 11. The intricate network of poachers and the scale and range of their operations has been exposed by the crackdown on a gang hailing from Madhya Pradesh which was preparing to poach animals in the Nagarhole National Park.

The shocking incident also underlines the urgency to fill the vacancies in the Forest Department and recruit watchers, forest guards, and those performing the core duty of protection and conservation. Currently, the wildlife wing is facing a 50 per cent staff shortage with the existing being deputed for non-core duties.

Sources said it was imperative to recruit young foresters and guards. The average age of

serving personnel was more than 45 years. Foot patrols should be enhanced and the personnel provided with arms and wireless equipment.

More than 40 persons hailing from Katni near Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh were arrested near Nagarhole National Park on Monday. A series of raids that followed led to the recovery of traps and other equipment used by the poachers to maim and slaughter animals.

What is intriguing is the arrival of the poachers from distant Jabalpur in Central India and the ease with which they entered the protected national park and snared a tiger near Mastigudi by using a "jaw trap".

The jaw trap was sighted for the first time in South India and immediately sent alarm signals pointing to a link between local

small-time poachers and those operating from Central and North India. The incident also reinforces the pessimistic view that tigers continue to be in trouble and the crisis facing this endangered animal is far from over. Though the official Census figures continue to project a rosy picture, the ground reality is frightening. The official figures show that nearly 3,750 tigers survive in the wild, whereas experts and NGOs working in conservation circles point out that there are less than 3,000 tigers remaining in the wild in the country. There were nearly 1,00,000 tigers in the country at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The crisis stems from degraded forests, habitat destruction, human interference in forest areas, and depleting prey base.



Poaching, which constitutes the single greatest threat to wildlife conservation in India, has compounded this crisis. According to sources, the global trade in

wildlife derivatives is said to be approximately U.S. \$6 billion and is next only to the trade in drugs and narcotics.

Indian tigers are highly susceptible to poachers because its organs and parts are used in traditional Chinese medicine. Wildlife conservation experts told *The Hindu* that one tiger could fetch nearly Rs. 1.5 lakh to Rs. 2 lakh in the international market. Poaching and trade in wildlife derivatives is fostered by the prevailing myth that tiger bones have aphrodisiac properties. A kilo of tiger bones fetches nearly \$350, according to sources.

With tigers almost non-existent elsewhere, the international network of poachers has turned its attention on India which harbours more than 60 per cent of the tiger population in the

wild. According to wildlife activists, the trade route for wildlife derivatives passes through the border areas of north-east India from where they are either smuggled to Nepal, Bhutan, or Burma and, thence, to China and the Far East, via Vietnam or Taiwan.

Though official figures are not available on the number of tigers poached in the country every year, the former Field Director of Project Tiger, P.K. Sen, had admitted that at least one tiger was poached everyday.

The Nagarhole incident could prove to be the tip of the iceberg and should send alarm bells ringing. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), S.K. Chakraborty, told *The Hindu* that the process to fill vacancies in the department was being expedited.

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CBI probe urged into trapping of tiger

By Alladi Jayasri

BANGALORE, JUNE 24. The news of a tiger being caught in a steel jaw trap in the forests of Nagarahole three weeks ago has caused consternation among wildlife activists who feel that the State Forest Department has not come to grips with the gravity of the situation.

Wildlife First, which has been actively involved in wildlife conservation in Nagarahole and other areas, has suggested that the Government initiate an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the incident.

Many cases have already been taken over by the CBI. Recently, the Supreme Court quashed a plea against transferring wildlife crimes to the agency, and allowed it to investigate the case of a huge haul of wildlife products in Khaga in Uttar Pradesh, for the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The Wildlife First President, K.M.Chinnappa, who works out of the Nagarahole National Park, and is known for his fight against wildlife poaching, contends that the handling of the tiger case by the local forest staff leaves much to be desired.

Giving the chronology of events, Mr. Chinnappa said that information about the tiger being caught in a "professional" steel jaw trap, the kind used by poachers, first came in on May 31. When the forest staff were alerted, they did not spring into action.

Wildlife activists then contacted the park warden who was in Bangalore, on phone, and voiced the possibility of an organised gang of poachers being involved.

Mr. Chinnappa and other volunteers gathered more information on June 1, and the presence of a group of a nomadic tribe from North India was detected on the southern edge of the park. This information too was passed on to the Range Offi-

cer and the Circle Inspector, but they maintained that no tiger was caught in a trap. However, they conceded that there were chances of a tiger being injured by some thorns.

On June 3, a video clip of the trapped tiger was shown by television news channels, and when the Wildlife First confronted the forest staff, the news reports were dismissed as "bogus." But to their relief, the Chief Wildlife Warden, S.K.Chakrabarty, happened to see the news clips and rushed to Nagarahole along with the Director of Project Tiger, who came down from New Delhi.

The search for the injured tiger began only on June 5, and the animal was found a day later, but even then no attempt was made to find the culprits.

A search to find jaw traps laid by suspected poachers was launched on June 7, a week after the first alert, and a solitary trap was found inside the park the next day, and it was only at this point that the leads given by the Wildlife First was followed up.

By then, the gang had ample time to scatter and pan out to the northern part of the forest. Some members of the gang were finally apprehended on June 10, and more traps, spears, and other "equipment" were seized.

With a large sum of cash also being recovered from them, Mr. Chinnappa and the Wildlife First member, Praveen Bhargav, feel that this could mean that this gang is linked to major wildlife trafficking rings in other parts of the country.

And more alarmingly, the gang could have used local gangs and illegal networks to facilitate their operations, only one of which has come to light now.

Considering that the international wildlife trade is estimated at \$ 5 billion annually, it was time the Forest Department investigated this incident more vigorously, Mr. Chinnappa said.

1417

Tiger found with trap on front paw; lust for bigger game draws killers to Karnataka forests

Latest in Nagarhole poachers' manual: N Indian 'jaw trap'

By VINAY MADHAV

Bangalore, June 3: A healthy male tiger was found caught in a 'jaw trap' near Karapur Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR) in Nagarhole National Park on Saturday.

JLR personnel guiding tourists on a safari in the park found the tiger limping, a steel jaw trap stuck on its front foot, Forest Department sources said. Earlier, other tourists as well as Forest officials had sighted the same tiger.

At first, Forest staff said the tiger was limping because of a thorn in its foot. However, many tourists had videotaped

the tiger and the video clips clearly showed the jaw trap hanging on the predator's foot. Forest staff are now on a frantic search for the wounded animal which has disappeared into the

'It is a disturbing development as prior to this, we had hardly come across jaw traps in South India'

jungle, sources said.

This is not the first time that a big carnivore has been trapped in Karnataka's forests. However, this is the first instance of a jaw trap being used, which has raised doubts as to whether

organised poaching on the lines prevalent in the forests of North India has made its entry into Karnataka also.

Earlier, poachers used metal cables to lay snares to catch deer, sambhar and other herbivores for their meat. But the sighting of the metal jaw trap—a heavy duty variety effective even against big animals—is cause for concern.

Wildlife biologist Ullas Karanth, who watched a video clipping of the tiger, has confirmed that the predator was stuck in a jaw trap. "It is a big male tiger, and it had a jaw trap on its leg. It is a disturbing development



The trapped tiger at Nagarhole

as prior to this, we had hardly come across jaw traps in South India," Karanth said.

"The trap is usually five to six kgs in weight and it would be firmly stuck into the ground. I feel that the tiger has managed to pull out the trap," Karanth said.

"It is high time that we concentrate on this problem (of poaching) as it is still in its initial stages.

"There is a severe shortage of Forest staff at lower levels, which has to be addressed urgently.

"Otherwise, if it is the handiwork of organised gangs, the wildlife in the park will be at risk," Karanth added.

Tiger 'Masthi' gets operated upon

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Mysore, June 7: The wounded tiger, which was rescued on Thursday from Nagarahole forests, was operated upon by a team of veterinarians in Mysore Zoo.

The adult male tiger, which was trapped after a massive operation which lasted for nearly 12 hours, has been shifted to the zoo for treatment.

The tiger was visibly in pain with the left fore paw almost in shreds. Its paw had got caught in a trap planted by poachers in the forest.

The operation was carried out by Dr Khadri, Dr Valandikar and Dr Shadakshya and lasted for nearly an hour.

Nicknamed 'Tiger Masthi', the carnivore was sedated for nearly 45 minutes.

It may be recalled that a wounded tiger with a jaw trap on its leg had been seen and photographed by some tourists at Nagarahole.

All efforts by forest officials to locate it had failed.

The tiger was finally found in a shallow cave in Mastigudi area. It required the combined efforts of nearly 150 officials and 10 pachyderms to get the tiger out.

"The feline was under str-



Veterinarians dressing up the injured paw of the tiger 'Masthi' inside its cage in Mysore on Friday.

ess and also had a temperature of 104 degrees. So, we decided to go along with only

supportive treatment," said Khadri.

The tiger will be monit-

ored round-the-clock and antibiotics and vitamin supplements would be administered, Khadri said.

Constructive surgery will be done on Tuesday.

"Amputation of the infected leg has to be done," said Valandikar.

Satisfied that the tiger was responding positively to medication, doctors said that after Tuesday's surgery, follow-up treatment would be continued for another three weeks.

Before the operation, the tiger was bathed and its leg disinfected.

Unable to adjust to the new environment, the tiger had turned hostile. It was seen roaring and trying to attack people.

Earlier, the Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Ravi Ralph and CCF Anur Reddy visited the zoo.

Director of the zoo. Pushkar, said the tiger would be kept in the zoo till it recovered.

He said that after recovering completely, it would be shifted to the Rescue Centre of the Bannerghatta National Park.

Ravi Ralph said efforts would be made to locate the jaw trap.

He said forest staff would be employed to trace the trap. Finding the trap will help us catch the poachers, he said.

A feline which taught forest men what patience is

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Mysore, June 7: It was curtains down for the massive hunt for the injured tiger in Nagarahole Park.

The elusive tiger, which had the forest officials on their toes, was finally trapped by forest officials on Thursday in Masthigudi area of Nagarahole National Park.

The week-long search concluded when the feline, nicknamed 'Tiger Masthi', was sighted at around 10 am on Thursday. The clever beast had obviously chosen its hiding place well — a shallow cave, 10 feet long and two feet wide — with close proximity to a water hole.

Jaw traps are commonly used by poachers to trap wild boars. But the fact that a tiger was trap-

ped in it forced the officials to sit up and take notice of what could be a potential threat to wildlife.

The injured animal remained elusive and when it was rescued from the woods, its paw was found badly hurt with part of it in shreds. A massive operation was launched with the help of pachyderms and tribals.

However, the animal, which refused to budge from the cave, was forced out by digging a hole atop the cave through which water was poured down.

The operation lasted for several hours and when the animal came out finally, all those involved heaved a sigh of relief. However, on close examination the forepaw of the majestic cat had been injured badly.

1417 39 ✓

Scribes 'waylaid' by jumbo; smugglers seen in the 'act'

DH News Service

HUNSUR (MYSORE DT) Karnataka Chief Conservator of Forests (Protection and Maintenance) Vedanth today confirmed that smugglers had cut fallen trees of sandalwood and teak in Nagarahole forest.

Speaking to reporters here after inspecting the Veerana Hosahalli forest in Nagarahole division following media reports that sandalwood and teak trees had been smuggled, Mr Vedanth said, "Trees had been cut, and sandalwood trees had been smuggled in this reserved forest. The rift between the people residing on the forest periphery and the forest staff could be the reason for the incident."

"Though the Forest Act says that fallen trees should not be removed from the forest, the department could not take strict measure in this regard," he said.

Replying to a query, he said many posts in the forest department were vacant, especially forest watchers, guards. "Because of this, we are facing problems in the protection of forest wealth," he observed.

"It is difficult for a guard to man 5,000 acres of forest land," he said, adding that efforts were on to appoint them. "It is also being ex-



DH PHOTO

A team of journalists and forest officials inspecting the remains of the cut sandalwood trees during their visit Nagarhole forests on Thursday.

amined whether the forest guards and the smugglers have any nexus," he replied to a query.

Meanwhile, when the group of journalists from Hunsur were taken inside the forest of Jaladahalli by walk, three smugglers were in the act of transporting chopped teak logs from the forest. Efforts by the forest authorities to nab them turned futile as they escaped in the dense jungle.

Another surprise was waiting for the group when it approached Madahalli Road in the forest

region. A female elephant and its calf attacked the group. Panicked members, including forest staff, ran helter-skelter. Some climbed the trees, some hid behind the bush.

However, forest official Jaishankar could not run fast and stumbled in the middle. Sensing trouble, Chief Conservator of Forest Vedanth fired two rounds in the air and the elephant and the calf ran into the forest. The journalists' group, with the memorable experience, safely returned home.



Stumps of trees that were felled illegally in the Veeranahosahalli Range of the Nagarahole National Park.

Tree felling in Nagarahole riles wildlife groups

By Alladi Jayasri

BANGALORE, AUG. 28. Wildlife groups in Bangalore and those working in Nagarahole National Park are livid over the discovery of large-scale tree felling within the national park, in which over 500 stumps of sandalwood and teak, the remnants of vandalism, have been found by a fact-finding team that went there on August 23.

Wildlife First and LIFT (Living Inspiration for Tribals) say that the Forest Department has done little to contain illegal timber felling in the forests despite evidence of several incidents coming to light in the area frequently.

Areas such as Gundanaapaare, Honaganakatte, Dayadakatte, Betallakatte, Hosakarekatte in the Veeranahosahalli Range are where the culprits strike, Wildlife First's K.M.Chinnappa said. In fact, the latest incident is regarded as a sequel to the one two years ago when large-scale timber felling and transportation took place in Kallahalla and DB Kuppe ranges.

Mr. Chinnappa said that although a vigilance inquiry was conducted at that time, no action was taken to bring the culprits to book.

Forest Department sources told *The Hindu* here that when the Chief Conservator of Forests, Vedanth, visited Nagarahole on August 15, efforts were made to trivialise the magnitude of tree felling.

It was only after LIFT's P.M. Muthanna and a few tribal people were assured by the Minister for Forests, K.H.Ranganath, that a fact-finding team, comprising Mr. Vedanth, the Conservator of Forests, M.N.Jayakumar, and the DCF, Mobile Squad, Ananda Gowda, visited the park on August 23.

Official sources admitted that protection in the park had been rather slack, and cited the oft-repeated explanation of lack of manpower and shortage of protection gear as the reasons.

However, Mr. Chinnappa said: "This is only the tip of the iceberg." The team was yet to visit areas in the Anechowkur, the Metikuppe, and the DB Kuppe ranges, apart from the Birunani area of Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, where several hundred trees had been felled, and the area cleared as if cultivation of some illegal crops was intended to be undertaken there.

Wildlife First, which recently exposed the incident of a tiger

that was injured by a steel jaw trap, alleges that the officials have not followed up on any of the leads that the local tribal people or wildlife groups working in conservation gave them.

The Vice-President of LIFT, Thamoo Poovaiah, even goes so far as to say that the coming of the Rs. 38-crore World Bank Eco Development Project four years ago to put in place a protection system, had actually served to "distract" the officials from the task for which they are employed in the first place.

"It distracted them from the core protection duties and diverted their attention to the peripheral eco-development activities outside the park," Mr. Poovaiah said.

Giving the breakdown on expenditure on protection and maintenance, he said that the establishment costs were Rs. 1 crore, but the World Bank project pumped in Rs. 8 crore, and there had been very little to show for it.

Wildlife groups have been working with the Forest Department in improving the working conditions of the forest staff, motivating and making them stakeholders in the protection of the park.

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Row over sandalwood smuggling in Nagarahole

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Mysore, July 23: The alleged smuggling of sandalwood from Nagarahole National Park has kicked up a row with forest officials holding the tribals of Hemmige settlement responsible for it.

Illegal felling of sandalwood at Veeranhosalli forest range was exposed when visitors took pictures of logs and stumps. However, when the smuggling went unhindered, tribals from a settlement were booked for colluding with the smugglers.

It may be recalled that a Bangalore-based organisation had highlighted the illegal felling of sandalwood from the Nagarhole National Park.

However, when Nataraj, a news photographer published pictures of logs and



The remains of sandalwood tree which was felled inside Nagarahole forest

sandalwood stumps allegedly felled at the National Park area, the concerned forest official is said to have threatened the photographer.

The forest officials had even threatened to register a case and initiate action against the photographer for entering the forest area, while refusing to reveal the nature of action against the smugglers.

Meanwhile, Budakattu Krishikara Sangha has charged the forest officials of making false cases of smuggling against tribals of Hemmige settlement.

In a complaint to the DFO (Regular), they have charged forest officials Karyappa, Arjun, Basavaraju and Pasha of picking up three tribals from their resettlement and foisting false charges of sandalwood smuggling.

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FRIDAY,
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THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
BANGALORE

Nagarahole: Forest Department team stumbles across timber smugglers

By VINAY MADHAV

Bangalore, Aug 29: It's official now: The Nagarahole National Park -- spread around Kodagu and Mysore districts -- has been ravaged by large scale timber smuggling. That's what a fact-finding team of the Forest Department stumbled upon during a recent foray ordered by Forest Minister K H Ranganath.

During a tour to Gundana-paare, Honaganakatte, Day-adakatte, Betalakatte and Hosakarekette on Aug 23, the team found over 500 stumps of teak and sandal trees and even came face-to-face with a gang of timber smugglers, who managed to escape. Apparently, the trees were being felled and transported just 3-5 kms from the Veeranahosalli forest range office.

The fact-finding team comprised of Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) C S Vedanth, Conservator of Forests M N Jayakumar and Deputy Conservator of Forests (mobile squad) Anand Gowda. They were assisted by P M Muthanna, convener of Living Inspiration For Tribals (LIFT) and some local tribals.

Nagarahole has been in the news for quite some time now with allegations flying around about illegal timber felling, elephant poaching and clearing of land for 'ganja' cultivation in Brahmagiri. Then there was the recent case of the north Indian style 'jaw trapping' of a male tiger, following which the Forest Minister set up the fact-finding team.

According to LIFT Vice President Thamoo Pooviah, the tree stumps did not bear any 'hammer marks' or numbering, which would have been done if the For-

est Department had come across these FOCs -- Forest Offence Cases. "This shows that patrolling has come to a standstill in the park," he added.

President of Wildlife First K M Chinnappa said, "This is just tip of the iceberg. The committee still has to visit areas in Anechowkur, DB Kuppe, Metikuppe and Birunani area of Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, where several hundred trees have been felled and patches of forests cleared for cultivation."

Thamoo blamed the World Bank-aided Eco Dev-

elopment project for distraction of officials from the core duty of protection. "While the park's establishment cost per year is little over Rs 1 Crore, Rs 38 crore has been pumped in during the last four years for the project. Now this money has proved counterproductive," he added.

Thamoo charged that Forest officials were now targeting tribals, NGOs and the Press, who helped the fact-finding team: "An Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) was taking down details of those who helped the team, including the identity of tribals. Such fact-finding missions will fail to deter officials from colluding with the offenders, unless strong action is initiated against officials involved," Thamoo added.

When contacted the Chief Wildlife Warden S K Chakrabarti admitted that he had heard about the incident when the fact-finding team confronted some people sawing trees in the forest. "There seems to be some loose ends in the story. But everything will be revealed, once the CCF gives his final report," Chakrabarti said.

'Control access'

Bangalore: Every time the media highlights instances of illegal deforestation, the Forest Department accuses it of exaggeration. In June, when a tiger was found with a 'jaw trap' on its leg at Kakanakote, the Department took three days to react, till the issue hit the headlines. After this incident, 42 tribals from Madhya Pradesh were arrested, who were released on bail. Now they have all disappeared.

Soon after the incident, the Hunsur Deputy Conservator of Forests issued a circular asking forest staff to beef up protection work. "Time has come to exercise control on everyone entering the park to monitor the activities of poachers. In the name of NGOs, research, tourists or VIPs, people would directly or indirectly take advantage in the name of wildlife research or tribal development, which has to be stopped," the circular read. • ENS

Nagarahole in news for wrong reasons

By Joseph Hoover
DH News Service

BANGALORE, Aug 29

Until recently the Nagarahole National Park was talked about as a wildlife sanctuary with the highest density of angulates and carnivores, the majestic tiger being the cynosure. But today it finds itself in the news for all the wrong reasons. A tusker goes down every three months. Teak and sandalwood trees are felled and transported out of the park every week. Protection, as NGOs lament, exists just in name, despite the Forest Department having sufficient staff to patrol the park.

"In the past officials would cite lack of personnel and equipment — weapons, wireless sets — for any lapse in protection. Today there are ample foresters, guards and trackers to man the park. So they cannot give an excuse for the recent incidents of poaching and smuggling," said K M Chinnappa, President, Wildlife First.

On their part, forest officials argue that the Supreme Court order (based on the interlocutory application (No 548) of 2000 in writ petition 202 of 1995), "restraining State governments from ordering removal of dead, diseased, dying or wind fallen trees, drift wood and grasses from National Parks or Game sanctuaries" has given an open invitation to unscrupulous elements to loot national wealth.

This does not hold water with NGOs. "This is an absurd excuse. Whether the tree is dead or fallen it has to be protected by the staff. They have been paid for this job," said Mr Chinnappa.

One of the reasons for the lapses in protection over the last four years could be ascribed to the Rs 38-crore World Bank Eco Development project. The funds were provided to do away with the man-animal conflict, by moving forest settlers to the periphery of the forest, thereby improving the protection mechanism in the parks.

"But what it has actually done is distract the officials from their core protection duties and divert their attention to the peripheral eco-development activities in villages outside the park," rued Thammoo Pooviah, vice-president, Living Inspiration for Tribals (LIFT).

As recent happenings show,



All that remains of a teak tree in Nagarahole. More than 500 such stumps were inspected by the fact-finding team appointed by the forest minister.

the park has become a veritable hunting ground for organised gangs to indulge in poaching and smuggling. That a tiger (in its prime) was snared in a steel jaw trap, four tuskers were poached and trees were felled and transported right under the nose of the

department indicates that protection has not been given due importance.

Only last week, a three-member fact-finding team, constituted at the insistence of Forest Minister K H Ranganath, endorsed claims by NGOs and

tribals that more than 500 mature teak and sandal trees were felled and smuggled from the Veeranahosahalli Range of the Nagarahole National Park.

Chief Conservator of Forests C S Vedanth, Conservator of Forests M N Jayakumar and Deputy Conservator of Forests, Mobile Squad, Anand Gowda had inspected Gundanaapaare, Honaganakatte, Dayadakatte, Betalakatte and Hosakarekutte to assess the damage wreaked by the gang.

According to a forest officer, the team distinctly heard wood being chopped in a nearby thicket. "But by the time we went to the spot, the smugglers had taken to their heels," said the official. It is on record with the Department.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg. The authorities are yet to visit areas in the Anechowkur, DB Kuppe, Mettikuppe, Birunani and the Bramhagiri Wildlife Sanctuary where several hundred trees have been felled and forests cleared to cultivate ganja. Having lived all my life in this region, I can confidently say that protection has never been so lax in Nagarahole," emphasised Mr Chinnappa, who as Range Forest Officer had guarded the park with great care.

When did the protection mechanism lose its perspective? According to LIFT's Muthana, smuggling has been rampant in Nagarahole over the last three years but has gained momentum in the last 12 months.

It is baffling that the Department has turned a blind eye to the goings-on, despite being rocked by large-scale smuggling of trees in the past. In one instance in late 1999, teak worth Rs 25 lakh was illicitly felled in the Kolangere section of the Kallahalla range. The smugglers had dug up a saw pit barely 100 metres from the patrol route to trim the felled trees into billets to be transported as head loads. Though a vigilance department, headed by chief conservator of forests, probed the matter, no one has been booked as yet.

Considering that smuggling and poaching are common incidents in Nagarahole these days and that inept officials have ruled the roost, NGOs have pleaded with the Forest Minister to reprimand callous officials before Nagarahole goes the Bandipur way.

'I have evidence...'

BANGALORE, Aug 29 (DHNS)

Even this morning, around 40 men belonging to a smuggling network entered the core area, according to Mr K M Chinnappa. "I have evidence to substantiate that a huge group of men entered the park and felled trees. I have informed forest officials in Mysore about it, providing them with the specific location," said Mr Chinnappa.

Conservator of Forests, Mr M N Jayakumar agreed that he had been sounded out by Mr Chinnappa. "I was told about it. But he has asked me to wait until he locates where the wood has been transported to," said Mr Jayakumar.

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11/01/03

'Hunting is the biggest threat to wildlife'

By Alladi Jayasri

BANGALORE, DEC. 31. Hunting in protected areas by local communities continues to be the biggest threat to Indian wildlife, and the poor understanding of its nature, extent, and impacts on wildlife has only taken large mammals closer to the brink of extinction, according to the wildlife biologists, K. Ullas Karanth, and M.D. Madhusudhan.

In a report published earlier this year in *Ambio*, a journal of the human environment, published by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Dr. Karanth and his colleague have discussed the case studies of Kudremukh and Nagarhole national parks.

The survey, conducted during 1996-97 as part of a larger exercise to evolve a programme of protection and conservation with people's involvement, and has since been put in place, found that in Kudremukh, at least 26 species of mammals were hunted, mostly with guns, at an estimated intensity of 216 hunter-days a month per village (surrounding the forest area).

"We had detailed interviews with retired and active hunters, and studied the hunting patterns described by them, and our data underscore the importance of preservationist programmes in the conservation of large mammals in the context of extensive local hunting," Dr. Karanth told *The Hindu*.

In Kudremukh, the survey

was conducted on the western fringes with evergreen vegetation.

At least 32 species of mammals with less than 0.5 kg. body mass occur here, and include the highly endangered lion-tailed macaque. The park is surrounded by 88 villages with an estimated 2.8-lakh population. Another 98 small hamlets are located within the park. The ethnic composition of the villages is diverse with Bunts, Bilavas, Vokkaligas, Brahmins, and Muslims, apart from tribes such as Malekudiya and Muggera.

During the survey, the emphasis was on obtaining information related to the intensity of hunting, and describing patterns of hunting — hunter-prey choice, techniques, and the influence of socio-cultural factors in driving the activity.

"Since hunting in India is forbidden under law, we were essentially probing an illicit activity that people were generally averse to discuss," Dr. Karanth said, and to assess the willingness of the villagers to divulge information, they carried out a pilot survey before launching the actual study.

On the basis of the pilot survey, they chose three widely separated village enclaves bordering the forests, Kadirudyaavara, Maala, and Thingale, where they believed that it would be fairly easy to gather and verify information on hunting. After many covert and overt over-

tures, and much coaxing, they were able to interview 49 active and 19 retired hunters, apart from several neutral informants.

The statements from the testimonies were randomly cross-checked among the respondents, and dubious data was discarded.

The results were quite disturbing — on an average, a hunter hunted 18 species of mammals in his lifetime. Seventy-eight per cent of the hunters ranked the chevrotain as the species they had hunted the most, followed by the common langur (60 per cent) and Giant Indian Squirrel (50 per cent).

About 75 per cent of all the hunters reported a general decline in the abundance of large mammals in the region, and the scientists were able to establish a significant relationship between the perceived rarity of a species and the rate at which it was hunted locally.

The hunters used locally crafted muzzle-loading guns, while some used snares to hunt ungulates like pigs.

Those who did not own guns borrowed them. Most hunters admitted that they hunted for food, although 48 per cent of them said that thrill was a factor too.

None of the 62 interviews reported encounters with the enforcement staff, and 40 per cent of them even admitted that they received assistance in their hunting activities.

Water shortage hits denizens of Nagarahole

By Alladi Jayasri

BANGALORE, JAN. 14. Tough days are ahead for the denizens of the Nagarahole Wildlife Sanctuary. Even before winter has yielded to summer, silt-filled tanks with parched beds and dried up streams are choking up the forests.

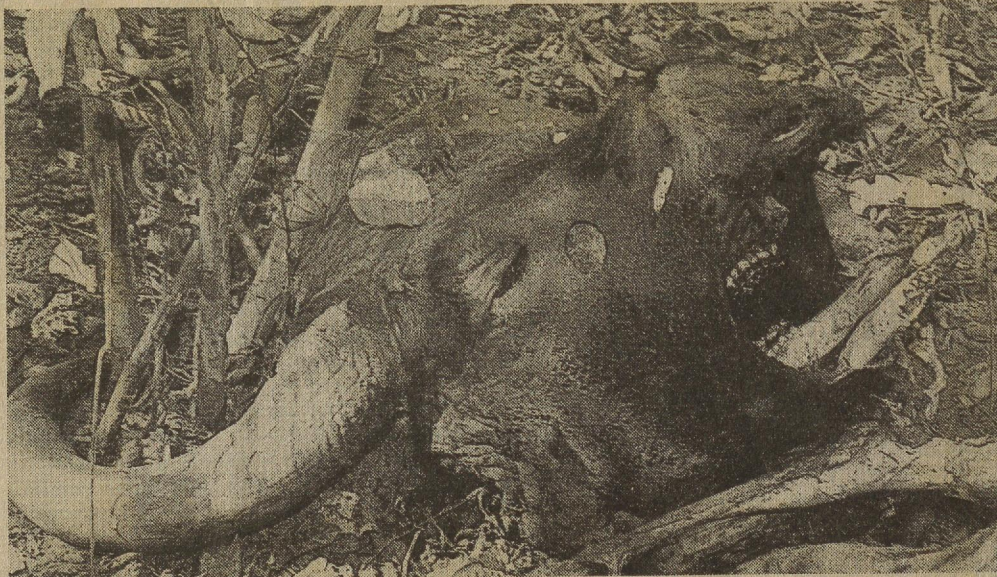
The wildlife conservation group, Institute for Nature Conservation, Education Research and Training (INCERT), which visited Nagarahole last week, has returned with photographs of a dead bison, and other animals that have given up attempts to look for water.

"If this is the situation now what can we expect to see in summer." There is no water anywhere nearby within a radius of 20 km., says S. Sridhar of INCERT.

The carcass of the bison was found a week ago near Kundanur village in the Mathigodu Range Forest, about 8 km. from Billenahosahalli. The activists also found a tank, which was "rejuvenated" under a World Bank-aided project, covered with silt.

Sandalwood smuggling

Sandalwood trees are being felled and billets traded at Rs. 300 a kg. in the sanctuary, ac-



The carcass of a bison which was found in the Mathigodu Range Forest.

cording to INCERT. At Banawarakere, Balekatte, Chandanagirikadu, and Alurkadu next to the RFO quarters, sandalwood trees are being cut and the billets smuggled out. The billets are packed in polythene bags and sold openly in Panchavalli, Hanugoodu, B.R.Kaval, and Hemmigegowdikere. The dealers come from Mysore to take away the billets. They have remodelled their

scooters to accommodate the billets. The petrol tank is altered to accommodate a little glove compartment where they hide the booty and ride back to Mysore.

Mr. Sridhar says that he has noted down the registration numbers of such scooters and passed them on to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests for action. The INCERT is critical of many forest officials who are

prone to their hobby when on duty. Many of them have made it to record books and won awards for wildlife photography.

While it is an engaging hobby, letting criminals get away with sandalwood smuggling and not showing interest in the welfare of wild animals that could die before the onset of summer due to lack of water is not what is expected from them, Mr. Sridhar says.

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'Numbers of large mammals dwindling'

By Alladi Jayasri

BANGALORE, JAN. 1. Nagarhole National Park, like most protected areas, is a happy hunting ground for local communities, and six of the nine focal species of large mammals are dwindling in numbers at the heavily hunted site. Poor enforcement capabilities, brazen flouting of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which bans all hunting, and many socio-cultural factors contribute to the thinning of populations, according to wildlife biologists, K.Ullas Karanth and M.D.Madhusudhan.

A study published in *Ambio*, a human environment journal published by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, comprises a survey of two patches of moist forest, Nalkeri and Arkeri, each about 70 sq km in area, but with vastly different pressure of hunting, conducted by the two wildlife biologists.

Local people from the Kodava, Kuruba, Yerava, Vokkaliga and Moplah communities hunt in the forests of Nagarhole. The researchers found that in Arkeri, the pressures of hunting have been consistently higher over the past three decades. "This is chiefly because until a few years ago, it lacked a wildlife protection staff invested with the exclusive responsibility of controlling hunting," Dr. Karanth says.

Besides, Arkeri offered better access to, and therefore, created a greater demand from local meat markets, and showed higher levels of hunting as compared to Nalkeri.

Systematic line transect surveys (a system of walking the forests in straight lines in different directions, and estimating the number of prey animals such as ungulates, and small mammals, and working out the predator-prey ratio, which indi-

cates the health of a forest) were conducted simultaneously in Nalkeri and Arkeri, over a sampling area of 599 km. The line transect helped estimate the abundance of nine species of mammals, the Indian Giant Squirrel, Bonnet Macaque, Common Langur, Barking Deer, Wild Pig, Chital, Sambar, Gaur, and the Asian Elephant.

Estimates by the local hunters and informants indicated that hunting in Arkeri was about three times as intense as in Nalkeri.

As many as 16 of the 29 mammal species of weight over 1 kg in Nagarhole were regularly hunted. Shotguns were the most popular weapons, but tribal hunters were known to use at least eight traditional techniques to hunt large mammals.

The Giant Squirrel, Bonnet Macaque, Langur, Chital and Wild Pig and Gaur are the six

species whose density is lowering at an alarming rate in Arkeri. As for the Muntjac and Sambar, both were equally in demand in Nalkeri and Arkeri, while the elephant is the only species occurring at a significantly higher density even in Arkeri.

Patterns of hunting at Nagarhole differed from that of Kudremukh National Park, where hunters mainly catered to the local wild meat consumption. In Arkeri, some hunters "specialise" in exclusive supply of wild meat to eateries in nearby towns, and sometimes in neighbouring Kerala.

Dr. Karanth's survey and its outcome is the prelude to the drafting of a conservation programme with a "preservationist" approach, towards a socially acceptable, economically equitable, and morally agreeable ways of minimising hunting pressures on large mammals.

14-17

11/2/03

Residents sceptical about brigand's presence in Nagarahole

By K. Satyamurty

BANGALORE, FEB. 9. Residents of the area surrounding the Nagarahole National Park are sceptical about the presence of Veerappan and his gang in the park. They are also anxious about the fall-out on the tourism business as a result of rumours.

They find no reason to believe the initial reports that the jeep driver of a forest official saw Veerappan and his men crossing the road in the forest for several reasons. "No outlaw with a price on his head will cross the road when a vehicle is approaching, knowing it could be filled with armed policemen. In a forest, the sound of an approaching vehicle can be heard from miles away, and the reaction of the gang will be to take cover." This is the reaction of some persons running wildlife resorts in the area, who know the topography well.

R. Ram, owner of Waterwoods, a private resort outside the park, says "Veerappan is not a fool to venture out having survived manhunts for so many years. He is not known to have operated

anytime recently in Nagarahole, which is a flat plain where he can be easily caught unlike in the hilly terrain. It is not a good hideout for outlaws unlike the Satyamangalam-Dimbum forests with steep hills and valleys which provide good cover and escape routes."

Other resort owners and their staff also scoff at the idea that Veerappan is out to kidnap foreign tourists as reported.

They point out that he can be easily caught with his captives before escaping to a safer place. Within 10 km. to the North of where he is said to be now, the highway to Kodagu passes and it can be tightly patrolled. To the West is the border with Wynad in Kerala, and to the East are populated areas. To the South there is a river, which Veerappan will have to cross with his captives on a boat. "The logistics involved defy logic," the resort owners say.

While admitting that the jeep driver could have sighted some poachers, residents around Nagarahole are worried that rumours about Veerappan's presence will affect business and keep away tourists.

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11/2/03

No tension in Nagarahole following rumours on brigand

By Our Staff Correspondent

MADIKERI, FEB. 9. Whether Vee-rappan and his men have entered the Nagarahole National Park or not, the brigand is still wanted here in connection with two cases registered against him and the gang, including the murder of a forest watcher at Devamachi in the Thithimathi Forest Range of the park, in Kodagu in 1983.

Veerappan, his brother, Madayya, and other members of the gang were involved in the killing of five elephants in the Arekere Reserve Forest at Devamachi village.

The forest watcher, K.M.Prithvi, who rushed to the spot where the gang killed an elephant, died in an encounter with the gang.

On August 27, 1983, a criminal case was formally registered at the Thithimathi police outpost by K.S.Madappa, then a forester. Later, the cases were transferred to the Ponnampet Police Station.

The involvement of Veerappan came to light when Madayya and his associate, Kolandepayyan, were arrested by Satyamangalam police on May 25, 1986, at Kollegal.

They were stated to have confessed that they were involved

in the murder of Prithvi and poaching elephants at Devamachi in 1983. They were brought from Satyamangalam to the Ponnampet Police Station where Madayya is said to have confirmed the involvement of the gang in the murder of the forest watcher and poaching elephants.

Meanwhile, high alert sounded since Friday in and around the park following rumours that Veerappan and his gang had entered Nagarahole remains. The STF, Police, and Forest personnel found no clue of the outlaw and his men in the park.

Ravindrakumar, Nagarahole Range Forest Officer, told *The Hindu* on Sunday that there was no tension in the park area in Kodagu.

The movement of tourists had not been affected. A team of policemen was in the park, he added.

Meanwhile, sources in the Hunsur Division confirmed that combing operations were on at D.B.Kuppe, Antarasante, Balle Elephant Camp, and Kakana-kote areas.

The State STF chief, Jyotiprakash Mirji, is reported to have reached the park today.

Police sources at Kutta and Srimangala police stations in Virajpet taluk of Kodagu, which

are located close to the park, said there was no cause for worry. They did not receive instructions from their higher ups in Kodagu to keep extra vigil following the developments, sources added.

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Lokayukata raids Nagarhole forest range

By Our Staff Correspondent

MYSORE, FEB. 15. The Lokayukta today raided the Nagarhole forest areas near here, and stumbled upon evidence of timber smuggling and misappropriation of funds in the Rs. 36-crore Eco-Development Project.

During his nearly six km. trek deep inside the reserved forest areas of Veerahosahalli in the Nagarhole range, the Lokayukta, Justice Venkatachala, found stumps of full-grown teak at several places. Neatly chopped logs of wood, meant for doors and windows of houses, were also recovered from a few places inside the forest area.

The Deputy Conservator of Forests (Hunsur Division), Annaiah, under whose jurisdiction the forests fall, tried to defend himself by initially claiming that he had been "framed" by vested interests. Later, he said that the poor strength of the Forest Department was the cause to prevent smuggling.

Mr. Venkatachala countered Mr. Annaiah's defence by pinning the blame for the smuggling of timber worth crores of rupees on the Forest Department officials.

An angry Lokayukta later told accompanying presspersons that timber

smuggling from the reserved forest areas had taken place on account of the Forest Department's "irresponsibility" and "official negligence."

That most of the timber had been smuggled from forest areas, which were deep inside and not on the periphery, indicated "official collusion," Mr. Justice Venkatachala said.

The Lokayukta's team, comprising the superintendents, Riyaz and Uthappa, apart from the Task Force (Health) Chairman and the Director, Vigilance, H.Sudarshan, also found the shell of a tortoise and remnants of burnt firewood at one of the places, which indicated that the smugglers had cooked food inside the forest area. Mr. Annaiah, the Assistant Conservator of Forests (Hunsur Division), Krishne Gowda, and other forest officials were with the Lokayukta team during the raid. Kalinga, a local tribal, led the Lokayukta team to places inside the forest area, where timber had been felled by smugglers. Mr. Justice Venkatachala warned Mr. Annaiah of action if any harm came to Kalinga.

Earlier, the Lokayukta team raided Mr. Annaiah's office in Hunsur following a complaint from Kodagu Ekikarana Ranga (KER) alleging large-scale

misappropriation of funds in the Rs. 36 crore World Bank-aided Eco-Development Project. The KER convenor, Thammu Poovaiah, alleged that funds to the tune of Rs. 1 crore had been misappropriated during the implementation of the project, aimed at the welfare of tribal people. Under the project, the tribal people were to be provided with gas stoves, cookers, shelter, toilets, and community halls.

The beneficiaries of the project complained to the Lokayukta that the gas stoves provided to them were sub-standard. The villagers complained that the Forest Department had used their manpower for digging trenches free of cost though the project stipulated payment of remuneration for the labourers. The Lokayukta raid also brought to light the reported death of 77 elephants in Hunsur Wildlife Division during the past 22 months. The Lokayukta sought to know from Mr. Annaiah whether steps had been taken to save the pachyderms. Of the 110 posts in the division, as many as 60 were vacant, Mr. Annaiah said. But, Mr. Justice Venkatachala told Mr. Annaiah that he was empowered to recruit tribal people as watchers on daily wages.

'Forest officials neglecting core duties'

By Our Staff Reporter

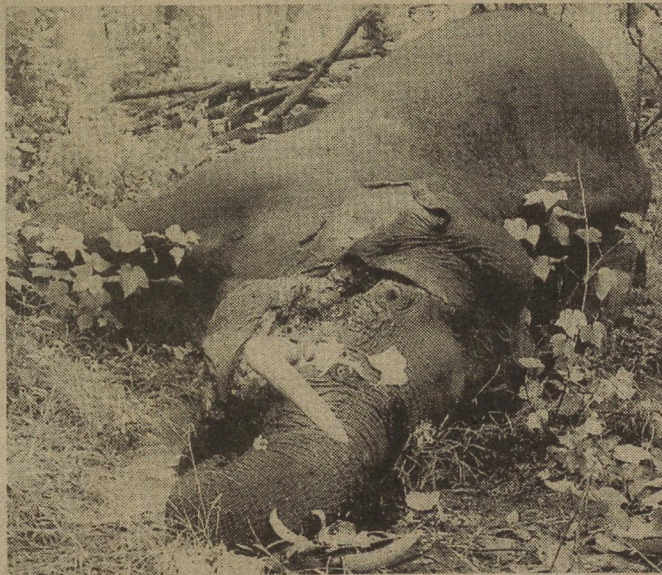
BANGALORE, FEB. 27. Wildlife conservation groups that have long felt that World Bank funding or any financial aid for forest conservation and protection is no solution are now saying this is the very lesson to be learned from the recent Nagarahole National Park episode.

After Lokayukta raids on the officials at Nagarahole a fortnight ago, Bangalore-based Wildlife First has said that working on the World Bank-aided Eco-Development Project has "totally distracted the park officials from their core responsibilities of protecting wildlife and forests".

Fearing an attempt to suppress the truth of elephant deaths, timber smuggling, and other omissions and commissions unearthed by the Lokayukta, Wildlife First has urged the Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, to order the stoppage of the Eco-Development Project, on which Rs. 14 crore is yet to be spent.

Investigations by Wildlife First and the facts that emerged from the Lokayukta raids have shown that around Rs. 24 crore passed through the hands of the park officials in the past five years under the Eco-Development Project.

"How can the Forest Department justify spending Rs. 8 million on bamboo hoeing, which



Another victim of the greed for ivory

is a highly destructive activity, while a huge expanse of natural vegetation was being looted or burned down by forest fires?" is what the Lokayukta and groups such as Wildlife First are asking.

As the Wildlife First president, K.M. Chinnappa says, "Spending crores of rupees on WB loans on rural development is not the job of foresters."

He says it is sad that greed for money is turning what was once the jewel in the crown of all wildlife reserves in Karnataka into a death trap for elephants,

tiger, and other wildlife.

Among the gruesome evidence that the Lokayukta's visit threw up was that 77 elephants had died in the national park between January 2000 and October 2002. And 44 of these were tuskers whose numbers are already dwindling all over Asia due to poaching for ivory.

The wildlife scientist, K. Ullas Karanth, who heads the New York-based Wildlife Conservation Society's India programme, says, "Such a high proportion of deaths resulting from intra-spe-

cific aggression — the official reason for the deaths — is unlikely." Unlike carnivores, he points out, elephants are sociable, and fights-to-the-death are rare.

Mr. Chinnappa, an old Nagarahole hand who quit the Forest Department to work independently over 20 years ago, adds, "The official explanations sound hollow and, in one particular case, the claim that a tusker died of starvation because its tusks were crossed, and it could not feed, is downright absurd."

This is just one of the ominous signs of wildlife destruction in Nagarahole, and the implementation of the Eco-Development Project from 1997-98 has only accelerated the pace of destruction.

Reports of trappers from Madhya Pradesh roaming the park freely, setting up jaw traps which snared one tiger last May, and other wildlife poaching sprees have continued against the backdrop of reports of timber smuggling and habitat destruction.

Wildlife First and other groups have documented the destruction well and, together with the Lokayukta's interest in the goings-on, the so-called "departmental inquiries have turned out to be nothing but a whitewashing of the truth", according to Mr. Chinnappa.

7/3/03

Nagarahole episode: 2 officials suspended

By Our Staff Reporter

BANGALORE, MARCH 6. The Forest Minister, K.H. Ranganath, and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, S.S. Mallikarjun, today informed M.C. Nanaiah (JD-neutral) in the Legislative Council that the Deputy Conservator of Forests, A.M. Annaiah, has been suspended and B.S. Ravi Kumar, lecturer, removed from the NSS programme following their alleged sexual harassment of women members of the NSS at Nagarahole.

Replying to a debate in this regard, the ministers told the member that the DCF was suspended pending a departmental inquiry. Mr. Ranganath clarified that there was no programme to take NSS volunteers into the reserve forests and, that too, on a night safari as alleged by Mr. Nanaiah. He also said

that no permission had been taken from the department.

Mr. Ranganath warned that the Government would not tolerate such an attitude on the part of the officers. The Corps of Detectives, which had conducted an inquiry, had indicted the two officers and the charge of sexual harassment had been proved, *prime facie*.

Mr. Nanaiah said the same Forest Department official had arrested reporters for attempting to go to the guesthouse at Nagarahole where the Panchayat Raj Minister, M.Y. Ghorpade, was staying, on the charge that their entry was illegal. But, how could the DCF and the NSS coordinator take 140 NSS volunteers, including girls, on a night safari violating all rules? He demanded that the two be booked for their actions as admitted by the ministers and arrested.

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'Tribal people not evicted from park'

By Our Staff
Correspondent

MADIKERI, APRIL 21. The Government has not resorted to the use of force to relocate tribal people living in the forests, national parks, or wildlife sanctuaries of the State, the Minister for Social Welfare, A.Krishnappa, has said.

Speaking to presspersons here on Sunday during his visit to Polibetta to assess the situation following the death of a man who was killed by an elephant, he said the Government had not evicted the tribal people living in the Nagarahole National Park.

On whether the Forest Department had identified land to relocate the tribal people living in Kodagu, the Principal Secretary (Forests and Environment), Gokul Ram, who was present, feigned ignorance over the issue.

The Minister took note of a suggestion by a pressperson that 1,000 acres of land was available at Majjigehalla in Virajpet taluk.

The tribal people had earlier expressed the desire to settle down on the periphery of the forests in the event of their relocation.

Mr. Ram said that 250 tribal families had moved into Nagapura where they were provided with financial aid and five acres of land each.

Similarly, 180 families had moved out of the Bandipur Wildlife Sanctuary.

He said the Government had filed a plea with the Supreme Court seeking to replace teak plantations in the forests with natural species of trees. A com-

munication gap between the Forest Department and the Principal Secretary became evident when presspersons questioned Mr. Ram about the on-going agitation by landowners demanding the right over trees grown on their land in Kodagu.

Atrocities

Mr. Krishnappa, who made a note of the cases relating to atrocities on the STs in Kodagu, said the Government would hold discussions with the district administrations in this regard.

A sum of Rs.3 crore was provided as relief to the victims of atrocities.

Several cases were being re-investigated, and some of them had led to convictions.

The deputy commissioners and superintendents of police had been told to hold meetings every month to review the situation, he said.

On the vacancies in the Social Welfare Department in the State, particularly in Kodagu, Mr. Krishnappa said steps had been taken to fill the posts.

The process was complete in 19 districts, he added.

While advertisements were published in some districts, the recruitment process had started in the others, he added.

The Deputy Commissioner, B.M.Shivaprakash, the Superintendent of Police, K.V.Sharath Chandra, the Chief Executive Officer of the zilla panchayat, M.K.Baladeva Krishna, the Conservator of Forests, P.Anur Reddy, and other officials were present.