

600 jawans for Kaziranga to check poaching: CM



CORRESPONDENT

KAZIRANGA, June 15: A new battalion with 600 jawans will soon be placed in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve for better management and checking of poaching activities, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sharma said following a review meeting on flood preparedness, anti-poaching measures and animal safety in the national park, here today.

Additionally, a more comprehensive strategy will be adopted to ensure complete zero poaching, he added.

The meeting, chaired by the Chief Minister, was attended by Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, Health and Family Welfare Minister Keshab Mahanta, Superintendent of Police from five districts – Golaghat, Nagoan, Sonitpur, Karbi Anglong and Biswanath – along with the District Commissioners.

The Chief Minister said that the objectives of the meeting were to analyse the animal casualty figures during floods and ensure that there is no poaching when the water level increases during the annual flood season. He said that since 2021,

rhino poaching in Kaziranga has reduced to a great extent. In 2021, there was zero poaching. In 2022, two rhinos were killed but poaching was greatly checked, he added.

Sarma said that since 2021, the number of deaths of wild animals crossing the National Highway during floods has reduced to a great extent. This time, the Kaziranga authority and police will ensure zero casualties of wild animals while crossing the highway to move to the foothills of Karbi Anglong during flood time.

Moreover, steps are also being taken to ensure that poachers cannot take advantage of floods in Kaziranga to kill any wild animal, he said. For that, emphasis is also being laid on having better coordination between the forest department of Kaziranga and the local police.

Sarma also informed that following the eviction drive in Burachapori, more wild animals, including a good number of rhinos and 12 to 15 tigers, have been sighted. Action is also being taken to gradually extent Kaziranga forest further into Burachapori also, said Sarma.

600 jawans ...

(Contd from page 1)

As far as erosion in the Kaziranga forest area is concerned, the Chief Minister pointed out: "Earlier, when there was erosion inside the Kaziranga forest area, there was also equal deposition of silt in some other nearby areas which ensured that the land mass or area of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve remained more or less same, but this is not happening nowadays, leading to reduced land mass or area of Kaziranga forest. This is a cause of concern for all."

The Chief Minister also said that measures are being taken to prevent erosion. A joint committee of the water resources department and Kaziranga park authority will soon formulate ways to use technology to reduce erosion in the Kaziranga riverine areas. The committee will submit its report within 45 days.

He also said that 20 new marine engine boats will be provided to the Kaziranga park authority to check poaching activities in the riverine areas.

Regarding footfall of tourists to the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, he said that a larger number of tourists visited the park this year compared to the number of tourists who visited the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve.

To further boost tourist numbers to the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, the Chief Minister said a documentary will be made on the two national parks and tiger reserves (Manas and Kaziranga) in the State which will be widely displayed to promote them.

A plan has also been mooted to create a cycling route and tea-testing facilities for tourists in Kaziranga along with a boat ride facility.

He also informed that around 90 per cent of the one crore saplings planted during Amrit Vriksha last year have survived.

'Elephants use names for each other — this ability was only known in humans so far'

George Wittemyer is Professor of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology at Colorado State University. Speaking from East Africa to **Srijana Mitra Das** at **Times Evoke**, he explains his new findings on elephants, their naming patterns — and human beings:

Photos: iStock & Getty Images

Can you tell us about your recent research on elephants?

■ We've been studying African elephants in Samburu, northern Kenya, for decades. We know these elephants individually. As a species, elephants are highly social beings — they're constantly interacting with their family members and

herd. During these interactions, we observed they kept speaking to each other or vocalising. Sometimes, this vocalisation went back and

forth — the matriarch would speak and the others would respond. Evidently, vocal communication is a very fundamental part of an elephant's social organisation. A group moves along and a matriarch gives a rumble call, with a crescendo of responses from everyone. At other times, there'd be a call but only one individual would respond, walking up to the elephant who'd spoken, etc. In that event, one individual was communicating specifically to another. So, in this study, we asked if the elephants had some sort of vocal label they used to identify each other — like a name.

We collected many elephant calls in as many behavioural contexts as possible and used a machine learning approach to understand their structures and similarities — we found very good evidence then that the elephants were using names in their interactions. From our data, the two scenarios which emerged included a contact call, where one individual rumbles and specifically tries to contact another one. The



MY NAME IS JOY! Matriarchs name their baby and tell others this title



LOTS IN A NAME: African elephants, famously social beings, travel huge distances in their herds seeking water — having names for each other helps keep the tribe together and also enables mothers to guide and protect children

other context was mother to calf — the mother rumbles to her child to direct or placate it and it responds to her. We also analysed greeting calls when elephants met each other — those too have vocal labels but they are used less here, just as when humans meet and talk, they don't keep using each other's names.

Can you tell us more features of these rumble calls?

■ The elephant rumble is quite complicated. Much of it is in the infrasonic range, so it's sub-human hearing. We literally can't pick this up, so we had to use specialised microphones to capture this information. Also, you must remain in close proximity to elephants to record all the information in their rumbles because the sound attenuates with distance. We therefore had a limited library — for comparison, ChatGPT, the AI-based computer language model, uses literally every digitally published item, which means drawing from billions of records.

So, we were working with some limitations and still need to figure out the syntax for these vocalisations. They go from infrasonic to sonic range and have a temporal part as well, where the rumble oscillates over time, like when we stress on parts of our speech. We look forward to teasing out the structural and syntax parts from such rich conversations among elephants.

Do other species also use names in this manner in their speech?

■ This is very rare in the animal kingdom. We find some evidence among dolphins and certain species in the parrot family — however, these imitate the vocalisation of another individual.

Elephants are not doing that — they are given a name arbitrarily, like we are, and they use these to identify and direct each other. We think mothers name calves, creating and bestowing a name on a child, teaching it this name and telling everyone else too — the entire group then uses it. We have never seen this in any other creature, besides ourselves.

What does this tell us about the world of elephants?

■ This gives us a first understanding that elephants are able to conceptualise things abstractly — they can



THEIR JUMBO IQ: Indian elephants are highly intelligent vocal learners

TIMES
eVoke

label objects and use that classification. This is a unique trait — it is the foundation of the very complex communication humans use which is integral to our success. Elephants have some of these characteristics too. We have now opened the door into seeing how their minds work.

What does this imply for the way humans treat elephants?

■ We're always creating excuses for our bad behaviour towards non-human species and some humans too. We've downplayed the intelligence of animals for millennia — we consider them below humanity and they don't get regard or consideration because we feel they are less capable than us. However, many studies now point out how most animals are both very intelligent and complex in the way they perceive and understand the world — chips are breaking off the incorrect narrative humans created about animals being inferior to us.

Could Indian elephants use names too?

■ I'd be surprised if we didn't find this in Indian elephants. We know they too are very intelligent, highly social and vocal beings. Some of the early research showing elephants are vocal learners and can learn and emulate sound with meaning, like human beings, actually started with Asian elephants. These skills evolved for a purpose — that is communication between individuals. I'm sure Asian elephants have very interesting things to say to one another.

READERS WRITE

Dear Times Evoke,

I'm in school and I love Times Evoke. I was so excited to read about space (8th June). Kevin Hainline on the new ancient galaxies found made me feel part of something so timeless and huge. The atoms in our body belong to stars and galaxies — I'm made of the matter that made dinosaurs! Thank you for bringing me this knowledge, TE.

— **Agnisnato Sarbadhicari**, Kolkata

Thanks for the awesome articles about space, TE! I was awestruck to read about the two ancient galaxies found by JWST. We've studied how all birds are diurnal except owls but I now learnt that nightingales sing for the moon too. Continue these amazing facts, TE! Thanks a universe!

— **Aditi Rana**, Lucknow

TE's interview with Kevin Hainline was very informative. So far, I was reading articles on astronomy for curiosity only but this interview has changed my views. As Hainline explained, all life comes from space. So, life on Earth will be understood much better if we can understand space better. Thanks, TE!

— **Gudiyawar Mahesh**, Ichalkaranji, Maharashtra

I expect thrilling articles in TE and TE never disappoints! Kevin Hainline shone a light on JADES-GS-z14-0. Such articles widen our minds. Thank you for such exciting reading, TE! I hope for more such exclusive articles.

— **Navdeep Singh**, Gurdaspur, Punjab

TE was marvellously aesthetic, stretching from JADES-GS-z14-0 to Earth and the solar maximum, discussed by Mark Miesch. As intelligent beings, we should preserve Earth better, the only known home in space for life.

— **Kazi Tasneem Parvin**, Burdwan

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High Court takes suo moto action on rising jumbo deaths

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The Karnataka High Court has taken a suo moto case on the rise in elephant mortality cases in Karnataka due to electrocution and other unnatural causes. HC exercised its jurisdiction based on an article published in the Bangalore Mirror on June 13.

The report highlighted that four elephants in the state have died due to electrocution in just the last month. Based on the report, the court has observed that elephants and other wildlife in the state and the country are assets. They deserve protection and care for their health and lives, and the authorities have corresponding statutory duties. "Whether inside or outside the sanctuary, the



elephants and other wildlife would need care. Their safety is to be ensured at all costs by keeping vigil and taking appropriate measures. The forest and other authorities owe a statutory duty in this regard. Their exposure to electrocution or other unnatural causes of death has to be prevented," noted HC on Friday.

The court has thus sent notices

to the Union of India through the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change; the Chief Secretary to the Government of Karnataka; the Department of Forest, Ecology, and Environment of Karnataka; the

Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Chief Wildlife Warden of Karnataka Forest Department; and the Divisional Forest Officer of Mysuru, asking the authorities to respond by putting forward facts and figures in the matter.

All the above authorities have been directed to submit their response regarding the steps and

measures that are presently taken to ensure the safety and protection of elephants and other wildlife assets in Karnataka, along with ways that the authorities use to fix the liability of officers when such kinds of deaths of elephants and wildlife occur. Apart from that, the court has also

sought clarity on steps proposed to be taken in the future in light of the repeated elephant deaths occurring and reported so as to prevent such instances of unnatural deaths. "Elephants and wildlife have the right to live in a safe environment, not to die an unnatural death, as they stand under statutory protection. The successive and repeated incidents of elephant deaths in the state in different areas due to electrocution or other unnatural causes is a serious matter to worry about. The report reflects that the incidents take place due to a lack of diligence on the part of the authorities concerned in charge of ensuring safety measures for the elephants in particular and the wildlife in general," noted the HC order copy.

Citing the death of Ashwathama recently in Mysuru, the BM report also stated that Karnataka has 47 cases of unnatural deaths and lost 35 jumbos to electrocution between January 2021 and now (June 12, 2024).



BM's report on June 13

Bhopal, 16 June 2024

Indore forest dept asks pet sellers to register on Parivesh 2.0 portal

Indore: Indore forest department on Saturday issued a guideline along with setting a deadline for the pet sellers to register on Parivesh 2.0 portal while pet-owners will also have to follow this order by August end. "Under the regulations, registration has been made mandatory for endangered species of Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and its amended Act, 2022, including CITES species of wild animals and plants," Indore DFO Mahendra Solanki said. TNN

Ivory, skin of spotted deer seized

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Trichy: Forest officials arrested four men in Trichy on Saturday for trying to sell ivory weighing 2.9kg and the skin of a spotted deer.

Officials arrested A Sridhar, 49, of Srirangam, L Venkatasubramanian, 65, D Pandurengan, 51, and L Murali, 60. They were booked under Wildlife Protection Act.

District forest officer S Krithiga, in a statement, said action was taken based on inputs from the wildlife crime control bureau (WCCB).

A special team had been conducting searches in Srirangam, Thiruvanaikaval, Edamalaipatti Pudhur and Sethurapatti for the past week. The items were found at Sridhar's house. The others helped him find buyers. All four were remanded in prison on Saturday. Further investigation is on.

Leopard found dead near dam

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

A young male leopard, aged around eight months, was found dead near Egalpenta village in Amrabad Tiger Reserve on Saturday morning. Forest department officials said after a thorough examination of the body, it was concluded that the leopard died from wounds sustained in a fight with another, stronger wild animal.

The carcass was found on a boulder by the side of the road overlooking the Srisailam dam, and forest department officials first suspected that it may have been hit by a passing vehicle on the busy road that leads to the temple



Carcass was found on a boulder near Srisailam dam.

town of Srisailam across River Krishna in AP. However, after a thorough physical examination, and a post-mortem it was concluded that the leopard suffered serious injuries in a fight with another wild animal and succumbed to the wounds. All the claws, whiskers and other parts of the body were found intact, officials said. Remains were later burnt by the forest department officials as per the protocols.

Satpura Reserve refuses to give tiger for translocation

Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Odisha demanded tigers from MP

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The Satpura Tiger Reserve has refused to give any tiger for translocation to the neighbouring states—Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. As the tiger reserve does not have a surplus population of felines, hence it is not in position to give any tiger for translocation.

Interacting with Free Press, field director of Satpura Tiger Reserve, L Krishnamurthy, said, “We are not in a position to give a tiger. Satpura does not have a surplus population of tigers.”

Notably, the state received a demand of tigers from the neighbouring state. Following this, chief wildlife warden Atul Shrivastava had shot off missives to all the tiger reserves of the state to identify the possible tigers which could be translocated. A senior forest officer said that Rajasthan has sought at least four tigers followed by one each by Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The process in this regard has reached an advanced stage. The possible



translocation of tigers will improve the gene pool of big cats in the respective states. It is reportedly learnt that Rajasthan is not having any tiger corridor and owing to this reason felines are doing inbreeding. On the other hand, the tigers of Madhya Pradesh move into the corridors and even reach till Maharashtra.

Kanha Tiger Reserve field director SN Singh said as of now, Kanha has two young tigers which are under the rewilding process. The age of one tiger is two and half years, while another is aged two years. They could be translocated on getting the necessary approval.

Sources said as Kanha Tiger Reserve has less population of tigresses hence it has made it clear that it would be unable to give tigress.

On being contacted, field director of Sanjay Dubri Tiger Reserve Amit Dubey said forest headquarters has been informed that there is one male tiger, aged two and half years, which is available for translocation. This tiger was rescued sometime ago.

Tamil Nadu may soon allow culling of wild boars to save crops

SV KRISHNA CHAITANYA @Chennai

THE Tamil Nadu government may soon allow 'selective' culling of wild boars that are venturing out of forest areas and damaging crops. At a meeting of the Farmers Conflict Resolution Committee held on Friday it was largely agreed that wild boars that are troubling farmers beyond 5 km from the forest boundary can be shot down. Besides, a number of other measures like creating bio-fences were also discussed to stop animals from raiding crops.

While the minutes of the committee meeting are still confidential, official sources told *TNIE* that keeping ecological and predator-prey balance in mind, wild boars will not be disturbed within 0-1 km or 0-3 km from forest boundary. Though farmer representatives in the committee were insisting on eliminating wild boars beyond 1 km, forest officials and scientists were against it. In the 3km-5km range, measures other than culling, like bio-fencing, would be considered.

A final decision will be taken by Chief Wildlife Warden Srinivas R Reddy who will issue orders under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, after holding consultation with the state government. Sources said the culling will be selective and executed by the forest department. Local-level committees consisting of foresters, VAO, panchayat head, and a farmer representative will be formed to assess the wild boar population.



The Times of India

Lucknow, 16 June 2024

UP tiger reserves open for 10 more days

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: Following surge in footfall and high demand, UP govt has decided to extend the tourist season in tiger reserves by 10 days. The normal tourist season for tiger reserves is Nov 15 to June 15.

Now, instead of closing on June 15, four tiger reserves in UP — Pilibhit, Amangarh, Dudhwa and Ranipur — will remain open for tourists till June 25, a spokesman said.

“Compared to last year, a good number of Indian and foreign tourists visited tiger reserves in UP. The tiger reserves attracted more than 1 lakh visitors, indicating a growing interest among travellers seeking wildlife experiences in the region. Thus the season has been extended by 10 days,” the spokesperson said.

Compared to 2022-23 season when 41,815 Indian and 137 foreign tourists visited the Dudhwa reserve, the current season has recorded 56,770 Indian and 292 foreign tourists till June 14 this year.

Similarly, Pilibhit reserve recorded increase from 23,525 Indian and 54 foreign tourists in 2022-23 to 38,183 Indian and 164 foreign tourists in 2023-24. Amangarh recorded 4,084 Indian and six foreign tourists this year, up from 3,066 Indian and two foreign tourists last year. At Ranipur Tiger Reserve, the number of Indian tourists surged from 4,180 in 2022-23 to 9,170 in 2023-24.

Online booking for these reserves can be done via UP Forest Corporation Ecotourism website (www.upecotourism.in).

Wild boars damage agri fields in Jamugurihat

A CORRESPONDENT

JAMUGURIHAT, June 15: Herds of wild boars that come out from the sixth edition of the Kaziranga National Park have caused major damage to the agricultural fields of the farmers of the southern bank of the Ghiladhari river and of the northern bank of the Brahmaputra.

The villages of Jamugurihat including Panpur, Hakama, Puranibheti, Amdara, Batiaroka, Khalihamari, Gameripal, Thultika, Bohorabheti, Chitalmari, etc., have been affected by the herds of the wild boars that

come out in search of food. The peasants of these areas have to suffer a great deal of damage due to this. The pumpkin fields, maize fields, arum fields besides the jute fields have been damaged by the herds of wild boars. The poor peasants had grown the seasonal crops with an intention to gain some financial benefits. They have now requested the department concerned and the local administration to look into the matter and to provide them compensation.

Similarly, the southern belt of Sootea too has been affected by the unchecked

attacks of the wild boars. The villages that share boundary with the sixth edition of the KNP of south Sootea area are Gorpal, Tewaripal, Bokabil, Kachamari, Koroinai, Kotarati, Buduaati, etc. The farmers of these areas have grown hybrid paddy besides the seasonal crops. But the condition of the agriculture fields has turned similar to that of Jamugurihat.

It is further pertinent to mention here that two of the local residents of the southern part of Jamugurihat were attacked by a wild boar resulting in serious injuries.

After AP's request for 8 trained jumbos, forest dept checks with field officers

K'taka's elephant boom has always been a boon for other states

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

The forest department has sought a response from its field officers at elephant camps to provide a list of 'surplus' elephants that can be sent to Andhra Pradesh (AP).

AP had recently requested Karnataka to provide it eight trained elephants for patrolling and protection purposes in their forests.

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre forwarded AP's request to the department. Officials say the state government has so far 'not approved' the request.

Karnataka currently has at least 100 tamed elephants at its nine camps. These elephants are used in operations to capture rogue elephants or in the Mysuru Dasara festival.

"Based on the response from the field officials, we will get to know if there are any surplus elephants that can be sent to AP.

As of now, we have not taken any decision," said additional principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife) Kumar Pushkar.

If approved, this would not be for the first time that Karnataka would provide tamed elephants to other states.

According to documents provided by the department, in the last six years, the state has provided 54 tamed elephants to other states, including Uttar Pradesh (16), Madhya Pradesh (14), West Bengal (8), Chhattisgarh (6), Bihar (4), Maharashtra (3) and Jharkhand (3). Of the 54 jumbos, 38 are male.

Best practices in taming

On average, the department has been capturing and taming 15-20 rogue elephants every year. Officials claim that given its long history of taming elephants (khedda operations), the state has put in place some of the best practices for domes-



Tamed elephants help a captured jumbo to get into a lorry. Given its long history in taming elephants, Karnataka has put in place some of the best practices for domesticating the gentle giants. DH FILE PHOTO

ticating the gentle giants.

Experts say shifting tamed elephants to other states could be a win-win situation for both donating and receiving states provided the "welfare of elephants are given topmost priority".

Reduces conflict

This could also reduce human-elephant conflict in Karnataka and better wildlife

protection in the receiving states.

Raman Sukumar, former chairman of Karnataka Elephant Task Force, says along with Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Odisha, which have wild elephant populations, Karnataka has been capturing rogue elephants and taming them.

"Karnataka has one of the

best practices in capturing wild elephants. Shifting them to states with no wild elephants will be a win-win situation, only if receiving states put in place the required expertise and improve their capacity building in managing them."

He says shifting tamed elephants to other states should be limited to just wildlife conservation and protection.

"Certain forests of Andhra Pradesh are witnessing a rise in wild elephant population. The tamed elephants from Karnataka can help that state in mitigating human-animal conflict. However, Karnataka should make sure that AP or any other state gives top priority to safety and welfare of elephants."

'No shortage'

Pushkar denied allegations of wildlife activists that there is a "shortage of tamed elephants" in the state.

"We have sufficient tamed elephants to capture rogue elephants. The state has been providing only surplus elephants to other states as a means to support each other in forest and wildlife conservation."

A former principal chief conservator of forests says maintaining tamed elephants is a costly affair.

Feeding them, their regular health check-ups (especially for the ageing or injured), salaries to mahouts and other expenses run into crores of rupees annually.

"It has always been a practice in Karnataka that only surplus elephants are given to other states, while maintaining a healthy stock of tamed elephants in the camps," he said.



Ralamandal Sanctuary is Indore's small wonder

In ancient times, living in harmony with nature was common worldwide. However, as humanity drifted away from nature, there arose a need to recreate natural habitats in cities to allow people, especially children, to learn about wildlife and birds. The Assam State Zoo and Botanical Garden in Guwahati, approximately 6 km from the railway station, exemplifies such efforts. Established in 1957 and opened to the public in 1958, the zoo covers 175 hectares, and the botanical garden spans 82 hectares. The zoo hosts the state wildlife emblem, the one-horned rhino, along with 112 other species, including tigers and golden langurs, in spacious enclosures.

Similarly, Van Vihar National Park in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, lies on the city's outskirts near the large Bhopal Lake, nestled in lush, forested hills.

Recognising a similar need, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department developed a dense forest area 12 km from Indore, the state's largest city, into the Ralamandal Wildlife Sanctuary in 1989.

Covering 275 hectares, it is named after the nearby village of Ralamandal. The sanctuary is divided into three zones: wildlife, tourist, and deer safari zones. Historically, the Holkar dynasty used this forested area for hunting, and atop a high hill stands the Shikargah, a two-storey red-brick building built

in 1905 by Shivaji Rao Holkar for royal relaxation. The park offers tours in a single motor-driven golf cart, providing a thrilling experience as deer approach the cart for photographs. The deer have been trained to come close with a single call, allowing tourists to interact with them.

Due to the lack of natural water sources, the forest department has constructed water reservoirs, supplied by nearby tube wells, to provide drinking water for wildlife and birds. Separate water facilities and umbrella-shaped concrete seating areas are available for tourists to relax and immerse themselves in nature.

Near the entrance, the range officer's office and an awareness centre with an auditorium showcase films and exhibitions about the sanctuary's features and display fossils, as the area was once home to dinosaurs during the Mesozoic era.

Ralamandal Sanctuary also includes a rescue centre with trained veterinarians to treat injured wildlife from nearby districts.

The sanctuary's main attractions are the abundant blackbucks, blue bulls, spotted deer, hyenas, wild boars, and jackals.

It is a valuable resource for the people and students of Indore to connect with nature, just 12 km from the city.



Shikargah was the resting place for royal hunters.



The deer safari park. PHOTOS BY AUTHOR



A view of the surrounding hills as seen from Shikargah.