

Headlines Himalaya

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No. 156

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For the 156 issue, we reviewed 39 reports from 12 sources and selected 10 happenings. Some two years back, IUCN species survival commission upgraded the one horned Asian rhino from Endangered to Vulnerable as a positive result of nearly 50 years of conservation in Nepal, Assam and West Bengal of India. INGOs in Nepal vehemently protested with flurry of emails and blogs for the fear that there will be less money for them and more poaching will occur. The IUCN decision was scientific and an outstanding recognition for the good work. However, the discussion degraded to the level that they requested Nepal's rhino should be in Endangered list and Indian rhinos in Vulnerable list which was insane. The recent rhino survey in Nepal proved them wrong, once again. Rhino number is up and the government agencies need a pat in the back. A job well done!

This weekly e-News is an attempt to keep our global readers abreast with the happenings in the Himalaya. Please share it with your colleagues and friends. Also, subscription is free. Enjoy!

- NEPAL** *Rhino numbers up again*
217 forest fires
7.5 ton sandalwood almost in China
Farmers haunted again by spurious seeds from India
- INDIA** *Ban first, manufacture and sell later*
Sand extraction, human wastes and trout
State government fails to protect wetland
Seized leopard skins were meant for China
- BHUTAN** *Too much social networking*
Greener but hungrier?

Nepal-Himalaya

RHINO NUMBERS UP AGAIN

Considering 408 rhinos in Chitwan, 22 in Bardia and 5 in Suklaphanta, totaling 435 rhinos in 2008, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation conducted surveys in three PAs where rhinos occurred and found that a significant increase in the number of rhinos from 435 to 534 over a three-year period. Chitwan now supports a total of 503 rhinos (145 males, 183 females and 175 unidentified). Bardia now has 24 and Suklaphanta has 7 animals.

April 24

<http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/04/23/top-story/significant-rise-in-rhino-numbers/220925.html>

217 FOREST FIRES

Across the country, 217 forest fires occurred so far this year, which is the highest for a year. The data was retrieved from NASA's MODIS Satellite, which monitors the global forest fire incidents. Although the government developed Forest Fire Management Strategy 2010 after a disaster in 2009 where 13 army personnel were killed while dousing the fire, the ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation has no rescue plan in place.

April 25

<http://thehimalayantimes.com/fullNews.php?headline=217+forest+fires+this+year+&NewsID=28535>

7.5 TON SANDALWOOD ALMOST IN CHINA

A Truck container with 7.5 ton of red sandalwood, on its way Tibet, and had passed through around 18 Nepali security check posts, apparently, with connivance of the police. However, it was seized near Nepal-China border after a Maoist leader, disgruntled over share of NPR 1 million, spilled the beans. Police found 235 logs of red sandalwood, hidden in 165 rice sacks. Red sandalwood trade at as high as NPR7000 per kilogram in China.

April 24

http://myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=30589

FARMERS HAUNTED AGAIN BY SPURIOUS SEEDS FROM INDIA

Farmers in Sarlahi, one of the five districts where farmers had suffered huge loss due to seeds of inferior quality last year, have planted faulty hybrid maize seeds this year as well. A recent filed study report says the 30-B-11 (Pioneer) and DKC-90-81 varieties of hybrid maize seeds produced by PHI Seeds Ltd of India and Monsanto India Ltd are of inferior quality. Last year, farmers had reported failure of maize crops in over 46,000 hectares in Bara, Parsa, Sarlahi, Rautahat and Nawalparasi districts where farmers incurred a loss of over NPR 3 billion.

April 28

http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=30679

India-Himalaya

BAN FIRST, MANUFACTURE AND SELL LATER

The ban on polythene bags in Jammu and Kashmir, western Himalaya has turned out to be another government hoax. The Government states that plastic bag ban is in force and occasional campaigns are carried out on roads. However, about 13 companies in different parts of Jammu are still manufacturing polythene carry bags and the manufactured product is sold across the state

April 21

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/2011/Apr/22/government-plays-prank-bans-polythene-allows-manufacture-37.asp>

SAND EXTRACTION, HUMAN WASTES AND TROUT

Extraction of sand, boulders, and outflow of wastes has destroyed the natural habitat of trout in nallah Sindh in Ganderbal district. In addition, washing of vehicles, outflow of wastes from residential houses and army camps on the banks of Sindh, use of pesticides including DDT by farmers have killed thousands of trout.

April 25

<http://www.greaterkashmir.com>

STATE GOVERNMENT FAILS TO PROTECT WETLAND

In Assam, eastern Himalaya, major wetlands, like Deepor Beel and Silsako Beel, continue to reel under growing anthropogenic and industrial waste. Continuous dumping of untreated municipal solid waste in the close proximity to Deepor Beel remains perhaps the biggest threat with high toxic substances Industrial activities near the wetland, with a large number of brick kilns and encroachment have caused substantial loss to the original area of the Ramsar site.

April 27

<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=apr2811/at09>

SEIZED LEOPARD SKINS WERE MEANT FOR CHINA

Seven leopard skins from four poachers in Kangra district, western Himalaya were confiscated. A leopard skin and its body parts cost about IRS 150,000 in the international market and the skins were meant for China.

April 28

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20110429/himachal.htm#5>

TOO MUCH SOCIAL NETWORKING

Surfing internet for social networking sites during office hours, especially by the civil servants, has compelled the government to block them during the office hours. The move came after most civil servants got caught in the recent social networking hype, which is taking toll on the productivity of the government machinery. To this end the officiating cabinet secretary issued a letter directing the ministries, commissions and autonomous agencies in Thimphu to block all the social sites, particularly those that are not useful for administrative and professional purposes.

April 24

Bhutan Times

GREENER BUT HUNGRIER?

A draft Bhutan Land Cover Assessment has found that the country's forest cover has increased from the official figure of 72 percent. But whether it is because of conservation or reforestation effort, or at the cost of cultivated land, is debatable. Some 15 years back, the land under cultivation was about 7.7% which could have gone down to about three percent. As losing agricultural land means losing food, it is estimated that an acre of paddy land can produce about 3,000 kg of rice, and obviously Bhutan is producing less rice every year.

April 28

<http://www.kuenselonline.com/2010/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=19208>

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