



# **The Vanishing Stripes**

**-II-**

**A REPORT**

By

|C|R|E|W|

on the Tiger Crisis in Madhya Pradesh-India

June 2000





# **Vanishing Stripes II**

A Report by  
CREW  
On the Status of Tiger  
and Its Habitat in Madhya Pradesh, India  
June 2000

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## Tiger and Its Habitat

Tiger continues to remain the main concern of CREW when we are confronted with the question of the protection and conservation of wildlife and ecological balance in the country in general and Madhya Pradesh in particular. Unfortunately the circumstances on the ground indicate that the powers that be only pay lip service and exhibit superficial concern for the basic issues involved; whereas they remain mainly interested in deriving benefits, both financial as well as political by ensuring populist activities to continue even in the core forest areas. Unless ecological balance is ensured on a long-range basis, no living species, including the human beings, may be able to survive. CREW remains vitally concerned about the survival of Tiger as the most important of the wildlife species in its natural ecologically balanced surroundings.

The idea is to save the tiger in its natural surroundings. The tiger will be safe in the wild only when there is prey-base. This would in turn depend on the survival of the flora, i.e., grasses, fruit bearing trees, herbs, shrubs, and the water bodies along with other factors linked with the habitat.



*Threatened from all sides*

All this would form a perfect ecological system, leading to better climate and rainfall by protecting the green cover, reducing soil erosion, recharging the ground water, ensuring perennial flow in rivers and nullifying other factors that pollute the environment.



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Consequently the phenomenon of Global warming would get arrested, the ozone layer would be protected, there would be less harmful radiation and the Earth would become a better place for the coming generations.

What should not be lost track of by any one is the importance of each and every link in the vital ecological chain because once the chain gets broken, it is bound to trigger grave after effects. The unfortunate part of the whole story is that the Trustees of nature-those holding executive authority-only lend lip service when it comes to protecting the ecological chain. The ground reality is rather dismal since the politicians and those responsible for protecting the forests and wildlife either choose to turn a Nelson's eye or end up becoming part of the whole nexus or the mafia engaged in looting the forests and other natural resources.

Our forests have been shrinking at an alarming pace. The human pressure on forests is immense due to rapidly increasing population and the situation gets further aggravated by the unhindered destruction of green cover by the timber mafia, encroachers as well as large-scale mining activity, grazing and the minor forest produce and fuelwood collection exercise. The rapid pace at which the green cover has shrunk in Madhya Pradesh during the last fifty years is a serious cause for concern and if things are allowed to drift the situation might become irreversible in future.



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## **Disintegration & destruction of Habitat**

The basic issue confronting us today is to halt the rate of destruction and disintegration of habitat, green cover, and ecological systems. The biggest problem is linked with the fuelwood and timber requirements of the ever-increasing human population from an ever-dwindling forests.

Today the magnificent tiger occupies a precarious and vulnerable position in the biotic

pyramid. It is a symbol of the delicate symbiotic relationship between different parts of the ecosystem. The tiger population and its well being can be seen as the most important indicator of the health of the ecosystem and a measure of our success as stewards of earth and nature. National Parks and



*View of Panna National Park-Rapidly depleting forest cover*



Sanctuaries play a crucial role in preserving the biotic pyramid. They restock the surrounding and connected forest areas thereby maintaining the ecological balance.

## **Tiger State (?) and Human Pressure**

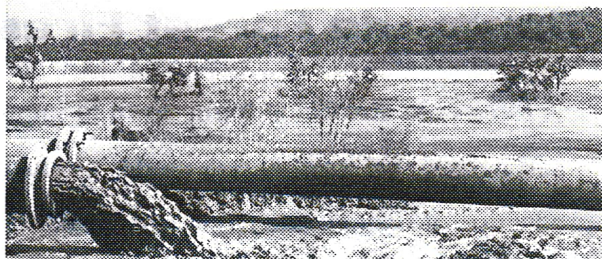
Madhya Pradesh is home to the largest population of tigers in the world and the State Government even describes it as the “Tiger State”. It has a total area of 443,000 square kms. of which 35 per cent (about 155,000 sq. kms) is classified as forest area. However much of this forested area has been over-exploited and systematically encroached upon by poachers, loggers and human settlers. Remote Sensing Surveys by the Forest Survey of India have indicated a progressive decline in the state’s forest cover, and present assessments suggest that less than 20 per cent of the state’s area is now under forest cover. To make matters worse, even this area is being severely threatened by human pressures.

The degradation and exploitation of forests has become a well-run enterprise in Madhya Pradesh. Since there is very little preventive or punitive action against illegal logging, trees are felled without fear of punishment for use as fuel and for construction. The local population has even started marginal cultivation in degraded forest areas. Successive governments have gone ahead and bestowed the status of lawful owners to those who have systematically encroached upon forest land and set up new forest villages deep inside the forests. Many of these villages have become nodal points for illegal logging and poaching operations. Some inhabitants of these villages even provide vital information, advice, and help to loggers and poachers, thus facilitating their illegal activities.

The ambitious Wasteland Development Program launched in 1985 by the Government of India under which wastelands were to be brought under forest cover has been largely unsuccessful. Consequently, the massive demand for fuel wood and timber for construction and other commercial uses continues to be met from the already shrinking forests.

## **Illegal Mining**

The forests in Madhya Pradesh are further threatened by illegal mining



*Waste from Panna Diamond Mines-Grave threat to environment*



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activity on a large scale, and by the practice of “shifting cultivation” in certain areas of the Bastar district dominated by the aboriginal population.



*Mountain of waste from Panna Diamond Mines*

The following table reflects the tip of the iceberg as far as the problem of illegal mining of boulders, sand, flagstone and other items from forest areas of Madhya Pradesh is concerned :

Year	no. of illegal mining cases	estimated value of seizure in million Rs.
1993-94	1100	10.9
1994-95	1130	21.5
1995-96	1100	9.8
1996-97	1225	12.3
1997-98	1400	13.4

The Madhya Pradesh Government is even seeking clearance from Government of India regarding proposals for stone slab mining in forest areas by the village-level forest protection committees. This was recently announced through an official press statement in Bhopal. Environmentalists feel that if this plan comes through it would spell doom for forests as well as wildlife.

## **Manmade Forest Fires**

The forests are also being burnt down to improve the collection of minor forest produce - particularly Sal seed (used in the production of chocolates), Mahua (used in the production of liquor), and tendu leaf (used for rolling beedi, a kind of cigar). Moreover, forests are often burnt down in order to destroy evidence of illegal logging or to cover



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up inefficiencies in the execution of state sponsored programs for plantation and protection of forests.

## Malik Maqbooja

All over the State, the district collectors are sanctioning Malik Maqbooja cases and they are being done under financial and political pressure. *Malik Maqbooja is a system for allowing the cutting of trees from private land by the landowners.* This is leading to the destruction of green cover and habitat because under the garb of Malik Maqbooja, trees are also being felled illegally from forestland, especially by the powerful and influential persons.

## Ruthless Exploitation

Free access to forests for minor forest produce collection even in Protected Areas that remain to be finally notified, besides free headloading, uncontrolled grazing and devastation by fires in the vicinity of human settlements are sweeping the forest floor clean of factors that are responsible for the regeneration of forests. The ever-increasing revenue targets compel the State forest department to carry out the felling operations even as there is no absolute guarantee that these areas will get regenerated. In most areas, the existing conditions are not conducive to natural regeneration and as a result the natural forests are getting reduced to shrubs or open forests.



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The following table indicates the State Government's ever increasing thirst for revenue from timber trade :

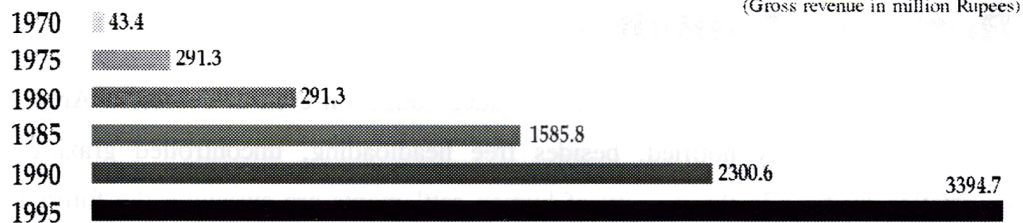
Year	gross revenue	Year (Rs. In millions)	gross revenue (Rs. In millions)
1970-71	43.4	1971-72	94.1
1972-73	128.2	1973-74	197.3
1974-75	291.3	1975-76	340.4
1976-77	454.9	1977-78	522.2
1978-79	600.8	1979-80	755.9
1980-81	934.2	1981-82	1327.0
1982-83	1356.6	1983-84	1460.0
1984-85	1585.8	1985-86	1873.2
1986-87	1853.2	1987-88	2061.7
1988-89	2223.7	1989-90	2300.6
1990-91	2227.8	1991-92	2764.9
1992-93	2888.4	1993-94	3322.6
1995-96	3394.7		



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### Revenue generation from timber trade in M.P.

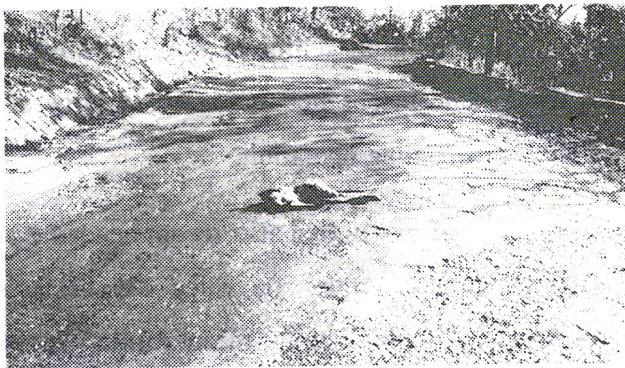


During investigations, CREW found that the extent of natural bamboo forests is also shrinking on a fast pace and bamboo forests are getting wiped out from a large area of the State due to over exploitation and soil erosion.



## Motor Highways and Tiger Habitat

The highways passing through Panna, Bandhavgarh, Kanha, Madhav, Pench, Satpura National Parks and many Sanctuaries like Acahanakmar and Pachmarhi are posing a major threat to Tiger and its prey-base.



*Monkey killed by a speeding vehicle on the highway passing through the Panna National Park*

## Development Projects

On account of mining, irrigation and hydro-electric projects, powerlines, road and rail construction, besides various other developmental projects, large areas under forests have already been deforested. A 1987 Status Report on Forests published by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department pointed out that a huge area was diverted to non-forest use in Madhya Pradesh before the Forest Conservation Act came in force in 1980. After this Act was passed, compensatory afforestation in Madhya Pradesh was only 19.70 and 37.70 per cent of the total forest area that was lost due to transferring of land use for different purposes during 1987-88 and 1988-89.

There has been considerable pressure on forestland due to various development-related projects in Madhya Pradesh. For the Omkareshwar Project, which is part of the ambitious Narmada Valley Project, 5829 hectares of land was required, which involved clear felling of about 500,000 trees. In order to pave the way for the State Government to recommend this project for Central clearance, the Chief Wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh had stated "The forest area involved does not form a part of wildlife sanctuary or National Park." But at the same time he admitted that Tiger, panther, chital, sambar, wild boar, bear, porcupines and blue bulls are present in this area-covering districts of Khandwa, Khargone and Dewas-which is also the habitat for the migratory Siberian ducks.

Similarly, about 130 hectares of land was required in Vidisha district of Madhya Pradesh for a reservoir project and 76,000 trees were to be felled for this project. In this case also the project was approved by the Chief Wildlife Warden stating that no significant wildlife except nilgai, sambar, chital and few crocodiles in the upstream were known to be present."



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Another burning example is the now shelved Indira Sarovar Bodhghat Hydro-electric Project in the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh. For this project, the State Government had recommended the felling of 8 million trees. This project was later stopped due to environmental reasons but not before a large area had already been devastated by a massive clear felling operation.

The State Government had also recommended a proposal to divert 168 hectares of land for a broad gauge train line when 135 hectares of this area fell in the Ghatigaon Sanctuary in Gwalior district, meant for the Great Indian Bustard, which is now virtually extinct from that area.

There are also cases where Section 35(5) of the Wildlife Protection Act, which states "No alteration of the boundaries of a National Park shall be made except on a resolution passed by the legislative Assembly of the State, " has been blatantly flouted. For example, a large part of the Madhav National Park has been transferred for the Mohini Sagar Hydroelectric Project in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh. Similarly land has also been transferred for irrigation projects from Panchmarhi Sanctuary (Amadehi Project) and Noradehi Sanctuary (Nirandpur Project). It has also been learnt, that a proposal has been mooted recently at the senior bureaucratic level to denotify many sanctuaries in the State. There are also plans to take away large areas from the Sanjay National Park and Ken Ghariyal (crocodile) Sanctuary for commercial purposes.

## **Demand for Fuelwood and Timber**

Due to the rapid growth of population, coupled with the sudden rise in prices of timber and firewood, illegal logging and theft of timber has increased all over the State and all this gets covered up by the Government's permission for unhindered removal of fuelwood from forest areas. The demand for fuelwood, which has



*Headloading of firewood-Where will it end?*



been increasing at a rapid pace due to rising population, gets met largely by those residing on the forest peripheries or the villages that have come up inside the forests over a period of time as the authorities have not bothered to shift the labour camps that were established deep inside the forests due to the shortage of labour for large-scale forestry operations.



*Road to destruction!*

A large part of the demand for fuelwood in the urban and semi-urban areas is also being met through illegal logging by the timber mafia and this whole exercise gets covered under the garb of fuelwood collection. A Crew team, which travelled different parts of the State, has detected that a parallel and illegal system of fuelwood collection, which is devastating the forest cover in the State, is flourishing right under the nose of the district collectors, police and forest authorities. The role being played by this system gets amply reflected by the following table which shows how, despite the growing demand, the State sponsored collection of fuelwood, which is supplied at Nistar depots of the Forest department for sale to people, has come down due to non-availability of fuelwood silviculturally in Madhya Pradesh between the period 1958-59 to 1994-95 (A State Forest Department Report):

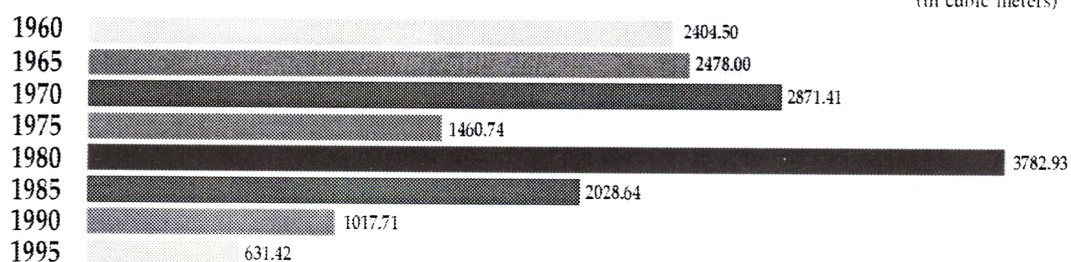


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## Year wise Fuel wood Production in M.P.

(in cubic meters)



## Detailed Statistics

Year	Fuel wood (cubic meters)	Year	Fuel wood (cubic meters)
1958-59	2063.70	1959-60	2404.50
1960-61	2923.10	1961-62	2360.70
1962-63	3171.40	1963-64	3448.10
1964-65	2478.00	1965-66	3270.10
1966-67	3280.40	1967-68	3632.20
1968-69	3382.13	1969-70	2871.41
1970-71	1664.80	1971-72	1475.96
1972-73	2162.00	1973-74	1020.27
1974-75	1460.74	1975-76	1437.00
1976-77	1413.37	1977-78	2289.12
1978-79	4067.30	1979-80	3782.93
1980-81	4000.00	1981-82	2260.11
1982-83	1726.78	1983-84	1814.45
1984-85	2028.64	1985-86	2100.00
1986-87	1417.00	1987-88	1029.08
1988-89	129.36	1989-90	1017.71
1990-91	971.68	1991-92	990.94
1992-93	784.54	1993-94	617.74
1994-95	631.42		



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## Encroachments and Diversion of Forestland

Records show that successive State Governments have diverted more than 2,00,000 hectares of forestland for agricultural purposes between 1951 and 1980. The State Government has regularized the unauthorized occupation of forestland for cultivation several times before the Forest Conservation Act was passed. This exercise is still being followed and as a result of the periodic regularization of forest encroachments successive State Governments have encouraged new encroachments. The process of encroachments gets boosted during the election period, when the politicians promise the regularization of encroachments.



*Forest encroachment in Balaghat District*

The Madhya Pradesh Government had in 1989 submitted proposals to the Central Government in accordance with Section 2 of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 for the diversion of

2,73,458.370 hectares of forest land for regularisation of encroachment in different districts of the State and the Central Government had responded to this by conveying its approval for regularisation of encroachments and diversion of 40,424.522 hectares of forest land in 27 districts of the State.

A State Forest Department Report titled-Four Decades of Forestry (1956-95)-reflects the real magnitude of the problem linked with the regularization of encroachments on forestland. The report points out that till 1995, the total forest area diverted in Madhya Pradesh under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 was 207622.415 hectares and nearly fifty per cent of this, i.e., 103873.565 hectares was the area diverted for the regularization of encroachments.

The task of renewal and distribution of leases (pattas) to the illegal settlers in so-called forest villages was started on priority basis in May 1997. By legalizing the rights of the



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forest encroachers, the State Government had given over 76,000 hectares of forestland for cultivation by October that year. According to a recent assessment of the State Government, there were nearly 1350 forest villages in the State, with the largest number of 165 such villages in Mandla district followed by 163 forest villages in Raipur district. The State Government had given fifteen-year Pattas to the forest encroachers for the first time in 1976-77 and the validity of these pattas had expired in 1992.

## Protected Areas



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*Grazing and more grazing inside a National Park*

Madhya Pradesh has 11 National Parks and 35 wildlife sanctuaries covering a combined area of about 17,000 sq. kms. These parks and sanctuaries, however, constitute only about 11 per cent of the forest area and barely 3.5 per cent of the total area of the state. The most recent Environmental Status Report, published by the state run Environmental Planning and Coordination Organization, has reported that easy access to forests for the collection of firewood and minor forest produce, uncontrolled grazing by livestock, and the frequent occurrence of fires near human habitations have virtually brought the process of forest regeneration to a halt. The problem is further aggravated by the intrusion of those involved in illegal logging, mining, and poaching. The problem has been amplified further due to the tardy progress in the task of relocating the existing villages to alternative sites from their present locations inside the Protected Areas. This problem is persisting in Bori, Panna, Bandhavgarh, Satpura, and Sanjay National Parks.

## Continuous Pressure on the Tiger Habitat

In view of the above factors it is not surprising that the Tiger population has come down drastically over the years. The Tiger population has been threatened even more by the progressive depletion of the forest cover in Madhya Pradesh in the last one-decade.

The tiger and its status reflect the overall situation that relates to the prey base and the tiger habitat, i.e., forests. Crew has been involved in monitoring the status of the tiger and its habitat. It has been conducting regular surveys in the protected as well as general forest areas of Madhya Pradesh to keep a detailed and systematic record of depleting forest cover, poaching, and loss of Prey base.

The following table gives the seizure details of cases linked with illegally felled timber. It reflects the timber mafia's pressure on forests in Madhya Pradesh.

**Table showing seizure of Timber in illegal felling cases**

Year	no. of Cases in 000s	timber Cu.mt. in 000s	poles Cu.mt. in 000s	fuelwood Cu.mt. in 000s	Estimated value in million Rs.
1993-94	103	27	10	31	124.0
1994-95	95	23	96	31	106.7
1995-96	96	23	98	30	122.7
1996-97	106	23	13	34	165.5
1997-98	93	32	10	40	268.8
1998-99	62	15	16	17	134.0

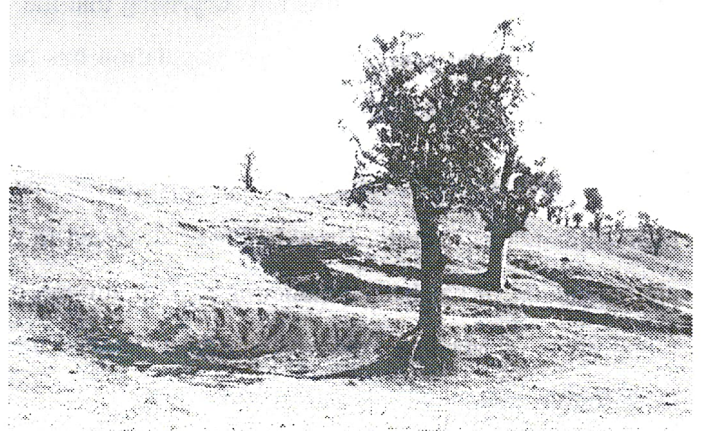


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# Indictment by Forest Survey Of India

The rather large tiger population of Madhya Pradesh has led to a certain level of complacency among the public as well as in the bureaucracy. Unfortunately the public is largely ignorant of the rapid pace of degradation and destruction of the rich forest wealth of



*Forest destruction in Chhindwara district*

the state. It still mistakenly believes that this once forest rich State still continues to retain the same kind of lush green forest cover as it used to only a few decades ago.

However the State of Forest Reports released by the Forest Survey of India every two years have a different story to tell.

- ❑ In the 1993 assessment, there was a decrease of 389 sq.kms of forest area in Madhya Pradesh.
- ❑ In 1995, when the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite data was analyzed digitally for Madhya Pradesh by the Forest Survey of India, it was revealed that there was an overall decrease of 232 sq.kms of forest cover in the State.
- ❑ Two years later, in the 1997 assessment, there was a decrease of 3,969 sq.kms of forest cover in the State.
- ❑ The State Government is presently giving credit to the village level forest protection committees for the preliminary projection by the Forest Survey of India regarding an overall gain of 635 sq.kms. in forest cover over the 1997 assessment. However environmentalists brush aside these projections saying that the difference between satellite imagery and ground situation is vast since the satellite projections fail to reflect the reduced density of forest cover.

When the Supreme Court had ordered for a suitable explanation for decline of dense forest during the short span of two years (October-November 1992 to October - November 1994) after there was a further change in forest cover of Madhya Pradesh in the 1997 assessment of Forest Survey of India, the State authorities had listed encroachments, diversion of forest land for non-forest activities, shifting cultivation, cut-back operations carried out for rehabilitation of degraded forests, and illicit logging as some of the main reasons for the decline in dense forest cover.



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## **Rapidly Declining Tiger Population**

The tiger population in India had fallen from a pre-Independence tally of about 40,000 about six decades ago to only about 3700 in 1993. Presently the Tiger population in this country is estimated between 3000 and 2500. The tiger population is seen as an indicator of the health of the ecosystem, and hence, this precipitous decline in the tiger population is extremely significant and a matter of grave concern. Of the total tiger population, the number of tigers in the Central Indian State of Madhya Pradesh was 927, according to the last Tiger Census (population estimation exercise conducted by the Government) in 1997.

However experts have contested the official tiger statistics and questioned the authenticity of the Census operations. They have grounds to believe that the menace of poaching, biotic conflict and destruction of habitat particularly threaten the tigers in Madhya Pradesh. Hence a large section of foresters as well as general public is convinced that their number has come down drastically in recent years.

## **Problem of Poaching**

Through field queries CREW has found that the problem of poaching, particularly that of Tigers and Panthers, is rampant around Bandhavgarh, Panna, Kanha, Satpura, Pench National Parks and in districts of Betul, Hoshangabad, Raisen, Seoni, Raipur, Raigarh, Vidisha, Sagar, Jabalpur, Katni, Chhatarpur, Chhindwara, Balaghat, Mandla, Shahdol, Sarguja, and Bilaspur. The animal skins and body parts are being smuggled out of the State mainly through the railheads at Satna, Jabalpur, Itarsi Jhansi and Sagar. CREW had reported a major Tiger seizure in the Balaghat district in its last report (June 1999).

Our latest study in the Jabalpur area this time shows that the poachers are active in the State. Some local villagers have links with the poaching gangs and are also involved in trapping, killing, skinning, storing, and smuggling of animal body parts. The Jabalpur district Police had arrested three persons Budhlal Chaudhary, Dahilal Chaudhary and Baliram from the Majhganva police station area on June 12, 1999 and seized from their possession one tiger and one leopard skin as well as skins of three spotted deers and Sambar antlers. A week later, from the same police station area, three more persons Kripal Singh, Prem Singh and Mohan Singh were arrested by the police while they were trying to smuggle out the bones of two tigers.



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In another poaching case that was reported in the first week of April 2000, the Police have arrested three poachers with panther hide in their possession from the Jagarpur forests, a few kms from Bagicha tahsil in Jashpur district of Madhya Pradesh. According to police sources, the panther had been poisoned to death by the accused who are local tribals and have been identified as residents of Jashpur and Sarguja district.

## Martyrs for A Cause

The list of the State foresters killed by poachers and illicit loggers while on forest protection duty is also long and revealing. The following list shows how the forest employees are being brutally murdered by poachers and illicit loggers while on forest protection duty in Madhya Pradesh :

District	Employee	date of murder
Balaghat	T.J. Indurkar, Forester	2.1.1992
Durg	Baliram Tandon, forest guard	13.1.1992
Rewa	J.K. Chaube, Dy. Ranger	20.7.1992
Rewa	Moolchand Prajapati, Vansevak	20.7.1992
Bilaspur	Ganpati, Forester	31.8.1992
Chhindwara	Jhanaklal Bhawarkar, Forest Guard	4.12.1992
Jagdalpur	Haribandhu, Forest Guard	30.1.1993
Jagdalpur	Rameshwar Pandey, Forest Guard	30.1.1993
Rewa	Rajmani Dwivedi, Forest Guard	19.2.1993
Jabalpur	Chandanlal Vakati, Forest Guard	22.7.1993
Jabalpur	Gayaprasad Singhor, Forest Guard	23.7.1993
Indore	B.D. Chanderia, Dy. Ranger	3.11.1993
Durg	Vijayram Sahu, Forest Guard	7.5.1994
Hoshangabad	Babulal Chadhar, Forest Guard	27.11.1994
Khandwa	Prakash Nikam, Forest Guard	29.1.1995



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District	Employee	date of murder
Kanker	J.R. Kumeti, Forest Guard	30.5.1995
Chhindwara	K.P. Dixit, Dy. Ranger	16.11.1995
Bhopal	Shambhu Singh, Daily labour	7.7.1995
Chhindwara	K.P. Jhulakhia, Forest Guard	29.7.1995
Balaghat	Mansharam Kakot, Forest Guard	8.8.1995
Sagar	Komal Singh Thakur, Forest Guard	17.10.199
Balaghat	Charansingh Shiv, Forest Guard	9.11.1995
Indore	G.S. Gaud, Forest Ranger	1.2.1996
Balaghat	Sukhdevram Netam, Forester	1.2.1996
Khandwa	Kamal Khan, Forest Guard	19.11.1996
Chhindwara	Majid Khan, Forest Guard	29.7.1996
Indore	Kedar Singh, Forest Guard	25.9.1996
Bhopal	Pratap Singh, Forest Guard	12.11.1996
Bhopal	Prahlad Singh Jatav, Forest Guard	12.11.1996
Sagar	Prakash Yadav, Daily labour	21.7.1997
Rewa	Anand Pratap Singh, Forest Guard	9.9.1997
Rewa	Surendrapratap Singh, Forest Guard	20.9.1997
Sagar	Ramnarayan Vaidya, Forest Guard	13.1.1998
Durg	Suresh Rao, Forest Guard	21/23.5.1998
Chhatarpur	Rambabu Tiwari, Forest Guard	9.9.1998
Hoshangabad	K.S. Chauhan, Forest Guard	15.10.1998
Betul	Kishorilal More, Forester	18.11.1998
Sarguja	Muneshwar Yadav, Daily labour	6.10.1998
Khandwa	R.V. Shikari, Guard	13.1.1999



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When contacted by CREW and asked to comment on the problem of poaching and more particularly the tiger carcass found inside the Pench National Park in January 2000 and the one found in the same area in December 1999 and another found at Bichwa outside Kanha around the same time, the State authorities said that these finds are not related to poachers. They stated that the carcass itself confirms that it is not a case of poaching but that of infighting between the tigers.

However there are others who have a different viewpoint. The carcass of a tiger cannot be the dead end for the investigation agency. Whenever the carcass of a Tiger or some other wild animal is found the investigation cannot be closed without a forensic examination. This is necessary not only as a legal binding but also to close in on poachers and their links with those smuggling tiger body parts or its derivatives to meet the international demands.

It is vital to point out that when ever poaching cases have been registered in Madhya Pradesh or in other parts of the country, only the animal skins, bones, jaws, and nails have been seized and *there has never been any seizure of other vital body organs that fetch a fortune in the international markets* like those in New York's Chinatown and Tokyo (Environmental Investigation Agency's recent Investigation report and "The State of Tiger" report-1999).

## Operation Wipeout

In the context of poaching, there was a news report in The Hindu of February 2, 2000. Quoting a forest department official, it said that the field protection approach in Madhya Pradesh was so weak and disjointed that it seemed there was an 'operation wipe out' going on in the State.

In addition to the loss of habitat and prey-base caused by the destruction of forests, the survival of the tiger is greatly threatened by poachers who have spread their tentacles not only in the general forest areas, but also in the protected areas. Their network now spreads all across the country, catering to the global demand for skins and body parts of rare and endangered species that fetch a fortune for those involved in this racket.

Recently 15 wild dogs were found killed by consuming poison in Kanha National Park. This poison is the source chemical which is being used by poachers for killing Tigers and panthers.



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## Poaching Cases Drag On



*The Khaga Saizure-the biggest catch of wildlife parts in India.*

*Are these tiger and leopard skins from Madhya Pradesh?*

Investigations by CREW have shown a clear trend that the State Forest Department authorities that are supposed to enforce the Wildlife Protection Act, generally drag their feet when it comes to pursuing the poaching cases to their logical conclusion. While only a small percentage of poaching related cases go for prosecution it is rarely that they end up in conviction or jail sentence for the kingpins running the poaching networks.

The information collected by CREW shows that while hundreds of cases are getting registered each year, only about two-third of these cases reach the trial stage and in terms of conviction, the scenario is very dismal.

The following table reflects the scenario relating to poaching cases :

Year	Cases pending	challaned	disposed	conviction	pending
1995	168	123	3	1	18
1996	159	109	1	0	08
1997	183	131	2	1	129
1998	75	52	1	1	51



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## Patronage to Poachers

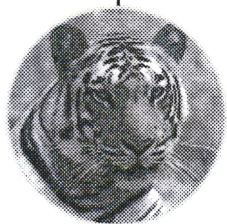
During the course of its investigations, CREW also stumbled on a startling revelation about the manner in which the Wildlife enforcement authorities are at times hand in glove with the poachers and how they help in bailing them out even if some brave forest employee catches them in the act of poaching.

The State forest department illicit poaching case no. 16594/23 of 1996 is a glaring example. In the evening of March 20, 1996 at about 8 p.m., six poachers were moving in a jeep in the Samaspura beat of the Samardha Forest Range in Bhopal district. They were fully equipped with two rifles fitted with telescopes, search light and other equipment. The beat guard, Anil Kumar Jain spotted the poachers while they were trying to focus their searchlight. Anil Jain took the help of some villagers and after engaging the poachers in a hand-to-hand combat arrested two of them, while four other offenders managed to escape. From their possession, one dead blue bull (neelgai), one jeep being used for poaching, two telescopic rifles (.22 bore and .315 bore) along with ammunition were seized. The forest Guard who was involved in this daring act was also awarded the prestigious Tiger Link Baghsevak Award recognizing his contribution for excellence in Tiger Conservation in 1996.

Later queries about this case are however very disturbing. While the brave and committed forest guard Anil Kumar Jain today goes unsung, the poachers have gone scot-free and it is also learnt from reliable sources that the rifles and the vehicle that had been seized as a result of Anil Kumar Jain's valiant act have all been returned to the poachers and the case is now gathering dust in Government files.

## Startling Exposure

Another startling aspect linked with the problem of poaching was exposed through a news item and a photograph published in the March 11, 2000 edition of Times of India published from Delhi. This news item about poaching in Bandhavgarh National Park clearly indicates that the group of people who have been photographed along with a slain Tiger are well known people who have to be politically and financially strong and rich enough to get a photograph taken in the same manner as it used to be taken when Tiger Hunting was a luxury for the rich and powerful. The Bandhavgarh incident, which has been corroborated by a photograph reportedly released by WWF (this organization later issued a denial in this regard), poses a serious challenge to the Tiger protection agencies of the State and all those organizations that are interested in the survival of this endangered species in its last stronghold-Madhya Pradesh.



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When CREW contacted the State authorities, they stated that the photograph published in the Times of India was an old one while admitting that it clearly shows that poaching has taken place. They also said that three persons shown in the photograph have been identified. Two of them, including a Sports Officer with the State Police, were absconding while the third had died recently in a road accident.

Investigations by CREW into this case also established that the photograph recently published in the newspaper is an old one and it does not reflect in any way that the poaching incident took place inside the Bandhavgarh National Park. While it has been found that the Park area is quite safe, there are indications that the poachers are presently active in the surrounding forests of Shahdol, Sidhi, Satna, Umaria, and Katni districts, that form the logical habitat for the Tigers moving out of the Protected Area due to growth in their numbers. The poachers' job becomes easy in this belt since the tigers moving out of the Protected Area become familiar to human proximity due to excessive tourism and tiger shows.

## **Patrolling-A casualty**

The menace of poaching also continues to touch alarming levels in the State due to poor patrolling. Crew has found out that in March 1998, the U.K. based organization-Global Tiger Patrol donated five Maruti Gypsy vehicles to three Sanctuaries-Sitanadi, Udanti and Barnavapara—in Raipur district for the protection of tigers and other wildlife in and around these Sanctuaries. At the time of the donation of these vehicles, the area had a total of seven vehicles—one with the DFO Wildlife, one each with each of the Sanctuary Superintendents, and three more given to the Sanctuaries by the M.P. Forestry Project. Hence with the GTP donation, a total of twelve vehicles should have been available for protection of the area.

However a year later, CREW found out that only six vehicles were in use-five GTP donated Gypsies and one from the M.P. Forestry Project and the others had been withdrawn to other areas. Hence the Sanctuary Superintendents for their official work and administrative duties were using the GTP vehicles donated exclusively for patrolling. In the process patrolling has become a casualty. The problem of forest department vehicles meant for tiger patrol is further aggravated by the fact that in practice they often get requisitioned by the district collector for other purposes and they get deployed for tendu leaf collection and other forestry activities.



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## Satpura Protected Area-An Overview

Through the present report CREW presents an overview of the area covering the Satpura National Park, the Pachmarhi Wildlife Sanctuary, and the Bori Wildlife Sanctuary. The Satpura National Park and Bori Sanctuary have recently been declared as Project Tiger Reserve by the Government of India.



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*Panoramic view of Satpura Forests*

Nature has endowed this region of the state with a dense forest which makes it one of the finest habitats for the tiger as well as the leopard, the wild dog, the cheetal, the barking deer, the sloth bear, the Gaur (wild oxen), and a wide range of rare birds.

The Satpura Protected Area (SPA) includes the Satpura National Park (524 sq. km) in the centre, Pachmarhi Wildlife Sanctuary (417 sq.km) in the north and Bori Wildlife Sanctuary (486 sq.km) in the south. It lies between 22 degree 19'28'' North latitude and 77 degree 56' 40'' and 77 degree 44' 0'' East longitudes in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. The SPA is a unique and compact reserved area that stretches over 1500 sq.kms. Efforts are underway to declare about 500 sq. kms of Mahuldeo forests on the East of SPA, and Rampur-Bhatodi on the south of SPA, also as wildlife sanctuaries. Copious rainfall, high relative humidity, moderate temperature combined with other geographic variables in this area provide favourable habitat conditions for diverse vegetation and wildlife. The area is connected by road to Bhopal (the capital of Madhya Pradesh), Jabalpur and Nagpur. The nearest railway stations are Piparia and Itarsi.



The sal forests are found on the higher Pachmarhi plateau. This is the western and upper most limit of the habitat of the dry peninsular sal trees. These forests are separated by a 200 km stretch of teak and miscellaneous forest from the main body of sal forest of the neighbouring Mandla and Balaghat districts. This isolated patch of sal is very important and needs to be conserved. Teak forests grow in the basaltic Deccan traps of the lower plains and one of the finest strands of teak are found in the Bori valley.

## History

Before 1859, the Gond and Korku aboriginal tribes practiced shifting cultivation in this area. Bori was declared the first reserved forest of this country in 1866 and around this time the first firm steps were taken to put a stop to the practice of shifting cultivation in this area. The Bori sanctuary was created under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1975. Later the separate Pachmarhi Sanctuary was carved out of it in 1977 and the Satpura National Park was notified out of the Bori and Pachmarhi Sanctuaries.



*The little that remains of the once vast green cover*



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# Threat to Wildlife

## Fire

The State forest department authorities recognize the fact that wildlife and its habitat in SPA is continuously threatened by fire, most of which is man-made and started by the villagers especially during the Mahua collecting season and also to get new flush of grass for their cattle.

## Encroachments

A recent survey in the Bori Sanctuary by CREW revealed that it is facing a serious threat of encroachment. Except in the monsoon season, about a 1000 small boats are used for fishing by fishermen's cooperatives throughout the year in the Tawa dam submergence area. The release of dam water for agriculture each December exposes the draw down area, which is used by the villagers for the cultivation of wheat and other crops. This state of affairs continues right up to the hot summer season when the wild animals come out in search for water. Moreover, pesticides used by the farmers accumulate in high concentrations in the water. Consequently, a large number of fish and animal die or become diseased. The problem of encroachment is gradually increasing with the rise in the population of villages that still remain to be shifted out of the protected area.

## Illegal Logging

Illegal logging is particularly rampant in areas of Pachmarhi Sanctuary and adjoining forest areas. Fortunately, this problem is only marginal in the hilly and rugged terrain of the Satpura National Park and Bori Sanctuary.

## Grazing

Pressure for grazing exists from outside the protected areas as well as from the villages inside the area. There are 17 revenue villages and one forest village in the Satpura National Park, 42 revenue villages and 8 forest villages in the Pachmarhi Sanctuary, and 17 forest villages in the Bori Sanctuary. All of these contribute to grazing in the protected areas.



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## Minor Forest Produce Collection

Minor forest produce (MFP) collection, an activity sponsored and supported by the State Government in unprotected areas of the state, is banned in the protected areas. Nevertheless, villagers living inside the protected area continue to collect MFP as well as fuel wood for their daily use.

## Poaching

The SPA territory is harsh and rugged and automatically provides protection against poachers. Nevertheless, cases of animal killing by poisoning are frequently reported from this area. Adjoining the Satpura National Park on the North and West is the Hoshangabad territorial forest division. The threat to wild animals from poachers is more acute in this strip of forest since villages surround this area. On the southern side of Satpura National Park is a continuous belt of dense forests lying in the Betul and Chhindwara region. Illegal logging of trees and poaching is a major problem in this area.

## Human Pressure

The Pachmarhi area is particularly faced with the problem of acute human presence. Pachmarhi, the only hill station/resort in Madhya Pradesh falls within the Pachmarhi Sanctuary area. It attracts a large number of tourists in the hot summer months and the resulting congestion has greatly damaged the unique ecology of the area. The Satpura National Park is in the area adjoining the Pachmarhi hills. Unfortunately, uncontrolled construction activity, even at a religious place like Chauragarh and the proliferation of military as well as official and semi-official training centres here is destroying the ecology, serenity and character of this area and the foothills adjacent to Piparia and Matkuli. An ever-growing number of people are acquiring property in this area and if this trend continues, the sanctity of the Satpura National Park would be irreversibly damaged.

The major problems that have been identified in the SPA are :

1. Conversion of forestland for agricultural, mining, quarrying, and residential use,



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2. Growth of human settlements inside the SPA,
3. Conflict between man and animal within the SPA,
4. Excessive and uncontrolled tourism, and
5. Training Centers.

## Solutions

1. Relocation of the settlements inside the SPA to appropriate locations outside.
2. Sensitization of human habitants to the needs and requirements of the SPA through educational and awareness programs.
3. Inputs through applied research for scientific wildlife management.
4. Incentives to motivate the frontline staff of the forest department.
5. Steps to regulate excessive tourism, and
6. Shifting the training centers from Pachmarhi.



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## Eco-tourism

A report published in the Delhi edition of Indian Express on November 24, 1999 reflects the Madhya Pradesh Government's plan to promote eco-tourism. The report said that the State Government is for promoting eco-tourism by attracting tourists, particularly those visiting Khajuraho, to the national parks and sanctuaries and offering them the option of controlled hunting of wild animals outside the Protected Areas.

Another report in the Delhi edition of The Hindu on November 26, 1999 also projected the State Government's plan to promote Mahasir fishing in the Ken River near Khajuraho.

This plan was unfolded by the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister while inaugurating the Khajuraho Millennium Environment seminar at Khajuraho. Talking about the ``immense prospects'' of eco-tourism the Chief Minister had said that Madhya Pradesh had a vast forest area, diverse wildlife and greenery. He had also announced that a task force, to be headed by the State Chief Wildlife Warden, would recommend how to link tourists visiting Khajuraho and the Panna National Park. While announcing this, the

Chief Minister had also stated that arrangements should be made to provide fishing facilities to tourists in the Ken River. He had also sought suggestions from representatives of the World Nature Fund for developing Panna and other national parks of the State on the pattern of the African safari parks.

Wildlife experts have expressed concern at the State Government's move to throw open the forests for culling of ``some species of wild animals''. Experts are also critical of the plans to allow Mahasir fishing in the Ken river.

The Ken River passes through the Panna National Park and the Ken Gharial Sanctuary. Under the Wildlife Conservation Act, any fishing activity cannot be permitted in this area. Since a part of the Ken river flows outside the protected area, the Government might like to promote Mahasir fishing in this part of the river but wildlife experts emphasize that while the river surface can be demarcated as a protected or an unprotected area but the aqua life in the Ken river, which cannot be restricted to any particular area, should not be threatened by any kind of fishing activity in close proximity to the protected area.

Experts have also pointed out that the concept of African Safari cannot be emulated in Madhya Pradesh since the make up of forests is different in these two different parts of the world. ``While ours are tropical forests, the forests in Africa are the Savannah type.

In sharp contrast with the African forests, the species' diversity Index in our area is very high for animals as well as plants.''' Moreover, on the cultural, ethical and religious counts also the approach in India is conservation oriented. While the forest Planners and managers here have adopted the ecosystem conservation approach, some African countries have a commercial approach, the Foresters have pointed out adding that while many in Africa believe in high production rate to sustain killing and hunting whereas our ethos is to "conserve and protect" in order to ensure a balanced eco-system.

Killing animals of any particular species of the wild can have a spiraling adverse impact on other species since all species are interdependent. On the issue of "culling", which is advocated by a section of foresters, who say that it should be allowed keeping in view the carrying capacity of forests, there is another section of forest managers, who feel that the concept of carrying capacity is very fluid, vague and unrealistic. Some senior State Forest department officials also advocate the culling of wild animals for commercial gains.



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## Violation of Wildlife Protection Act

The June 1999 edition of Tigerlink, produced by Ranthambore Foundation has cited the comments of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) to highlight how the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 is being violated in Madhya Pradesh. Quoting the CAG report, it says that the Wildlife Protection Act is being “badly ignored” in the State as “illegal mining” is being carried out in many forest reserves of the State.

The CAG report said that in Ken Ghariyal Sanctuary illegal mining of valuable diaspore and pyrophilite stone was being carried out by a company on the basis of a 20-year lease granted by the Chhatarpur district collector after a no-objection certificate had been issued by the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO). Later, a joint inspection by the DFO, Chhatarpur and Director Panna National Park was conducted in October 1993 after a complaint was sent to the State Chief Secretary by a villager. The report revealed that mining was going on inside the boundary of the forest area.

The CAG report also revealed that mining was being carried out in the Khurela and Maujpur areas of Shivpuri National Park. The lease for these mines, which was renewed after three years was given by the Shivpuri District Collector.

The Hindu also reported on February 02, 2000 that the Forest and Wildlife Acts were being violated in Madhya Pradesh with impunity. The report highlighted the concern expressed by the Central Government over press reports relating to the violation of the Forest and Wildlife Acts and the declining quality of management of the Protected Areas, which include the National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, in Madhya Pradesh.

The report stated that the Central Government representatives, who had accompanied a team from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), on a field visit to the State in January this year, were very critical of the State Government's ‘computerized’ presentation since it did not reflect the problems of poaching and field administration but only “dramatized that all was well with the Protected Areas in the State.”

The report further said that this was in sharp contrast to the assessment of many wildlife experts and newspaper reports describing the ground level situation on the forest and wildlife front in Madhya Pradesh as the ‘worst crisis ever.’

The Centre's concern, the report said, was aggravated particularly, after the seizure at Khaga in Uttar Pradesh, which happens to be the biggest ever seizure of big cat



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derivatives in the country.

After the Khaga seizure, the chief wildlife warden of Uttar Pradesh has gone on record saying that the tiger derivatives also came from Madhya Pradesh. The cat skin seizure included four tiger skins, 70 leopard skins, 150 kg of tiger and leopard bone, 70 leopard skins, 132 tiger claws, 18,000 leopard claws (representing approximately 1000 animals), 2 leopard teeth, one leopard penis, and other assorted wildlife contraband.

## Conclusion

The continuation of the ecological balance and the survival of wildlife in their natural habitat would require commitment at the highest political and bureaucratic levels; because it is through them only that this task could acquire importance, urgency and commitment.

Presently the conservation measures lack political will otherwise there is no reason why a proper "Wildlife Protection Security Force" could not be raised so far out of the massive profits/revenue the State Government has been earning out of the exploitation of Natural Resources in forestlands.

Similarly the establishment of a Competent Prosecution agency funded out of the Forest Revenue should ensure success of Forest/Poaching/Hunting/possession of wildlife parts and illicit felling of trees cases in the Courts of Law.

The present state of the success of these cases in the Courts of Law gives a dismal commentary on the interest being taken by the concerned State Government agencies. This in return sends signals to the poachers and illicit fellers that the pious Government announcements for the protection of wildlife and ecology continue to lack teeth and as such they could continue to play havoc till fortunately for them the political and bureaucratic apathy continues and lasts.

The failure of forest related cases in the Courts of Law needs serious examination whether the relevant Provisions of Law



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need amendments and changes so that the burden of proof could shift to the criminals in suitable cases. The present Laws had been drafted long ago when both the forests and Wildlife were in abundance and SHIKAR (hunting) was a way of life for the rich and the powerful. Presently their activities have become commercialized, the pressure on ecology has reached alarming levels, and the survival of all living beings is at stake.

CREW would like to request all the concerned agencies to kindly heed the events as they are taking place and to wake up to their duties, responsibilities and public expectations. They will have to act to ensure the balance of ECOLOGY while there is still chance to reverse the downhill slide to disaster.



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# Grim Reminders

Some of the major lapses of the Madhya Pradesh Government observed by CREW:

1. The final notification has not been issued for the Pench National Park by the Madhya Pradesh Government even two-and-half years after the Supreme Court had issued an order in this regard. Consequently fishing by the fish mafia and minor forest produce collection goes on unhindered in this Protected Area possessing outstanding eco-system in gross disregard of the guidelines laid down for the conservation of National Parks and Protected Areas (CNPPA) by IUCN.

These guidelines prohibit exploitation of natural resources in an area which is included in the list of National Parks. Exploitation in this sense is considered to include the removal of mineral resources, timber and other vegetation, and animal life, or the development of dams or other structures for irrigation or hydroelectric power.

The guidelines also point out that the highest competent authority has to take steps to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area and enforce effectively the respect of ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features which have led to its establishment as a National Park and the general requirement against exploitation must be rigidly enforced.

2. The State Government has ignored the decisions of the Wildlife Board and failed to announce a Special pay for the wildlife staff of the Forest department.
3. "Tiger Shows" are being encouraged for tourists and high-profile State guests in National Parks. The State Wildlife Advisory Board and experts have recommended several times that the "Tiger Shows" be stopped.
4. The Government has allowed the bifurcation of a huge area from the Madhav National Park in Shivpuri district to pave the way for the Mohini Sagar dam.
5. Forest land has been transferred for non-forest activity in Pachmarhi Sanctuary (Amadehi Irrigation Project) and Nauradehi Sanctuary (Nirandpur Irrigation Project).
6. The handling of poaching and timber related cases in law courts leaves much to be desired.
7. CREW has evidence to establish that the process is on in Madhya Pradesh to regularize old Trophies.



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8. Wildlife vehicles meant for Tiger Patrol have been diverted for use elsewhere by the district administration.
9. There has been no progress with regard to proposals for diverting the highways passing through the Panna, Kanha, Madhav, Bandhavgarh National Parks and Achanakmar Sanctuary.
10. There are cases, particularly in the Pachmarhi area where Section 21 of the Wildlife Protection Act, which bars accrual of new rights in Protected Areas has been blatantly violated by influential people in collusion with the district authorities.
11. Neglect of the village relocation task by the authorities in Panna, Bandhavgarh, Sanjay National Parks and Bori, Achanakmar, Udanti and Sitanadi Sanctuaries.
12. Delay in notifying other ecologically important areas as Protected Areas that have been so identified by the Wildlife Institute of India to achieve the National target of bringing 5 per cent geographical area of the State under the Protected Area Network.
13. Poor financial support for the upkeep of the Protected Areas, which should be 15 per cent of the total forestry allocations.
14. The overall budgetary allotment to the Forestry Sector for forest regeneration and protection is decreasing. The funds that are collected from this sector are not ploughed back in adequate proportion.
15. Rejection of a proposal for Rampur-Bhatodi Sanctuary, which will act as a buffer to Bori-Satpura Tiger Reserve, by the State Wildlife Advisory Board manned by committed bureaucrats and political appointees.
16. Green signal has been given for night driving in National Parks and Sanctuaries on the recommendation of the State Wildlife Advisory Board.
17. Entry of Diesel Vehicles, banned till recently in National Parks and Sanctuaries, has been allowed on the recommendation of the State Wildlife Advisory Board.
18. The State Government has also announced its decision to allow shooting of Blue-bull on the pretext of damage to agricultural crops and lack of funds to compensate the farmers.
19. Large-scale building construction activities are going on in National Parks and Sanctuaries on the pretext of better management.

20. Mobility of Staff in protected Areas and general forest areas has been seriously affected due to the recent Government order to withdraw vehicles that were more than 13 years old. The situation has been aggravated further since these vehicles have not been replaced with new ones.

CREW would continue to project the GRIM REMINDERS in its coming reports



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## Mother Nature

Beautiful Trees,  
Lovely Flowers  
Gentle breeze  
Eternal nature  
Splendid rains  
their soothing Shower  
Perennial rivers  
Placid lakes  
Shimmering ponds  
Shall we lose them forever ?  
Will no body pay heed  
While the Rich Forests  
&  
Abundant wildlife  
Gets destroyed by  
Human greed  
He cuts down trees for his own sake  
And harms Mother Nature  
What a pity  
Man continues to hunt wildlife  
Will some one tell him he's  
committing a blunder.

*This poem on environment  
and wildlife has been  
contributed by  
Miss Medha Shrivastava,  
who is studying in the Sixth  
Standard at New Delhi's  
Sanskriti School.*