

Headlines Himalaya

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The 124th issue of Headlines Himalaya, weekly e-News is an attempt to keep our global readers abreast with the happenings in the Himalaya. As a part of your contribution to the environment and conservation in the Himalaya, please share it with your colleagues and friends. Also, subscription is free.

This week, water issues came in many forms. Flood has devastated many but Monsoon in eastern Himalaya suggests a slow downhill trend. Flood also brings island tigers in north Bengal and an introduction of flood-resistant paddy. River water in Bhutan had isolated two species of langurs from breeding in the past but it has been turned around, prompting a possible extinction of the golden langurs. Amidst rhino poachers and timber smugglers, we also read about communities and individuals who get stronger by day because they preserve common sense, pool experiences and enhance knowledge for livelihood and to protect nature. The cash-strapped, urban jungle is a different story because it is riddled with superbugs, carbon-emitting industries, saving/credit cooperatives and black-market timber. Good reading!

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SUPERBUG IN NEPAL?

A new class of superbugs resistant to all antibiotics from south Asia, is spreading. The NDM-1 which stands for New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase-1, was identified in two types of bacteria -- *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Escherichia coli* -- in a Swedish patient admitted to hospital in India. NDM-1 gene was found on DNA structures, called plasmids that can be easily copied and transferred between bacteria. Even Nepali doctors have detected such instances here that have become increasingly difficult to treat. Doctors believe that the infection here may have been introduced from India, but this remains to be investigated. One bacterium among this resistant army is *E. coli* which has fortified itself with NDM. In another report, Bir Hospital, the oldest hospital in Kathmandu, is to be developed into a 'model hospital'. However, around 40 per cent of the hospital area is occupied by scrap

and it generates around 333 kg wastes daily with contaminated risk waste as 261 kg, non-risk waste of 72 kg. Two autoclave disposal machines with an hourly capacity to burn 30 kg of waste at 121⁰C, lie defunct.

Aug 11, 19, 20, 26

Kantipur, Gorkhapatra, Himalayan Times, Nepali Times

MUSTANG BANS GOVERNMENT AND TREKKERS

While the government is gearing up for the Nepal Tourism Year 2011, the youth society of Mustang will put a ban on foreigners from entering the Upper Mustang effective from October 1. The government had opened Mustang for foreign tourists in 1992 and pledged to provide the locals 60% of the revenues collected from tourists who paid \$700 each for the permission. In 2009, the charge was reduced to \$500. They accuse the government of not giving a penny, though the government had collected \$7.8 million from 11,153 tourists between 1994 and 2007.

August 20, 25, 27

Himalayan Times

WEAVING BAMBOO BASKET, SAVING WILDLIFE

Prem Dahal, a 73 year old villager from Taplejung District who makes his living by weaving and selling bamboo baskets, east Nepal, has dug out 9 water holes with a capacity of 20 - 200 liter for wild animals in Khewang, Surumkhim and Kanchenjunga base camp. It takes about 2 months labor for him to build a water hole as he chisel out rocky areas with hammer and pitching tools to bring down running water. As it takes about a day's walk to reach these water holes, he maintains them at least two times each year.

August 23

Kantipur

FROM NO INDUSTRY TO LESS CARBON EMISSION INDUSTRY

Government of Nepal has given consent to establish less carbon generating industry with in the Lumbini World Heritage Site reversing the earlier decision to ban all industries. It has prohibited the industries emitting carbon and polluting air. Industries like tanning, cement, distillery, tobacco, plastic, brick kilns, according to this decision, are not allowed.

August 25

Gorkhapatra

VILLAGE COOPERATIVE FLOURISHING, TOWN COOPERATIVES POLLUTING

There are 18,705 cooperatives in Nepal that contribute 3% to GDP (gross domestic production) with 50,000 jobs and support livelihood of around three million people indirectly. Of these, over 7,000 saving and credit cooperatives have deposits of NPR 60 billion from poor and middle class people. However, small farmers cooperatives opine that town-based saving and credit cooperatives evade norms and discarding values associated with the cooperative movement. They said cooperatives in villages are flourishing and town cooperatives are polluting the environment. Of 22,800 small farmers groups, 800 groups have formed agriculture cooperatives which are model cooperatives in Nepal as they address poverty and food security.

August 27

Himalayan Times

DECLINING VULTURES AFFECT LOBA TRADITION

The decline in vulture population in Lo Manthang of Mustang has affected cremation of Loba community, which includes feeding vulture with corpse cut into pieces. With the decline in vulture population, corpses to be fed to vultures, remain unattended which has become a matter of worry for the Lobas as it is considered not-so-good premonition. A group of ornithologists suggested a rapid decline of 30% of Mustang vulture population every year.

August 28

Gorkhapatra

COST OF NATURAL DISASTER

Over 245 people lost their lives due to floods, landslides, hailstorm, lightning, and incidents of fire and outbreak of different diseases that hit 48 districts this year. Two happenings feature prominently: 40 were killed by lightning strike and Floods/landslides claimed dozens of lives and displacing hundreds of families in 12 mountain and 5 Terai (lowland) districts.

August 23, 25, 26, 30

Gorkhapatra, Himalayan times, Nepalnews.com

POISON, POACHERS AND PARKS

Two poachers with home-made gun, hooks and traps, were arrested in Banke National Park as they were setting trap lines. In another report, 5 adult chitals (spotted deer) were poisoned to death in Bardia National Park, Western Nepal.

August 31

Kantipur, Himalayan Times

India-Himalaya

FLOOD-PROOF RICE BRINGS HOPE

A new submergence-tolerant variety of rice that promises to ease the creases from the faces of Assam's flood-hit farmers, has been introduced in this central Assam district this year. Swarna sub-1, an updated version of India's popular rice variety Swarna, can last for more than 15 days under water. It produces up to 3-3.5 ton per hectare when submerged, which can go up to six ton in normal conditions. The seed is popular among the new-generation farmers and were distributed among all the 13 districts of Assam.

August 21

Assam Tribune

VERMI-COMPOST, TEA AND ELEPHANTS

Tea and organic compost have changed the fortunes of 300 families on the periphery of Gibbon wildlife sanctuary in Assam's Jorhat district. Villagers grew paddy, vegetables and lost them to elephants every year. They shifted to tea plantation as tea were not the jumbos' cup of choice and later, set up 37 tanks with earthworms to produce vermi-compost. A year-and-a-half later, villagers have reaped greater returns with increased tea yield (20%) and sale of organic fertilizers.

August 21

Telegraph

RHINO HORN SEIZED

Two poachers with a rhino horn were caught and police suspect that the poachers had killed the rhino inside Orang Wildlife Sanctuary in lower Assam and then, took shelter in a nearby village.

August 22

<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=aug2210/at03>

FLOOD SITUATION IN ASSAM GRIM

More than 50,000 people have been affected as more than forty villages were flooded by the swelling tributaries of the mighty Brahmaputra River in Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts. In another report, northeast Monsoon rainfall in the entire eastern Himalaya has gradually gone down as suggested by the data since 1982.

August 23

Assam Tribune

FLOOD BRINGS ISLAND TIGERS

Because of flood and changes in water flow each year, an 800 ha island has come up on the Torsha River in the Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, north Bengal over the past five years and its grassland has become an ideal habitat for elusive and endangered tigers and hispid hares. This natural tract of grassland is surrounded by river and provides undisturbed habitat for the wildlife. As Jaldapara has only five-seven tigers, the grassland will act as a specially protected habitat enabling the population to be viable.

August 27

Telegraph

ARE BIG DAMS SAFER THAN SMALLER ONES?

In a first formal reaction to the controversy over construction of mega dams in upper reaches of Brahmaputra River, the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) stated that large dams are even safer than small dams because the design and construction requirement of large dams are much more stringent making them more resilient. The State Government of Assam had asked MoWR about apprehensions on the construction of big dams in upper reaches of River Brahmaputra and its adverse impact on downstream areas in Assam.

Aug 27

<http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=aug2710/at095>

PRECIOUS PINE

Chilgoza pine (*Pinus gerardiana*) grows wild in the high altitude and their cones yield the edible nut chilgoza, an expensive dry fruit also called neoza, which sells at INRs 500 to 700 per kg in the market. The villagers who collect the nuts under the forest right are able to earn Rs 300 to Rs 400 per kg. Extensive damage to the endangered chilgoza pine trees due to the construction of the 100 MW Tidong-I project in the tribal Kinnaur district of Himanchal Pradesh, western Himalaya has been reported. As against the approval for felling of 1,261 trees, the project felled 1,851 trees. With the revised assessment, felling of another 4,815 trees is inevitable which include 2,803 chilgoza pine trees and such may exacerbate local extinction.

August 30

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2010/20100830/himachal.htm#>

Bhutan-Himalaya

GOLDEN LANGURS CROSS-BRED INTO EXTINCTION?

The capped langurs are found east of Dunmang tshachu, central Bhutan while pure bred golden langur extend west and north of Riotala in Bhutan. A research report suggest that the endangered golden and capped langurs are cross-breeding in areas between the Dunmang tshachu in Zhemgang and Riotala (near Kartigangchu) in Trongsa and the hybrid process could probably be due to human settlements as they started building bridges across the Chamkhar river, where the langurs used those bridges to cross to the other side. Earlier, the river acted as a barrier. The capped langur traits (black pelage) are more dominant than golden traits (golden pelage) and the phylogenetic (study of the closeness/relatedness of genetic codes) clearly showed that male capped langur are the ones moving into golden langur troops and siring the hybrid offspring. Because of this, Dr. Wangchuk's research suggests that golden langur could disappear as a distinct species.

August 29

<http://kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=16559>

ILLEGAL TIMBER ROLL HIGHER

Illegal timber business is thriving in the blue pine rich dzongkhags (districts) in Bhutan. The demand for timber, which has outstripped supply, has led to the black market. Contractors and individuals cannot participate in auction, unlike in the past, and this has made contractors resort to the black market. By regulations, timber meant for rural areas cannot be brought to cities. Locals opined that it would be difficult to smuggle timber into urban areas unless the truck permit are fake or there is a nexus.

August 21

<http://www.kuenselonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=16476>

China-Himalaya

SPREADING LAKES, MELTING GLACIERS

Large water bodies in Tibetan Plateau may swell as glaciers thaw leading to disasters like mudslide and flash floods. The water level at Zige Tang Lake in northern Tibet has risen 1.8 m in the past four years, while the world's highest salty lake, Namtso, has also risen 20 to 30 cm each year for the last five years. More than 10,000 ha of grasslands in northern Tibet, have been submerged as a result of ten nearby lakes with increasing water surface area.

August 21

http://www.tew.org/archived/2010/23082010_1.html

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