

Call of the wild

Sanctuary

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Andamans

islands in the sun

Creatures of the Deep

Tourism in Goa

Lakshadweep

dive to adventure

Tom Kocherry

ocean crusader



Sea to Shining Sea

protecting India's marine heritage

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Good news for the rainforest?

In a wonderful victory for the people of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and its rainforests, the government has announced its intention to impose a moratorium on all new logging concessions, extensions and plantations. The PNG Prime Minister has also promised to review all existing logging licenses. PNG has the third-largest intact tropical ancient forest in the world and the largest in the Asia-Pacific region. But unsustainable logging is fast destroying this immense natural resource. Pitted against the PNG government is the powerful industrial logging lobby.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Elephant tracking... by ear!

A new technique to gauge the health and numbers of forest elephants in Central African Republic and Ghana will be employed for the first time in March 2000. Researchers and acoustic engineers from Cornell University will attempt to monitor elephants by recording the sounds that they make. Acoustic information will prove particularly vital in areas where little is known about elephant populations because of the dense forest cover. Acoustic monitoring

has already been successfully used with whale populations. If the African experiment is successful it will be extended to other areas of the continent and other species such as gorillas and rhinos.

SWEDEN

Shut it down!

Sweden took the first concrete step in the move to phase out its 12 nuclear power plants by 2010 when it closed the Barseback 1 plant on the west coast. The Three Mile Island nuclear accident in the US in 1979 caused a national debate in Sweden and a referendum in which the decision to phase out nuclear power plants was taken. Meanwhile, the leakage of high levels of radiation from a Japanese uranium reconversion plant in September 1999 have strengthened calls for the global phase-out of nuclear energy.

MEXICO

Mitsubishi against the whales

The El Vizcaino Biosphere Reserve, Mexico's largest, is threatened by a proposal by the Mitsubishi Corporation to build the world's largest salt factory. The reserve is the last spawning and nursing ground for the endangered California grey whale *Eschrichtus robustus*, and is also home to sea turtles, fishing eagles and peregrine falcons. The salt



factory is to be located at Laguna San Ignacio, on the Baja coast of Mexico. This as-yet-unspoiled coastal area is also the last home of the berrendo antelope, which is on the verge of extinction. Nearby salt works, also owned by Mitsubishi, are suspected to have led to an increase in coastal salinity resulting in the deaths of nearly 100 sea turtles in 1997, disturbance in whale migration patterns and bird-nesting areas.

NEPAL

Rhinos in trouble

Rhino lovers have been shocked by the fact that as many as 42 one-horned rhinos have died in Nepal's Royal Chitwan National Park over the last 15 months. Preliminary investigations suggest that most of the

deaths were due to poaching, electrocution and poisoning. Of the global population of approximately 2,000 one-horned rhinos, Chitwan is home to around 500. Some experts fear that Chitwan is no longer able to sustain such a large rhino population. Efforts are being made to translocate some of the animals to other suitable habitats in Nepal.

ANTARCTICA

Illegal whaling by Japan

Every year, Japanese whaling ships illegally kill hundreds of whales in the Antarctic's Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary, in contravention of numerous resolutions passed by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). The Greenpeace vessel MV Arctic Sunrise has been following the Japanese whaling fleet and calling on it to cease its illegal operations, all to no effect. Japanese whaling is ostensibly for scientific reasons, yet the meat produced ends up on the open market back in Japan. The Southern Ocean around Antarctica was formally declared a whale sanctuary in 1994 by the IWC and has been off limits to commercial whaling ever since. This year Japan intends to kill more than 400 threatened minke whales in the Antarctic.



BITTU SAHGAL