

News Briefs

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1. Vietnam acts to protect last remaining wild elephants

VN Express - 2.7.2020

After rampant habitat destruction and poaching have pushed Vietnam's elephants to the brink, rangers are working hard to protect a small pachyderm herd. Now 30 rangers take turns to patrol a forest sanctuary in Quang Nam Province once a week or more to check on the elephants living there. One day last month, a team of six rangers got on their motorbikes and set out on a trail that runs through Quang Nam and Quang Ngai Provinces in the central region as well as several other provinces in the Central Highlands.

Along their trek, the rangers saw elephant footprints of many sizes on the soil, aside from the animal's excrement along a stream. They also found tree barks peeled, a sign that the elephants could have been there for a meal.

On the way, they removed several animal traps, set up camera traps, and as the sun went down, set up camps to stay for the night. Every month, 30 rangers of the Elephant Habitat and Species Conservation Area take turns to patrol the elephant sanctuary four to six times. In all, a ranger spends an average of 15 days in the forest each month.

2. Planting right crops may prevent elephant-human conflicts (Indonesia)

The Jakarta Post - 4.7.2020

As elephant-human conflicts continue to be reported in Sumatra amid massive deforestation that prompts the critically endangered species to go to plantations and human settlements to

find food, an expert has suggested that planting the right crops may prevent such conflicts. Wahdi Azmi, director of the Aceh Conservation Response Unit, which aims to care for the elephant population, said Sumatran elephants were not familiar with oil palm fruit in the past. "But ever since the loss of their habitat to plantations, the fruit is what is available to them and they find it palatable.

Aceh is home to the largest population of the critically endangered Sumatran elephants. More than 500 individuals of a population of around 2500 of the elephants native to Sumatra Island live in the province. Therefore, the animals need a vast natural habitat as their home range. Wahdi said people should learn from the history of the Aceh Sultanate, which gained wealth from the export of pepper and nutmeg and at the same time, nurtured coexistence with elephants because the animal did not eat the crops. "We can serve both animal conservation and economic interests hand in hand by growing the right commodity crops," he said.

3. Plastic waste kills a Thai elephant in another wake-up call

Sustainability Times - 14.7. 2020

It is not as if any more proof was needed that plastic waste is a clear and present danger to wild animals large and small, but here it comes: a wild elephant has died in Thailand after ingesting large amounts of plastic litter. A male elephant weighing about 3.5 tons and aged around 20, was found dead in the Khao Khitchakut National Park in central Thailand and a subsequent autopsy revealed the cause of death to have been plastic bags and other items that caused a blockage and infection in the pachyderm's intestines.

Likely the jumbo unwittingly swallowed plastic trash left behind by visitors to the protected nature reserve. “People are still being deaf to our campaign,” the minister said. “We have found the loss of other animals caused by the plastic bags, with the latest case of the poor wild jumbo.” Until recently Thailand’s nearly 70 million citizens produced some 3.75 billion plastic bags a month as waste since plastic bags were handed out liberally in shops and stores with every purchase. A campaign launched this past January to reduce that colossal sum has led to some positive results, yet the Southeast Asian nation is still a leading producer of plastic waste in the world.

4. Electric wire traps set up for wild elephants turn into death traps for locals

Kathmandu Post - 18.7.2020

On July 13, Badri Thapaliya, 60, a resident of Magurmadi in Mechinagar Municipality Ward No. 9, Jhapa, came across a naked wire hanging by the electric wire trap set for wild elephants. Unaware that the wire still had active electricity flowing through it, Thapathaliya grabbed a hold of it and died of electrocution. The trap was set by Thapaliya himself to ward off wild elephants. But he had forgotten to cut off the power supply to the trap the night before. Although it’s illegal to construct electric fences in the fields, the residents of northern and southern belts of Jhapa fence their properties with electric wires to ward off wild elephants. In 2019, Thapaliya had lost his older brother, Ganga Thapaliya, to a similar accident; he had fallen into an electric trap set up for elephants.

The same year, two people from Magurmadi also died after being electrocuted in a similar wire trap setting. In Ward No. 4 of Buddhashanti Rural Municipality, two other people lost their lives in a similar accident, according to the District Police Office in Jhapa. Two similar deaths were reported in 2018 and in 2017, three people had lost their lives after being electrocuted by elephant traps in Jhapa, according to the Office. The Division Forest Office in Jhapa, said accidents caused by electrocution has become a major problem in the northern and southern belt of the district.

5. Elephant deaths in Cambodia leads to extinction concerns

The Star - 23.7.2020

A local Elephant conservation organisation in Mondulkiri province has expressed concern about the declining domestic elephant population after a 53-year-old male pachyderm named Kham Khen died on Sunday from chronic abscess disease on his back. “Since 2017, the number of domestic elephants in Mondulkiri decreased subsequently and so far the breeding of domestic elephants in Cambodia has not been successful,” said Khun Dlyon, director of the elephant conservation organisation Elephant Livelihood Initiative Environment.

Five domestic elephants died in 2017. Three died of illness, another was shot by authorities when it charged villagers and another from Mondulkiri province died after falling into a pit in Snuol district in Kratie province. Two more elephants died in 2018. One was sick and the other died as its owner didn’t provide food when it was in rut (displaying behaviour associated with the urge to breed). There were 70 domestic elephants in Mondulkiri province 20 years ago, according to Dlyon. But indigenous peoples do not allow domestic elephants to breed. Ageing and disease have resulted in a series of deaths and only 38 elephants remain. “After the death of Kham Khen, the number of domestic elephants in Mondulkiri has dropped to 37 and could lead to the extinction of elephants in that area.

6. Problem pachyderms? ‘Geofencing’ helps reduce Sri Lanka’s human-elephant conflict

Mongabay – 26.7.2020

As the chief veterinary surgeon at the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWC), Tharaka Prasad is probably the only Sri Lankan to receive messages from an elephant. Known as Panu Kota, a male elephant roams the Sinharaja Forest Reserve in southern Sri Lanka, and each time he draws close to a nearby village, his collar emits a beep that offers locational information to Prasad. Scientists put a radio collar on Panu Kota on

June 1, 2019. Since then, the elephant's current location details are transmitted through the GPS coordinates every four hours via a satellite communication system to wildlife authorities.

Through this mechanism, the department's team was able to mark a virtual boundary known as a geofence around the adjacent villages the elephant was known to enter. "Whenever Panu Kota crosses any of the virtual boundaries, a message transmits itself, enabling us to easily identify its geolocation and the closest village so our teams can intervene swiftly," Prasad, who monitors the elephant's movements from DWC headquarters, told Mongabay. If the elephant remains inside the village, Prasad informs ground staff at DWC's Rakwana office, the station closest to the range of the elephant, so they can act fast before the animal comes into conflict with the villagers.

Prithviraj Fernando, an Asian elephant conservation and management specialist who leads the Centre for Conservation and Research (CCR), pioneered Sri Lanka's first effort in radio tracking the elephants. The CCR team, in collaboration with the DWC, started their mission using VHS collars to check migration patterns of Sri Lankan elephants in 1995. They found that the animals have home ranges of around 200 km² and do not migrate long distances through elephant corridors as previously believed.

7. Trunk calls get jumbos food (India)

The Telegraph Online - 29.7.2020

A flood-hit Assam village along the Brahmaputra is in the limelight for reasons other than the deluge and Covid-19: its residents have played benefactor to a herd of elephants stuck on a chapori (sandbar) over the past four days.

Since Saturday, the villagers of Salmara in Upper Assam's Majuli district, have been supplying whatever they can to feed the elephants following their "incessant trumpeting" over the past fortnight. "We couldn't turn a deaf ear to their call from the chapori, about 8km away. They seemed to be in distress, having run out of food. We then raised funds to supply to this herd of over 100

elephants with whatever was available and could be carried on boats," Saitainya Hazarika, 30, a small-time trader, told The Telegraph.

They have till now supplied over 300 banana plants, 10 bags of salt, besides bananas, elephant apples, pumpkins, sugarcane and jackfruit for the elephants. The trumpeting has decreased since Saturday. Other villages are now following in Salmara's footsteps. On Tuesday, residents of two nearby villages — Jogigaon and Dhakinpat Kumargaon — visited the chapori with a boat laden with banana trees, fruits and salt. "We are having a tough time since May 24 due to floods. Then came Covid. It is difficult to reach the nearest hospital because of the floods. After overcoming these odds, it is an indescribable feeling that we are doing something good. Elephants are like God to us," Hazarika said.

8. More than 500 people, 100 elephants die every year due to conflict with each other (India)

Hindustan Times - 10.8.2020

Addressing the event, Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said elephant conservation is vital as it balances the ecosystem. More than 500 people and 100 elephants die every year due to conflict with each other, officials of the environment ministry said on Monday. Releasing the figures at an event ahead of World Elephant Day on August 12, the officials said interactions between humans and elephants have led to the death of both.

As per the last census conducted in 2017, India is home to 30,000 elephants. Elephants have to be kept in forests for which fodder and water augmentation program has been initiated, the minister said, adding that by next year results will start showing. "We must protect our elephants. The Kerala incident was inhuman and such criminal acts will be dealt with. Giving out the figures of deaths due to human-elephant conflict, Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife) Soumitra Dasgupta said hundreds of elephants migrate and come in contact with human beings. "More than 500 human and 100 elephant deaths

take place each year due to the conflict. More elephant corridors have been identified, budget has been increased by 30 per cent and several committees have also been formed,

9. Most of 250 wild elephant deaths in Tamil Nadu caused by poison, allege activists (India)

Mirror Now – 12.8.2020

Over 250 wild elephants have succumbed in the last three years in Tamil Nadu. While forest officials term these deaths as natural, some wildlife activists have alleged that most of the deaths occurred due to poison used by some farmers to prevent wild animals from damaging the crops. According to an activist who conducted a study on elephants in the western region of Tamil Nadu, some farmers leave jackfruit laced with jaggery and poison to prevent crop destruction during the annual migration of elephants through private plantations.

The activist added that many jumbos who consumed these poison-laced fruits died over a period. He further claimed that such poison ‘traps’ are used by farmers who encroach on forest land to raise crops, said a report in Times of India. According to the activist, such illegal crop plantations were found along the stretch from Anaikatti in Coimbatore to Bhavani Sagar in Erode, and passing through Velliyagadu, Karamadai, Mettupalayam, Sirumugai and Lingapuram.

10. Call to boost efforts to protect pygmy elephants

Sun Daily - 13.8.2020

Malaysians may soon see the last of jumbos unless there is political will to help them survive. The elephant is a protected species, but not enough is being done to ensure they do not go extinct. For instance, the Borneo pygmy elephant is listed as endangered and accorded protection under the Wildlife Conservation Enactment.

The Borneo pygmy elephant is a sub-species of the Asian elephant and the smallest on the

continent. The chairman of the Centre for Environment, Technology and Development, Malaysia, said it was still unclear what caused the premature deaths of pygmy elephants. “It could be a question of insufficient wildlife enforcement officers. He said the federal government should fund efforts by the state to protect the pachyderm.

Data from nathab.com shows there are about 1500 pygmy elephants left in the wild. The primary threat to them is loss of habitat mostly through human encroachment such as the clearing of land for agriculture or infrastructure development. They are no longer able to take their traditional migration routes, and in Sabah it is estimated that 20% of elephants have been wounded by traps.

11. Nepal’s elephant population trapped between human settlements and mega development projects

Kathmandu Post - 13.8.2020

Ever-expanding human settlements, deforestation and development projects are undermining Nepal’s elephant conservation efforts, wildlife conservationists have warned. Speaking during a virtual interaction organised on the occasion of World Elephant Day, the participating experts suggested that the country needs to strike a fine balance between conservation and development to save valuable wildlife species like elephants, which are under threat due to human activities.

The problem arises after 1950 with malaria eradication programmes and new settlements in the Tarai where people did not only migrate from the Hills, They stripped down the forest areas and settled down in the low-lying Tarai plains, which used to be elephant habitats and corridors. Earlier, there used to be one long chain of elephant movement from Assam to northwest India via Nepal. This path was cut off due to massive deforestation.”

Now wildlife conservationists worry that the mega projects like East-west railway, Tarai expressway, proposed Nijgadh airport, Postal Highway and upgradation of East-West Highway will further damage what little remains of the

elephant habitats and their corridors. Elephant habitats are already under threat due to deforestation, urbanisation and various human activities. Restricted movement of elephants has become a major cause behind increasing elephant-human conflicts in recent years.

12. China's smart system guards 300 wild Asian elephants

China.org - 15.8.2020

A leading smart system is monitoring about 300 wild Asian elephants in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan province. The Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve and Inspur Co., Ltd have joined hands to develop a world-leading system for the conservation and ecological protection of Asian elephants. Powered by artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), big data, and cloud computing, this system enables around-the-clock monitoring of the animals, effectively mitigating human-elephant conflict.

An Inspur spokesperson said that it sets an example of how technology can be leveraged to protect endangered species, promote harmony between humans and nature and drive sustainable development. With the establishment of the Xishuangbanna National Nature Reserve in Yunnan province and effective conservation measures, the number of elephants in China has grown to nearly 300 in 2020. About 95% of the elephant population live in the reserve, China News Service reported. Found only in South Asia, Southeast Asia and the southern border of Yunnan province, Asian elephants play a crucial role in protecting wildlife resources in their habitats and maintaining local biological diversity and ecological integrity in tropical forest ecosystems. This will unveil a new age of harmonious coexistence.

13. Across China: China defuses human-elephant conflicts

XinhuaNet – 19.8.2020

In recent years, conflicts between wild elephants and humans continue to worsen, with the giant

animals breaking into residential areas, eating crops, damaging houses and threatening people's lives. In addition, the lives of wild elephants are often in danger. While continuously strengthening the protection of wild Asian elephants, the Chinese government has rolled out measures, such as constructing prevention projects, carrying out monitoring and building food bases for the endangered species, to solve the dilemma of human-elephant conflicts. Asian elephants are under Class-A protection in China and are mainly scattered in Xishuangbanna and Pu'er, southwest China's Yunnan Province. Since 1958, Yunnan has established 11 national or regional-level nature reserves in the tropics, covering a total area of about 510,000 hectares, providing the Asian elephants shelter. The data released by the Yunnan Forestry and Grassland Administration (YFGA) showed that thanks to strengthening ecological conservation, the population of wild Asian elephants in Yunnan increased from 170 to about 300 over the past three decades.

14. The Chitwan National Park starts collecting samples following detection of tuberculosis in dead elephants (Nepal)

Nepal 24 Hours - 24.8.2020

The Chitwan National Park (CNP) has started collecting blood samples from living tuskers following the detection of tuberculosis among dead elephants.

There are 59 elephants at CNP. Samples of 28 elephants (20 at the elephant breeding center at Khorsor and eight at Sauraha) will be collected for a test. Blood samples of the elephants will be taken out through ears and tails of the elephants, he said, adding that it takes four to five days to collect blood samples. The samples will be sent to the Centre for Molecular Diagnosis in Kathmandu. Fifteen elephants witnessed natural death while 25 others breathed their last due to several causes at CNP since 2002. It may be noted that elephants at CNP contracted the disease in 2002 for the first time and the disease continued to affect the mammoths until 2016. The disease resurfaced in 2018.

15. Virus gives Sri Lanka's threatened elephants a reprieve

Brinkwire - 26.8.2020

Sri Lanka's coronavirus lockdown has helped reduce the death toll from clashes between elephants and humans, conservationists have said. A record 405 elephants were killed by humans in the country last year, up from about 360 in 2018. A total of 121 people were killed by elephants, up from 96 the year before, according to government data.

Speaking ahead of World Elephant Day on Wednesday, Jayantha Jayewardene, a leading international expert on elephants, said: "We can say that the human-elephant conflict eased during curfews. "But this is a temporary situation. Farmers will start defending their crops and the killings will resume. Most of the killed elephants are shot dead or poisoned by farmers trying to keep them off their land. The beasts are considered sacred in the majority-Buddhist island and are protected, but prosecutions are rare. Most of the humans are killed by elephants who have seen their habitat drastically reduced, rampaging in villages looking for food.

16. Elephants cross swollen river, destroy crops (India)

Outlook India - 31.8.2020

A herd of 50 wild elephants strayed into the Sankrail area in Jhargram district of West Bengal on Monday, crossing the swollen Subarnarekha river, officials said. The herd, which had several elephant calves, destroyed paddy in Rohini, Rogra and Adhari villages in the area after swimming over to Sankrail, they said. The jumbos also ate vegetables grown on a vast stretch of land and camped in the nearby forested area at dusk, Forest Department officials said. Villagers ensured no harm was done to the elephants despite the loss of crop and cordoned off the area, they said. Efforts were on to drive the herd back to Chandabila forest range by quick response team of the Forest Department and locals, they added.

17. 1600 elephants in Bandipur, finds internal survey (India)

The New Indian Express - 19.9.2020

Over 1600 elephants are wandering in and around Bandipur Tiger Reserve (BTR), as per an internal survey conducted by forest officials of the reserve. The survey was conducted during the lockdown and unlock period for four months, starting April. The officials followed all the protocols used when the all-India elephant census is carried out. This is the first time that an internal survey has been conducted by a team for a particular forest. As per the last all-India survey, there are 8500 jumbos in Karnataka.

The survey was done for two days every month for four months. It was done to understand the species, the forest area and get data on how to improve the habitat. The officials stated that it helped in improving supervision on ground. If the forest staffers know the number of jumbos and congregation points, we can manage them better. We found that there is a need to strengthen the vegetation infrastructure rather than concrete infrastructure. Preliminary information has shown that there are over 1600 elephants in the reserve. A final assessment report will be ready in another 20 days," he added.

18. Kin of victims killed by elephants to get jobs as Home Guards in Bengal (India)

Hindustan Times - 7.10.2020

The West Bengal government will provide jobs to kin of victims killed by elephants in the state, chief minister Mamata Banerjee announced on Tuesday. "Till date villagers killed by elephants used to get a compensation of Rs 2.5 lakhs from the government. We have taken a policy decision that henceforth we will provide a family member of the victim with a job of Home Guard," said Banerjee. At least 433 people have been killed by elephants across West Bengal between April 2014 and September 2019. In Odisha, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, the death toll was 447, 391 and 329 respectively during this period. "There are around 200 elephants in south Bengal and around

500 elephants in north Bengal. Man-elephant conflict is common in both south Bengal and north Bengal,” said a forest official.

19. Human-elephant conflict escalates in China’s Xishuangbanna

Nikkei - 20.10.2020

Xishuangbanna, the southernmost prefecture in China’s Yunnan Province, is known as a safe haven for wild Asian elephants where hundreds of the giant animals live in the sprawling tropical rainforests. But balancing modern human activities with protection of wildlife has never been easy. For some people in Xishuangbanna, coexistence with the wild elephants is becoming more and more challenging, and sometimes even fatal.

The Asian elephant is the largest land animal in Asia and was listed in 1986 as an endangered species by IUCN. With an average height of 3.7-4.1 m, adult Asian elephants weigh 3-5 tons. Although most wild elephants try to avoid humans, they will attack if threatened. Over the past couple of decades, the level of threat has increased for both humans and elephants. Deforestation due to expansion of rubber tree plantations and farmland, as well as conservation-driven changes to the rainforests, have dramatically reduced food sources for elephants. At the same time, the size of the elephant population in Yunnan has almost doubled to 300 from 180 in the 1980s. This has forced many of the giant animals out of nature reserves and into close encounters with villages.

20. State Forest Department starts campaign to curb jumbo deaths due to electrocution (India)

The Millennium Post - 18.10.2020

Concerned over the recent trend of elephant deaths through electrocution in different forests of North Bengal, the state Forest Department (FD) started anti-electrocution campaign at strategic locations to curb such deaths. The campaign has been undertaken in the villages and tea gardens around the elephant corridors

and in sensitive villages and tea gardens around Buxa Tiger Reserve, Jaldapara National Park, Gorumara National Park, Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, Bagdogra and Naxalbari areas.

The FD is using its own vehicles ‘Airavat’ for the campaign. Five of these vehicles will travel in different parts in and around the forests of North Bengal to sensitise people about the importance of conserving wildlife. They will be asked to inform the FD if they notice electric wires situated at lesser height, wires dangling precariously here and there and electric poles not properly rooted to the ground, or similar issues

According to sources in the FD more than 17 jumbo deaths have been recorded since January out of which seven deaths have been attributed to electrocution. There has been deliberate electrocution in at least three to four cases mostly in North Bengal.

21. Take a hike: Vietnam bans elephant rides

New Straits Times - 23.10.2020

Authorities in Vietnam’s Central Highlands region are set to ban the famous elephant riding tours following accidents and animal protection concerns. This was confirmed by Central Highlands province’s Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism deputy director, who said they would look at other elephant-related services such as bathing and feeding the animals to offer tourists new experiences. Animal rights activists have long complained that the elephant rides were an exploitation of the animals.

Dak Lak in the Central Highlands is home to many of Vietnam’s surviving elephants. Vn Express News reported Dak Lak Elephant Conservation Centre director Huynh Trung Luan as saying that the centre would try out new tourism products using four elephants. He said that in the last 30 years, three captive elephants delivered stillborn calves and the nearly 100 wild elephants gave birth to only four babies. Luan blamed the high mortality and low birth rates among the pachyderms on habitat encroachment, contaminated food and exploitation for tourism.

22. Elephants to be spotted near railway track with sensor system (Bangladesh)

The Financial Express - 27.10.2020

The Chittagong-Cox's Bazar Railway Project will introduce use of sensor system to detect the presence of elephants near rail-tracks to avoid accidents, according to a publication of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The technology, which comprises thermal imaging cameras or seismic sensors, will help save the lives of both elephants and human beings. Supported by the ADB's High-Level Technology Fund, construction of the proposed 102-km railway line is expected to make significant contribution to Bangladesh's tourism sector.

Accordingly, the railway link will connect Cox's Bazar district to the country's railway network, facilitating transportation to the world's longest sea beach. "The project will not only boost the national economy through further development of Cox's Bazar into a major tourist destination, but also facilitate access to the Trans-Asia Railway network for the local population as well as the entry of local products to sub-regional markets and trade," the article noted.

There are around 40,000 Asian elephants in the world. In Bangladesh, the Forest Department has reported that there are around 300 Asian elephants, and most of them are in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. These elephants are known to migrate from across the border in Myanmar to Cox's Bazar and Chittagong, and reach the north-east Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram.

23. Elephants chase motorbike driver to Chon Buri home (Thailand)

The Thaiger - 29.10.2020

Wild elephants chased a motorbike driver in Chon Buri, following him to a family's home where he stopped and asked to hide inside. Three elephants ran after him to the house and damaged the front of the home. Luckily, the elephants weren't able to enter inside the home and the family, including a child and a pregnant woman, were not harmed.

One resident live streamed the elephant intrusion on Facebook, recording an elephant wandering in their outdoor living space and knocking down laundry that was hanging up to dry. Locals called authorities and 10 officers responded to the call at around 10 pm. They were able to lead the 3 elephants back into the forest.

Elephants in the area have been an issue, and local residents have been asking authorities to help move the elephants deeper into the jungle, away from residential homes and roads. Last month, in the same district, an elephant wandered to a resident's home, knocking down a fence.

24. Elephant trespassers: Angels or beasts? (China)

CGTN - 30.10.2020

Asian elephants living in southwest China's Yunnan Province are an endangered species. But protecting them demands more than a little tolerance from locals. Between 2011 and 2015, about 48,000 incidents were reported of elephants ravaging cropland and injuring people. This is not surprising as the animals' living space, which once covered over half the country, has been squeezed to a small southwest corner where about 300 still roam the rainforest.

The elephants have also developed a fondness for the corn and sugarcane grown by farmers. As a result, locals have had to get used to living alongside these giant animals, who weigh about 3-4 tons and can easily knock over a car. But their presence is not always welcome. For locals, the animal is both angel and beast. Elephants have an excellent memory, remembering things they can be grateful for as well as incidents for which they might want to seek revenge.

Rescuers say they are often unwilling to leave the rescue center where they have been treated for an injury. At the same time, there have been reports of elephants destroying the same cropland every year, belonging to a farmer that once killed a member of their family. Human-elephant relations are complicated. To keep them away from farmland, their favorite crops

and vegetables are grown in separate designated areas. But what is grown still falls short of what the elephants consume, considering that an adult elephant can eat over 150 kg of food on a daily basis.

25. Sri Lanka digs moat around landfill to keep hungry elephants out

Reuters – 25.11.2020

Sri Lanka's government is digging a moat around one of its landfills to keep hungry elephant herds out and reduce conflicts between the animals and villagers. Dozens of elephants lumber out of the forest daily into a rubbish dump near the eastern town of Ampara, rummaging through mounds of garbage for wilted vegetable scraps. This has become a common sight at the country's three largest landfills, which are located next to wildlife protection zones.

The elephants consume plastic along with the food scraps, which slowly kills them, officials have said. In 2019, a record 361 elephants died mainly because of humans, local environmental groups reported. The Ampara landfill was created around a decade ago in the middle of an elephant corridor that is home to 200 to 300 elephants. Electric fences have not worked to keep the determined animals away. There is no proper plan or a system for this, Government institutions have established landfills on the border of wildlife protection zones. Once that is done, the wild elephants and other wild animals who eat the rubbish die.

The government is now trying trenches around the facility to deter the animals. Villagers who have had an uneasy co-existence with the wild herds say the situation is only getting worse.

26. Wild elephants return to Yunnan's reserve after decades (China)

Xinhua - 4.12.2020

Eighteen wild Asian elephants were spotted in a nature reserve in the Dai Autonomous Prefecture of Xishuangbanna in southwest China's Yunnan

Province, local authorities said on Thursday. The trumpeting of wild elephants was first heard by a forest ranger in a village near the Menglun subsidiary nature reserve on Nov. 12. Their footprints were later discovered. Two days later, drones and infrared cameras captured the herd, which included 11 adult elephants and seven calves, according to Wang Bo. It has been 41 years since wild Asian elephants were first spotted in the Menglun subsidiary nature reserve, according to the station. The station has carried out real-time monitoring and early warnings of elephant activities in the area. It also timely publicizes safety information to villages and scenic areas within the scope.

27. Anthrax scare in Joypur rainforest in Dibrugarh (India)

The Sentinel - 6.12.2020

The recovery of the bodies of a female elephant and a calf within three days in Joypur rainforest in Dibrugarh district has spread Anthrax scare in the forest area. On December 3, inside the Joypur rainforest of Naharkatia, the body of an elephant calf was recovered. The veterinarians from TinsukiaGuijan and Naharkatia suspected the cause of death of the elephant calf to be infection of Anthrax. The fear of Anthrax has thickened on December 5 after the recovery of the carcass of a female elephant inside the rainforest.

Anthrax is a bacterial disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, a type of germ positive and spore-forming bacteria. Anthrax cause bacteria capable of lying dormant in the form of spores in carcasses and burial grounds of infected animals. To prevent the outbreak of Anthrax, the forest officials cremated the elephant calf instead of burying it. After just two days of the incident, the dead female elephant was recovered under a mysterious condition which has increased the risk of Anthrax outbreak. Spread over an area of 108 km² at Joypur in Dibrugarh district, several rare animals such as hoolock gibbon, black panther, leopard, wild dog, stump tailored macaque, caped langur and flying squirrel are found inside the rainforest.