

Headlines Himalaya

Nov 26 – Dec 2 (2018)

No. 533

Editorial Team: Rajee Tamrakar and Bisanteree Wagle

For the 533rd issue of Headlines Himalaya, we reviewed 27 news from 13 sources and selected 26 happenings from five countries. Sarus crane (*Grus antigone*) was declared the official bird of Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality, central Nepal. The Central Zoo in Lalitpur district, central Nepal has put on display a pair of Ring-Tailed Lemur (*Lemur catta*). Dramatic regrowth of forests is seen in the areas above Namche Bazaar town along Mt. Everest Base Camp Trek. Climate change changes fruit bearing ability and quality of fruits of apple trees in Himachal Pradesh, Northern India. Ancient human habitation discovered in Tibet Autonomous Region of China. Recent trainings on the basics of organic farming encourage farmers in Bhutan to go organic. Traders in Pakistan say they are ready to collaborate with the government to address climate change.

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

NEPAL

River miners get green signal
Sarus crane declared official bird
Hydropower project in final stage
Casualty at Mt Ama Dablam
Central Zoo to make new animal public
Rafting begins in Tamor
Rhino sightings common in human settlements
Cross Border bridge not operational yet
Regrowth of forest in Everest Base Camp trail
Transboundary approach for conservation
Delayed construction worries lawmakers

INDIA

Leopard cub rescued
Mcleod Ganj takes cleanup action
Climate change changing apples
Villagers against unscientific excavation
Action to prevent encroachment
Big cats venture into cities

CHINA

Training for farmers and herdsmen
World's highest power transmission project completed
Ancient human habitation discovered

BHUTAN

Farmers benefit from organic farming training
Flood leaves land fallow
White Bellied Heron in danger of extinction

PAKISTAN

Efforts for clean and green Pakistan
Hydropower plant affects agriculture
Rescue effort for a trapped markhor failed

RIVER MINERS GET GREEN SIGNAL

The District Monitoring Committee, Rautahat has directed the local bodies to allow local contractors to extract river products on the banks of Bagmati River in Rumaulighat. Earlier, the monitoring team conducted Environmental Impact Assessment and concluded that the water level in the river has risen due to large amounts of sand and gravel in the river. Chief District Officer has urged the contractors not to use excavators in the river and meet the government's criteria.

Nov 26

<https://bit.ly/2EwdFuz>

SARUS CRANE DECLARED OFFICIAL BIRD

Sarus crane (*Grus antigone*) was declared the official bird of Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality at the sarus crane conference organized in Lumbini, central Nepal. Since the bird species is thought to have connection with Lord Buddha, a ban had been placed on hunting Sarus crane and its eggs to protect the bird species about two decades ago, which resulted in increase in its number.

Nov 26

<https://bit.ly/2r1a9pn>

HYDROPOWER PROJECT IN FINAL STAGE

The construction work of Ghalemdi Khola Hydropower Project in Myagdi, western Nepal of 5.5 MW capacity has progressed around 90 per cent of the total physical infrastructure. The project, estimated to be around NPR 1.15 billion, is likely to come into operation within four months.

Nov 28

<https://bit.ly/2LpTwrr>

CASUALTY AT MT AMA DABLAM

An American climber was found dead at Camp II on Mt. Ama Dablam, eastern Nepal while descending the 6,812 metre-peak as the autumn climbing season ends. His death was attributed to high-altitude pulmonary edema, the sources claimed.

Nov 28

<https://bit.ly/2EwcxHu>

CENTRAL ZOO TO MAKE NEW ANIMAL PUBLIC

The Central Zoo in Lalitpur district, central Nepal has put on display its latest members of animals-a pair of Ring-Tailed Lemur (*Lemur catta*). This large strepsirrhine primate, with the average life span of 16-19 years, is native to the African island of Madagascar and some tiny neighbouring islands.

Nov 28

<https://bit.ly/2Ew87iC>

RAFTING BEGINS IN TAMOR

For the first time in the Tamor River of Panchthar district, eastern Nepal, rafting has been brought into operation professionally. A travel and tours company has beenoperating it from Pinashi to Majhitar covering 12 Km rafting adventure which will take two-and-half-hours.

Nov 28

<https://bit.ly/2Sgk0hC>

RHINO SIGHTINGS COMMON IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Rhinos (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) have been troubling the locals by entering the human settlement in Bharatpur Metropolitan City, Chitwan, central Nepal since a decade. Rhinos not only scare people but damage crops and vegetables, according to the former Chairperson of Community Forest User Groups, Chitwan. Lack of food may have compelled these animals to venture into human settlement areas.

<https://bit.ly/2EDIKxl>

CROSBORDER BRIDGE NOT OPERATIONAL YET

A motorable bridge which links Nepal and India, built over the Mechi River in Jhapa, eastern Nepal, hasn't been inaugurated even after six months of its completion, due to the delay in construction of roads on either side of the bridge. The Indian side needs to construct 400-metre road where as 1.3 km road needs to be built on the Nepali side for the bridge to become operational.

Nov 29

<https://bit.ly/2LpUdB3>

REGROWTH OF FOREST IN EVEREST BASE CAMP TRAIL

The Everest Base Camp trek remains the main attraction with guides and porters carrying gear. People here depended on forests for firewood for daily household chores that had resulted in deforestation. But now, there has been dramatic re-growth of forests in the areas above Namche that were virtually barren in 1983. Reductions in livestock herding, the success of community forestry and change in energy sources consumption have helped revive ecosystems.

Nov 30

<https://bit.ly/2S97v7P>

TRANSBOUNDARY APPROACH FOR CONSERVATION

Increase in tiger numbers in adjoining protected areas of Nepal and India has also increased the threats of cross border poaching and human-wildlife conflict. This demands the transparent and mutual coordination and understanding between Nepal and India for successful conservation of tigers, according to the Range Officer of Valmiki Tiger Reserve. He further emphasized on looking at Chitwan, Parsa and Valmiki Tiger Reserve as a single complex rather than as separate territories. There are Nepal Army guard posts every 5-10 Km along the border to stop cross-border poaching.

Nov 30

<https://bit.ly/2S4JX3D>

DELAYED CONSTRUCTION WORRIES LAWMAKERS

Lawmakers express concern over the slow construction of the fast track linking Kathmandu to Terai in the meeting of the Development and Technology Committee under the House of Representatives. According to the minister of physical infrastructures and transport, the problems started after the Nepal Army was given the task of the construction last July without discussing with the Ministry and Road Department. The committee decided to direct the bodies concerned to complete the task within the deadline by resolving all problems that may occur during construction.

Dec 1

<https://bit.ly/2LppGn0>

LEOPARD CUB RESCUED

A leopard cub (*Panthera pardus*) was sighted hiding under a parked car in Chakkar, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, northern India. Forest officials were called by the police, and a rescue team captured the cub using a net instead of a tranquilizer gun. The cub was taken to a rescue and rehabilitation centre for veterinary examination before it is released into the wild.

Nov 27

<https://bit.ly/2BsbR2L>

MCLEOD GANJ TAKES CLEANUP ACTION

The Municipal Corporation in Dharamshala of Himachal Pradesh, northern India has finally taken the initiative to clean up blocked drainage areas, improve garbage collection and to build better recycling systems. McLeod Ganj is one of the suburbs of the municipality, and it became a tourist attraction after the Dalai Lama's administration made it their home in exile. Door-to-door garbage collection, a biodegradable composting site along with plastic waste recycling has been planned.

Nov 27

<https://bit.ly/2QEDzUf>

CLIMATE CHANGE CHANGING APPLES

The Indian Meteorological department recorded an increase in the mean maximum temperatures in winters in Himachal Pradesh, northern India, by 0.06°C. Excess rain and lack of snow make it difficult for apple plants (*Malus pumila*) to survive. But a warm climate leads to a loss of fruit-bearing ability, decrease in fruit's size, reduced juice content and change in the colour. As production and quality of apples get affected, most farmers have switched to industrial crops, off season vegetables, or flowers.

Nov 28

<https://bit.ly/2Qw5Qvt>

VILLAGERS AGAINST UNSCIENTIFIC EXCAVATION

Several villagers in Chhiyal village in Manali of Himachal Pradesh, northern India stopped the cutting of a mountain face required to construct a four-lane highway. Their main protest was against the unscientific excavation work that has triggered landslides, posing a danger to the villagers and their homes. They have come down to sitting on the highway if their demand is not fulfilled.

Nov 29

<https://bit.ly/2ECWJUb>

ACTION TO PREVENT ENCROACHMENT

In a meeting of the Grazing Area Allotment Committee, a decision to constitute sub-committees was made in Jammu, northern India. This was done to prevent encroachment of grazing areas allotted to nomads every year. Such sub committees were constituted to ensure removal of brushwood fencing, forest fire and prevention of encroachment. Efforts were made so that marginal and poor grazers were given fair and proportional allocation.

Nov 30

<https://bit.ly/2A3CTO4>

BIG CATS VENTURE INTO CITIES

In Maheshpur range of Lakhimpur Kheri district, Uttar Pradesh, northern India, three tigers (*Panthera tigris*) and a leopard (*Panthera pardus*) have been spotted out of the protected area of Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. Due to this, villagers and farmers have been gripped by panic, in the fear of being attacked while working in sugarcane field. Similarly, a leopard (*Panthera pardus*) was sighted on the platform in Gumman Railway Station of Himachal Pradesh, northern India. After picking up an injured dog, the leopard exited the scene.

Nov 30&Dec 2

<https://bit.ly/2UUbAyl>

<https://bit.ly/2Brj7f1>

China Himalaya

TRAINING FOR FARMERS AND HERDSMEN

Since this year, Shigatse City in Tibet, south western China has actively carried out a total of 238 skills training courses in which 9,048 people have been trained to promote skills for farmers and herdsmen and improve the employment rate post training. Besides, specific training courses have also been made for cleaners, security guards, vegetable planting and so on.

Nov 26

<https://bit.ly/2R3FgtJ>

WORLD'S HIGHEST POWER TRANSMISSION PROJECT COMPLETED

The world's highest power transmission project went into operation on Nov 23 in South Western China's Tibet Autonomous Region. Its completion has solved the problem of power cuts in the region. Despite the area's fragile ecosystem, construction and up-gradation of substations and transmission lines have been completed. However, nearly 1,000 transportation cableways have been implemented to reduce any negative environmental impact.

Nov 27

<https://bit.ly/2UVIjDB>

ANCIENT HUMAN HABITATION DISCOVERED

In Nyingchi, Tibet Autonomous Region of southwestern China, a research team led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences found stone artifacts, pottery sherds and animal bones. A total of 24 pits were dug along Lhasa River, Nijyang River and Yarlung Zangbo River, out of which 24 showed records of human occupation. This study discovered that humans set foot on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau around 30,000-40,000 years ago.

Dec 1

<https://bit.ly/2QEDGiD>

Bhutan-Himalaya

FARMERS BENEFIT FROM ORGANIC FARMING TRAINING

In Chudzom village block in Sarpang, Southern Bhutan, 137 farmers participated in a two-day training on the basics of organic farming including preparation of organic pesticides using local materials. Earlier, most of the farmers here grew cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*). But after recent trainings, they have been growing vegetables since last year for a better profit. The farmers said that they learned better farming techniques from the training.

Nov 27

<https://bit.ly/2S4a62Q>

FLOOD LEAVES LAND FALLOW

At least 6.07 ha of paddy (*Oryza sativa*) field has been left fallow in Thimyul village, Lhuentse, north eastern Bhutan this year after a flood drained away the water source in the previous year. The flood also washed away two suspension bridges. The local government has been requested for the reconstruction of the bridge to help the locals with irrigation and other activities.

Nov 29

<https://bit.ly/2EAZogZ>

WHITE BELLIED HERON IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION

White Bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) is a critically endangered bird species, and Bhutan is home to about half the world's population of this species, the population being less than 60. Rafting and kayaking along its potential habitats pose a threat to the species, and more than three rafting companies along Phochhu and Mochhu rivers in Punakha, north western Bhutan exist. Extremely small size of population of the bird in its habitat indicates that the river and its surrounding ecosystem are on the verge of collapsing.

Dec 1

<https://bit.ly/2R2TFqg>

Pakistan- Himalaya

EFFORTS FOR CLEAN AND GREEN PAKISTAN

Pakistan's State Minister for Climate Change said efforts are being made to make the Clean and Green Pakistan drive successful. The president of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that traders are also ready to collaborate with the government to address climate change through various steps like tree plantation, ban on plastic bags and use of renewable energy. Since Pakistan is seventh in the list of ten countries badly affected by the climate change, more trees need to be planted to mitigate its impact. Pakistan has launched a program dubbed the "Billion Tree Tsunami" to boost tree plantation.

Nov 27

<https://bit.ly/2CIDcoJ>

HYDROPOWER PLANT AFFECTS AGRICULTURE

The farmers in Sharqi Baizi in rural Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, northern Pakistan complained of lack of irrigation water for autumn crops. This is because of the establishment of a 2.6 MW hydro-power plant by the provincial government on Machi branch of upper Swat canal at Qasami village, Mardan district. Farmers say that both the autumn and winter crops produce have been severely affected hurting the poor farmers of the area, whose sole source of livelihood is agriculture.

Dec 1

<https://bit.ly/2LnsbWS>

RESCUE EFFORT FOR A TRAPPED MARKHOR FAILED

A trapped Kashmir markhor could not be rescued from a small cave in a hill along the Chitral River, of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, northern Pakistan. According to the divisional forest officer, Gol wildlife division, while a horde of Kashmir markhor (*Capra falconeri*) were grazing near Balach village, Chitral district, one of the markhors slipped into a cave after being chased by stray dogs. A joint operation was led to rescue the animal, but the action was stopped as it might have frightened the animal into jumping into the river.

Dec 1

<https://bit.ly/2SbDunU>