

# Headlines Himalaya

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For the 537<sup>th</sup> issue of Headlines Himalaya, we reviewed 23 news from 12 sources and selected 22 happenings from five countries. Risky link road causes the recently re-opened airport to turn into a grazing land in Baglung, western Nepal. The bird population has declined rapidly due to haphazard constructions and pollution in Taudaha Lake, Kathmandu, central Nepal. Climate change causes rhododendron (*Rhododendron arboreum*), Nepal's national flower, to blossom early. The ban on polybags below 40 microns imposed by the state government of Himachal Pradesh in 2010 has become ineffective. In a move to control pollution, China fined its environmental regulation violators a total of USD 2 billion. Human-wildlife conflict and the irrigation schemes have been prioritized in the 12th five-year plan in Bhutan. 'Clean and Green KP' app introduced in government system of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan in order to simplify decision-making process.

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## NEPAL

*Wildfire spreads*  
*Airport turns into grazing land*  
*Kathmandu's air quality deteriorates*  
*Pond loses water to plants*  
*Bird population declines*  
*Villagers risk lives to cross Seti River*  
*Message from the President*  
*Tree choppers fined*  
*Human-elephant conflict in Koshi*  
*Highway clean-up initiated*  
*National flower blossoms early*  
*Growth in Gharial population*

## INDIA

*Rare grassland bird spotted*  
*Plastic use still unabated*  
*Poachers arrested*  
*Freezing cold resulting water shortage*  
*Landslide damages highway*

## CHINA

*China fights pollution*  
*Endangered crane population increases*

## BHUTAN

*12<sup>th</sup> five year plan of Bhutan*  
*Fire in forest near the capital*

## PAKISTAN

*Clean and green KP app launched*

### WILDFIRE SPREADS

In Gorkha district, central Nepal, wildfire that erupted a few days ago has spread across the forest at Sama Gaun. The efforts made to control the fire have been unsuccessful due to the wind. Endangered animals such as snow leopards (*Panthera uncia*), and plants of medicinal values are at risk due to the wildfire.

**Dec 25**

<https://bit.ly/2Szd93d>

### AIRPORT TURNS INTO GRAZING LAND

The Baglung airport, western Nepal has turned back into a pasture land in less than a year of its reopening. This was due to the lack of enough passengers. The airport has an unpaved runway and an 8 km gravel access road, making monsoon travels risky, as it becomes muddy and slippery.

**Dec 25**

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

### KATHMANDU'S AIR QUALITY DETERIORATES

In Kathmandu, central Nepal, the air quality has dropped to very unhealthy and hazardous levels last week. Despite the order made by the Supreme Court which directed authorities to take immediate action, not much has been done to curb air pollution. Such unhealthy levels can even affect healthy people, and their vulnerability to illnesses will increase.

**Dec 25**

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

### POND LOSES WATER TO PLANTS

In Baang of Taplejung, northeastern Nepal, a pond is drying up due to the uptake of plants that are present in its vicinity. The solution offered for its recharge is diversion of water from the Fungfunge river into the pond through pipes. The estimated budget for this plan is NPR 15,00,000.

**Dec 25**

<https://bit.ly/2GS0qHi>

### BIRD POPULATION DECLINES

In Taudaha lake, Kathmandu, central Nepal, the bird population has declined rapidly due to haphazard construction of hotels, resorts, houses, monuments, and pollution. According to a bird expert, construction works nearby and noise pollution has high impact on the birds. Local government is in dilemma as it cannot halt lawful constructions and, thus, cannot do enough to protect the natural environment of the lake.

**Dec 25**

<https://bit.ly/2Ql6Puf>

### VILLAGERS RISK LIVES TO CROSS SETI RIVER

In Doti, far-western Nepal, villagers must cross the Seti River regularly to get from Baphi village to Dipayal Bazaar for purchase and sell. But since there is no bridge over the river, the villagers depend on boats, inflated tubes or traditional ropeway crossings. During the monsoon, it is impossible to cross the river. A bridge was under construction, but it collapsed, and the failed project is yet to resume.

**Dec 26**

<https://bit.ly/2C1EyUx>

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In Chitwan, south central Nepal during the 15<sup>th</sup> Chitwan Elephant Festival, the President said that the entire human existence would be threatened if we fail to conserve biodiversity. According to the president the sites in the Ramsar list require special protection and that through the development of eco-friendly infrastructure, domestic tourism could be promoted.

**Dec 26**

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

### TREE CHOPPERS FINED

In Pokhara, central Nepal, the organizers of IME Nepal Literature Festival have been fined NPR 10,000 for chopping 24 trees without permit around Phewa Lake. Tree felling is permitted by the municipality if there is no environmental impact. However, the organizers failed to do so and have admitted to their mistake.

**Dec 27**

<https://bit.ly/2Qj8XmI>

### HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT IN KOSHI

In the areas around Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, south eastern Nepal, the residents have been threatened by the wild elephants (*Elephas maximus*) that inhabit the reserve. The residents have been affected by these animals as they destroy their houses and crops at night.

**Dec 27**

<https://bit.ly/2GV7FOZ>

### HIGHWAY CLEAN-UP INITIATED

The Madhyapur Thimi municipality and Suryabinayak municipality, Bhaktapur, central Nepal, initiated an Arniko Highway Clean-up Campaign. Hundreds of students from 25 different schools took part in the event, where they covered about 4.5 km of the highway collecting plastic and removing tonnes of solid waste.

**Dec 28**

<https://bit.ly/2GV7G5v>

### NATIONAL FLOWER BLOSSOMS EARLY

Nepal's national flower, rhododendron (*Rhododendron arboreum*), usually blossoms in mid-February to mid-April. The flower grows at an altitude ranging from 1,300 m to 3,200 m from the sea level. According to climate change experts, the flower has already blossomed in December as the global temperature has been increasing.

**Dec 28**

<https://bit.ly/2F5Jx9L>

### GROWTH IN GHARIAL POPULATION

In the Rapti and Narayani rivers that flow through Chitwan National Park, south central Nepal, the gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) population has increased by 40 and 23% respectively since the 2016 census. The national park has released 685 gharials in the Rapti river and 399 in the Narayani river after a breeding center was set up in Kasara in 1978.

**Dec 28**

<https://bit.ly/2LNuOS0>

### RARE GRASSLAND BIRD SPOTTED

A swamp prinia or swamp grass-babbler (*Laticilla cinerascens*), an endangered grassland bird in India, was spotted on a river island in Chandrapur area in Guwahati, north eastern India. This species is specific to the Brahmaputra and Cachar plains. According to the bird enthusiast who spotted the bird, the habitat isn't good and their future on that island is bleak.

**Dec 29**

<https://bit.ly/2Tp2AzJ>

### PLASTIC USE STILL UNABATED

The ban on polybags below 40 microns was imposed by the state government of Himachal Pradesh in 2010. Yet, people are using it without any fear. Due to hilly terrain, polythene and plastic enter water streams and get accumulated, leading to the choking of drains and pollution in rivers. Social bodies and NGOs have appealed to the authorities to enforce the ban strictly to protect the environment and water channels from contamination.

**Dec 29**

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

### POACHERS ARRESTED

Two poachers from Chilika area, eastern India were arrested by Wildlife personnel with carcasses of eight Gadwalls (*Anas strepera*), three Little Grebes (Podicipedidae), a Common teal (*Anas crecca*) and a Eurasian wing (*Garrulus glandarius*). Similarly, seven poachers from Karbi Anglong district, north eastern India were arrested by Kaziranga National Park authorities. Forest officials recovered a huge quantity of skin, bones, nails and teeth of Royal Bengal tigers (*Panthers tigris tigris*) in a Tata Magic on National Highway 37.

**Dec 29 & 30**

<https://bit.ly/2Tp2VIZ>

<https://bit.ly/2BYu8EY>

### FREEZING COLD RESULTING WATER SHORTAGE

Water crisis has been triggered in Kashmir as water supply lines are frozen in many places. The minimum temperature has reached -7°C in Srinagar, northern India. Public health engineering department has decided to supply drinking water in tankers to the affected residents to overcome the situation. Chief engineer of public health engineering department said that though cold conditions have intensified problems, most of the water supply schemes are functional in Kashmir.

**Dec 30**

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

### LANDSLIDE DAMAGES HIGHWAY

Frequent landslides have damaged the 10-km Dharamsala-McLeodganj road, Himachal Pradesh, northern India. The total width of the road was 6.096 m which has now been reduced to 3.96 m at certain places due to landslides. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has failed to undertake repair works, posing a threat to the lives of commuters. On an average, 1,200 vehicles pass through daily with 5,000 in the peak tourist season. The Army has requested a ban on heavy vehicles on the road which has been forwarded to the district police for further action.

**Dec 28**

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

## China Himalaya

### CHINA FIGHTS POLLUTION

China fined its environmental regulation violators a total of USD 2 billion. The ministry urged local environmental bureaus to help companies set pollution treatment solution plans and to pay attention to reasonable appeals of companies during environmental inspections. The ministry has scheduled a second national environmental inspection in 2019 and vowed to win the war against pollution.

**Dec 26**

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

### ENDANGERED CRANE POPULATION INCREASES

Enhanced conservation increases the population of a critically endangered black-necked crane (*Grus nigricollis*) in Tibet, southwestern China. The species is on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list of threatened species, with less than 10,000 in the world. Tibet currently has more than 8,000 black-necked cranes, an increase from 6,900 reported in 2007.

**Dec 27**

<https://bit.ly/2F8Yngk>

## Bhutan-Himalaya

### 12<sup>TH</sup> FIVE YEAR PLAN OF BHUTAN

At a meet-the-press session, human-wildlife conflict and the irrigation schemes were prioritized in the 12<sup>th</sup> plan. The agriculture minister stated that although various technologies and schemes have been explored to address irrigation channel issues but resource mobilization remains a challenge. For human-wildlife conflict issues, Bhutan government would be getting support from Bhutan for Life and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Bhutan apart from government budget.

**Dec 24**

<https://bit.ly/2AvBik4>

### FIRE IN FOREST NEAR THE CAPITAL

About 0.405 ha of forest was damaged in a fire that started near Samazingkha area in Thimphu, western Bhutan yesterday. According to residents, fire incidents occur in the same area annually and the causes are unknown. Fine will be imposed if anyone leaves open fire for carelessness and negligence.

**Dec 28**

<https://bit.ly/2s7usgZ>

### CLEAN AND GREEN KP APP LAUNCHED

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister inaugurated the 'Clean and Green KP' app. According to the chief minister, introduction of modern technology into the governance system would ease out the decision-making process. The people will have a forum to register their complaints to address environment and governance-related issues with the help of Clean and Green KP app.

**Dec 27**

<https://bit.ly/2R4H5Ya>