

Headlines Himalaya

May 14 – May 20 (2018)

No. 505

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For the 505th issue of Headlines Himalaya, we reviewed 30 news from 11 sources and selected 30 happenings from five countries. In Nepal, Supreme court issued show-cause notice against the government's failure to address the trade of illegal wildlife organs. Country's only international trade border point with China, Mailung-Syaphrubesi road section opened by Nepal Army. In India, Haflong in Assam adopted by-laws barring use of polythene in the town. Habitat disruption consequences to bird declines in Brahmaputra plains. Rare footage of snow leopards shows healthy population in Chantang, west central Tibet. Ministry in Bhutan drafted disasters resilient roof design guidelines. Bhutan recorded to be well-nigh free of Bt-Brinjal (*Solanum melongena*).

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

Four red panda killed
Sunkoshi River affected by sand mining
No electricity for 119 rural municipalities
Man climbs Everest for record 22 times
Red panda: smugglers' main target
Lack of water act adds to river-induced disaster
Khumbu icefall shifts expedition route
Army involved in poaching
Supreme Court issued a show cause notice on wildlife organs
Plastic bag ban rendered useless
Five years of cleaning; Bagmati still polluted
Decline in leopard populations
Ban on 18-seater public vehicles on BP highway
Nagidanda best site for STOL airport
Vultures start showing up
Risk of bird flu in east Chitwan
Campaign launched in Bhaktapur
Mailung-Syaphrubesi opened by NA

INDIA

Mock drill for disaster management
birds threatened in Brahmaputra plains
World Major action on banning polythenes
Bee keeping training ends
Training for vets
Several honey bee day celebrated

CHINA

Chantang captures 2000 footages of snow leopard

BHUTAN

Samdrupjongkhar suffers water shortage
Ministry drafted guidelines for resilient roof
Bhutan: well-nigh free of Bt-brinjal

PAKISTAN

*Festival of chilim starts
Power plant inaugurated*

Nepal-Himalaya

FOUR RED PANDA KILLED

Stray dogs in Taplejung and Ilam, eastern part of Nepal, are turning out to be problematic as they are recorded to kill four red pandas (*Ailurus fulgens*) in a year. These dogs mostly stay out of sight from people, and come out to prey red panda, according to source. These wild dogs are seen living in jungle and one of the organization, Red Panda Network has initiated family planning and rabies vaccine to control the population of dogs in that area.

May 14

<https://bit.ly/2L1X5CY>

SUNKOSHI RIVER AFFECTED BY SAND MINING

There has been hefty extraction of sand, aggregates and stones in the Sunkoshi River, eastern Nepal, which has greatly affected the natural beauty as well as ecosystem of the river and the environment. Due to sand mining, the river has changed its course in various places while large holes have been observed in the river. The locals are expressing their worries about the haphazard extraction.

May 15

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/41756/>

NO ELECTRICITY FOR 119 RURAL MUNICIPALITIES

Total of 119 rural municipalities of Nepal are deprived of electricity even when the country has been declared free from load shedding. As per a collaborative program organized by the Rural Technology Producers Association and the National Federation of Rural Municipalities, they are providing financial support to develop energy and are promoting renewable energy in the rural areas. They are focused in the sustainable use of energy.

May 16

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/41812/>

MAN CLIMBS EVEREST FOR RECORD 22 TIMES

A forty eight years old Sherpa from Nepal, has successfully managed to become the only mountaineer to climb Mount Everest for 22 times. Previously, he had ascended the mountain on May 27, 2017. As of early spring season, there are about 60 mountaineers who have already scaled the world's highest peak.

May 16

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/41814/>

RED PANDA: SMUGGLERS' MAIN TARGET

From April 14, 2017 to April 13, 2018, thirty-five people have faced legal action for their involvement in smuggling Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) hide. According to the data from District Forest Office, Kathmandu, central Nepal, people were punished for their involvement in trading of as much as 15 pieces of hide of this endangered wild animal. Besides this, smuggling of body parts of various other wild animals such as leopard (*Panthera spp.*), pangolin (*Manis spp.*), tiger (*Panthera tigris*), bear (*Ursus spp.*) has been recorded.

May 16

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

LACK OF WATER ACT ADDS TO RIVER-INDUCED DISASTER

There has been no response from the Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation even after the forwarding of Water Act drafted by the Water Induced Disaster Control Department last year. Due to lack of Water Act, disasters associated to rivers have been causing major damage in lives and properties in Nepal. According to the Deputy Director General at Water Induced Disaster Control Department, with the formulation of act, human encroachment near the rivers would have been easier to manage.

May 17

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/41888/>

KHUMBU ICEFALL SHIFTS EXPEDITION ROUTE

Due to melting ice, many experienced mountaineers are avoiding the Nepali side of Mount Everest. Known as the Khumbu icefall, it is a treacherous 760-yard stretch of ice with shifting crevasses. This area has taken lives of a quarter of those who have died on the Nepali side of the mountain. As a result, expeditions have shifted route to the northern side of the mountain in Tibet. According to the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), there is high risk of avalanche as the Khumbu glacier is retreating at an average of 65 feet per year.

May 17

<https://bit.ly/2ktj1vq>

ARMY INVOLVED IN POACHING

According to an official from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), every year more than 30 Nepal Army officials are exposed for assisting poachers. Some are caught with animal parts while others also found to be involved in smuggling of forest products. As per the under-secretary of DNPWC, guilty soldiers are punished internally. However, according to Nepal Army spokesperson, such accusations are baseless and are an attempt to defame the Nepal Army.

May 17

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

SUPREME COURT ISSUED A SHOW CAUSE NOTICE ON WILDLIFE ORGANS

The Supreme Court of Nepal has issued a show cause notice to the government for not acting against the illegal use of wildlife parts in the country. The action came as a response to a written petition filed by a conservationist and co-founder of Greenhood Nepal, who is seeking legal action against those in possession of valuable parts of wildlife for decoration. According to one of the advocate, this initiation will not allow people display the parts in their houses or offices.

May 18

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

PLASTIC BAG BAN RENDERED USELESS

Newly appointed joint secretary at the Ministry of Environment was visited by plastic bag manufacturers when the government announced a ban on plastic bags thinner than 30 microns two years ago. They warned him that the action could result in the loss of jobs for thousands of workers. Businessmen have been using tactics of fear and political pressure to render bans on plastic bags useless. According to the joint secretary, the major problem of waste are plastics and urged for strict law to stop and punish the plastic manufacturers.

May 18

<https://bit.ly/2L1HJ19>

FIVE YEARS OF CLEANING; BAGMATI STILL POLLUTED

The Bagmati River Clean-up Mega Campaign has begun five years ago today. Despite five years of persistent cleaning efforts, the condition is still agonizing. Organized in 45 different places with the involvement of thousands of participants, the campaign has managed to extract about 20,000 tons of waste from the river and riverside. However, the river has still not been restored, and is far from being clean.

May 19

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/42011/>

DECLINE IN LEOPARD POPULATIONS

Due to problems like habitat fragmentation, food declination and poaching, leopard (*Panthera pardus*) populations in Nepal have been steeply decreasing. International Union for Conservation of Nature published a report in 2012 showing that Nepal had a total of 1,000 leopards but the number is rapidly decreasing. However, the reason for the declination of the species, pointed out by the Assistant Conservation Officer and Information Officer at Chitwan National Park, central Nepal, is the exclusion of leopards from National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973.

May 19

<https://bit.ly/2JdfG1B>

BAN ON 18-SEATER PUBLIC VEHICLES ON BP HIGHWAY

A ban has been made for public vehicles having more than 18 seats with more than 2,000 mm wheelbase from commuting along the BP (Banepa Bardibas) Highway. In addition to that, containers which weigh more than 10 tons are also prohibited from operating on the highway. The main motive of the ban is to ensure road safety, as there has been an increase in the number of road accidents due to plying of vehicles more than the capacity of a highway.

May 19

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/42003/>

NAGIDANDA BEST SITE FOR STOL AIRPORT

Three spots were studied for the construction of a domestic, short take-off and landing (STOL) airport, near to Kathmandu. On the survey, the hilltop of Nagidanda located in Kavrepalanchok district, central Nepal, was recognised as the most favourable site out of other two spots; Thulichour located in Dhulikhel and Thulichour at Chisapani, central Nepal. This airport must stage flights to Lukla in order to lessen the severe congestion at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA).

May 20

<https://bit.ly/2si6jmQ>

VULTURES START SHOWING UP

Even though they went missing for a few years, the endangered vultures (*Gyps spp.*) have started showing up again in their nests in Bajura, far western Nepal. They had disappeared about 5-7 years ago due to lack of carcasses to feed on because farmers started burying their dead farm animals. According to the locals, they hope that the environment will be balanced due to the reoccurrence of vultures as they are the natural scavengers.

May 20

<https://www.nagariknews.com/news/47300/>

RISK OF BIRD FLU IN EAST CHITWAN

Residents of Sutarni, east Chitwan, south central Nepal are in threat of infection by bird flu (H₅N₁ influenza virus). After an investigation conducted by the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division which comprised of blood samples collection, it was found that the infection had not been transmitted to humans so far. However, due to pervasiveness of bird flu, many areas have been declared as 'affected zones' and poultry farmers were told to kill infected fowls.

May 20

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/42069/>

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN BHAKTAPUR

The "Healthy Bhaktapur Campaign" was launched by the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS). The campaign is primarily focused on increasing public awareness on the issue of various sorts of health-related problems among the people with the onset of monsoon. The campaign is month long and a free health camp was organized at different parts of the district under it.

May 20

<http://www.myrepublica.com/news/42062/?categoryId=81>

MAILUNG-SYAPHRUBESI OPENED BY NA

Mailung-Syaphrubesi road section that links Kathmandu, central Nepal, with Rasuwagadi, central Nepal, was completed by the Nepal Army (NA). Rasuwagadi is the only international trade border point with China. The road was inaugurated by Defence Minister on Sunday, after which the NA handed the responsibility of the road over to the Ministry of Transport.

May 20

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

India-Himalaya

MOCK DRILL FOR DISASTER MANAGEMENT

With initiative of the District Disaster Management Agency (DDMA) in association with 17 Dogra Regiment Col Devraj Gill, Additional Deputy Commissioner along with 70 rescue team members, including army medical unit conducted a mock drill on disaster management at Golakganj area, north eastern India. The main aim of the mock drill was to make minimal unfortunate event by taking immediate steps when natural calamities strikes. Every year, north eastern India suffers floods and storms damaging number of villages, taking many lives so the mock drill was aimed to minimize such events.

May 14

<https://bit.ly/2xlSf1k>

MAJOR ACTION ON BANNING POLYTHENES

A small town called Haflong in north eastern India, the chairman of the town committee has officially declared an immediate ban on the polythene products. The committee has banned people to use polythene bag in any business like in teashops, vegetable vendors and other common shops. Striking thing is they have also banned in plastic water bottles and have made a system of taking fine of USD 73.77.

May 17

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

BEE KEEPING TRAINING ENDS

Over 750 unemployed youths were given training of bee keeping which lasted for four days till Thursday in Guwahati, north eastern India. The training program was organized by Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) mainly focusing on north eastern states. The program not only gave them training on bee keeping, but also provided bee (*Apis spp.*) boxes and tools, to each trainees.

May 18

<https://bit.ly/2KXgLb5>

TRAINING FOR VETS

About 15 days training starting from May 2 to May 16 was given to 80 field veterinarians coming from 26 districts of Assam, north eastern India. The Assam Veterinary Council, the College of Veterinary Science and the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department collaborated to organize this training. The training spoke for recent advancements in the veterinary science, evolution of new vaccines for livestock protection along with other useful trainings.

May 18

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

SEVERAL BIRDS THREATENED IN BRAHMAPUTRA PLAINS

Home of over 890 species of birds, Brahmaputra plains of north eastern India suffers endangerment of 13 grassland birds of which 10 birds are “near-endemic”. These birds consists of Bengal Florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*), yellow weaver (*Ploceus megarhynchus*), white winged wood duck (*Asarcornis scutulata*), Manipur bush quail (*Perdica manipurensis*) etc. According to one of the ornithologists, around 70 birds’ species resides in the grassland of the plains, but due to excessive burning management in the sanctuaries even in the breeding season, have left many species of birds to be threatened. He also added saying that construction of dams are also the major cause and urged for detailed research related to birds.

May 19

<https://bit.ly/2LDY8Ka>

WORLD HONEY BEE DAY CELEBRATED

On Saturday, the World Honey Bee day was celebrated with a seminar organized for 300 farmers and honeybee (*Apis spp.*) keepers from different regions of Assam, north eastern India. Seminar held in Directorate of Horticulture and Food Processing, Assam’s Khanapara Campus, talked about potential of income increment by bee keeping along with its role in controlling the elephants conflicts. The seminar also focused on increasing production of various crops with the scientific beekeeping.

May 20

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

China Himalaya

CHANTANG CAPTURES 2000 FOOTAGES OF SNOW LEOPARD

Total of 270 info-red camera installed in an area of 380,000 hectares have been able to capture about 2000 footages of Snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) in Changtang, west central Tibet. Installed at an altitude of 5,050 meters, cameras have succeeded to trap many behavioural activities of the species like hunting, competition for food, mating, frolicking etc. On addition to that, during this survey, other wild species like lynx (*Lynx spp.*), manul (*Otocolobus manul*), Tibetan fox (*Vulpes ferrilata*) and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) were also recorded.

May 15

<https://bit.ly/2IRb1jp>

Bhutan-Himalaya

SAMDRUPJONGKHAR SUFFERS WATER SHORTAGE

Even after passing the second deadline of Water Treatment Plant (WTP), Samdrupjongkhar, south eastern Bhutan had to struggle more for water. The project was delayed because of the failure to include some of the technical parameter in their Bill of Quantity (BoQ), according to the letter send by company to the Ministry of Work and Human Settlement. Also, due to unavailable resources for the construction, they were using time consuming alternatives which has cost them almost USD 6.6 hundred thousand.

May 14

<https://bit.ly/2GWQw1W>

MINISTRY DRAFTED GUIDELINES FOR RESILIENT ROOF

To overcome the damage of houses roof top due to windstorm that occurred in all over Bhutan in past few years, Ministry of works and human settlement has studied these conditions and has drafted a windstorm resilient guideline for making roofing system in the country. Poor craftsmanship, lack of periodic maintenance, exposure to moisture and insect attack were the major cause for these failures which are totally address in the guidelines, as per sources

May 17

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

BHUTAN: WELL- NIGH FREE OF BT-BRINJAL

Bt-Brinjal (*Solanum melongena*) is a genetically modified vegetable species which can be vulnerable to environment and also to human health. A survey of its presence was taken in the various cities of Bhutan, where the test of 280 samples from different vegetables market was done using a rapid test kits which screens genetically modified element. Moreover, there were no such elements in those Brinjals from those cities. Even though, they found no presence of Bt- Brinjals from those cities, they didn't claim that whole Bhutan is free from Bt-Brinjals.

May18

<https://bit.ly/2LCnoR1>

Pakistan- Himalaya

FESTIVAL OF CHILIM STARTS

Kalasha, colorful and ancient indigenous people of Bumburet Kalash valley, northern Pakistan has started celebrating "Chilim Just Festival" from 14 May. The festival welcomes the spring with distribution of milk among the shepherds. With musical essence of dance and rhythmical chant of drums, all men and women dance in a circle and celebrate the moment in their traditional attire. Also, Deputy Commissioner has also indulged in celebration the festival very generously. He has make sure that every people get food items in good quality with a reasonable price, clean drinking water and also encouraged to manage the solid waste produced by the celebration.

May 14

<https://bit.ly/2rHL6mE>

POWER PLANT INAUGURATED

After spending a total cost of USD 770 million, Bhikki Power Plant was inaugurated in Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab, northern Pakistan. Also, the power plant has been a cost effective, since it has lowest power generation cost which can save USD 337 million. During inauguration Punjab Chief Minister solaced saying that tireless effort has brought no load shedding during this year's Ramazan, the holy month in Islam during which Muslims fast for 30 days.

May 19

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