

Headlines Himalaya

June 11-June 17 (2018)

No. 509

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For the 509th issue of Headlines Himalaya, we reviewed 30 news from 10 sources and 30 selected happenings from five countries. The embankment construction under the Mahakali Irrigation Project along Khanya Khola area in Kanchanpur, far-western Nepal is at risk due to careless digging and extraction of construction materials by the contractor. To keep the promises made during the election, local Governments of Darchula, far western Nepal, are constructing 44 district roads without doing environment Impact Assessment (EIA) for the projects. The protected species of the walnut tree (*Juglans sp.*) are illegally being cut down by the locals in Anantang, in Kashmir, northwest India. The Dzongkhag administration has initiated a campaign to ban plastics in Tsirang, southern Bhutan, by carrying Clean Bhutan's biodegradable jute bags to the Sunday vegetables market. The Culture Department of Tibet Autonomous Region organized an intangible cultural heritage performances and exhibition in Tibet Buddhist College, Lhasa, Capital City of Tibet, southern China on June 9th. Wildlife in District Ghizer, northern Pakistan is in danger of extinction due to the absence of the conservation strategy and illegal hunting.

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Fire catch in Sunsari
In chhaupadi hut, girl dies of snake bite
Lightning strike kills two children
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Activists demanding details of Rani Pokhari reconstruction project
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FIRE CATCH IN SUNSARI

A fire broke out in the main market of Itahari, Sunsari, eastern Nepal destroying property worth around NPR. 2.5 million. It's understood that the fire started from a fancy cloth store due to electric short-circuit. With the support of fire fighters from Itahari, Dharan, Duhabi and Biratnagar, Police Force extinguished the fire.

Jun 11

<https://bit.ly/2K5JLgy>

IN CHHAUPADI HUT, GIRL DIES OF SNAKE BITE

In the district of Achham, far-western Nepal, a teenage girl of eighteen-year-old has died of snake bite while staying in a menstruation exile (Chhaupadi) hut during her period. Chhaupadi is a deeply rooted tradition practiced in some part of west Nepal wherein a menstruating women and those in the postpartum period are kept in a secluded place away from the house as they are considered impure and untouchable. Chhaupadi was declared as a criminal offence in 2017. Within past 12 years, 13 girls and women have died in Achham district due to the incidents related to this tradition.

Jun 11

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

LIGHTNING STRIKE KILLS TWO CHILDREN

A lightning strike has killed two children, both seven years old, and injured five others in Changad Rural Municipality, Surkhet, mid-western Nepal. The lightning hit the victims in a school. Police said the injured children were taken to hospital for treatment.

Jun 11

<https://bit.ly/2K2Hh2C>

SUMMIT IN BISHKEK

3rd Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program (GSLEP) steering committee meeting is going to be held in Bishkek, central Kyrgyzstan. Government personnel from 12 snow leopard range nations experts and partner organizations will attend the meeting for reviewing and guide various elements of management and implementation of the GSLEP for conservation of the charismatic and endangered snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*). Nepal is the chair of GSLEP standing committee since 2017. In Nepal, snow leopard is being protected in three blocks along the Himalayas.

Jun 13

<https://bit.ly/2MfJ6Ka>

ELDERLY MAN KILLED BY ELEPHANT

A herd of wild elephants (*Elephas maximus*) killed a man, 67, at Rattanpuri, Bara, central Nepal. Police Inspector said that the wild tuskers from Parsa National Park picked him and trampled him to death, while he was asleep. Wild elephants had entered human settlement to feed on the crops.

Jun 14

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

ACTIVISTS DEMANDING DETAILS OF RANI POKHARI RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

A leader of Bibeksheel Sajha Party has filed Right to Information (RTI) application at Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) and Department of Archaeology (DoA), demanding disclosure of details of reconstruction project of Rani pokhari which was damaged by massive earthquake on April 25, 2015. KMC has made a master plan to restore Rani Pokhari with DoA monitoring every aspect of the project. Conservationists are objecting against the use of modern construction materials and building new structures around Rani Pokhari.

Jun 15

<https://bit.ly/2tqn0Nq>

AROUND 600 CHICKENS DIED WITHIN A DAY

In Rukum, mid-western Nepal, around 600 chickens have died at a poultry farm within a span of 24 hours inflicting a loss of around NPR. 7 lakhs to the owner. District Livestock Service Office (DLSO) suspected the chickens died due to Ranikhet disease which might have transferred from the weighing scale instrument, brought by traders from Kailali, far-western Nepal to buy chickens in that farm.

Jun 17

<https://bit.ly/2JW3LpY>

BP HIGHWAY OBSTRUCTED BY LANDSLIDE

Landslide caused by heavy rainfall at kaldhunga, Kavre in Central Nepal obstructed the passengers and vehicular movement along the BP Highway. Police informed the Road Division Office about the incident and tried to remove the debris and resume traffic along the road section.

Jun 15

<https://bit.ly/2K09PxW>

CELEBRATING EID AL-FITR BY NEPALI MUSLIMS

Thousands of Nepalese Muslims gathered at the Kashmiri Takia Jame Masjid, Ghantaghar, Kathmandu, central Nepal, to offer prayers on the last day of Ramadan. Eid, the festival to exchange happiness, started on May 17 with a month-long fasting. Eid is the day, celebrated after taking a month-long fasting.

Jun 15

<https://bit.ly/2Mh16Ej>

TIMBER SMUGGLING: SUSPENDED APF PERSONNEL

Four Armed Police Force (APF) personnel are suspended on charge of smuggling over 100 cubic feet timber worth around NPR. 7 lakhs in an APF truck in eastern Nepal. A probe committee was formed to investigate the matter.

Jun 15

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

CONSTRUCTION WITHOUT EIA

To keep the promises made during the election, local Governments of Darchula, far western Nepal, are constructing 44 district roads without doing Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) for the projects. The local governments are unaware of the impact of such projects to the environment and their consequences. However, impacts of construction of roads without EIA have already been observed in some places. In Shaileshikhar Municipality, the construction of Bagora-aagar road has caused landslide damaging an irrigation channel and a drinking water project. Local authorities said that due to lack of manpower and for the fast construction of road, they can't conduct EIA.

Jun 17

<http://thahakhabar.com/news/42173>

MAHAKALI IRRIGATION PROJECT AT RISK

The embankment construction under the Mahakali Irrigation Project along Khanya Khola area in Kanchanpur, far-western Nepal is at risk due to careless digging and extraction of construction materials by the contractor. The embankment is being constructed on the stream to conserve the base area of the Mahakali Irrigation Project. The contractor has been accused of digging pits and extracting stones and pebbles from risk-prone zone along Khanya Khola.

Jun 17

<https://bit.ly/2K0aZcM>

MURKY RAIN IN NEPAL

Rainfall with dust had occurred in various parts of the country due to westerly wind carrying dust along with it. According to the Department of Hydrology and Meteorologist (DHM), the murky rainfall occurred when the wind

mixed with dust particles that had spread from Rajasthan desert, north-western India caused rainfall in Nepal. Meteorologists said that such murky rainfall was not seen recently in Nepal. They also warned people not to collect and use water from such rains for some days because it might contain chemical elements.

Jun 17

<https://bit.ly/2IfP23L>

WEEKLONG PROTEST IN MANTHALI

Businessmen have taken out a rally in Manthali, southern Nepal, against the Supreme Court's decision to ban heavy vehicles on the BP Highway. BP Highway is the only route that links four districts Dolakha, Ramechhap, Sindhuli, and Okhaldhunga, with the eastern Terai (southern plains of Nepal). The Supreme Court's decision to ban heavy vehicles on BP Highway has affected day-to-day activities of people. Hence, hundreds of businessmen have been in a weeklong protest to pressurize the government for allowing heavy vehicles on the highway.

Jun 17

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

India-Himalaya

ILLEGAL CHOPPING OF WALNUT TREES

According to the sources, the protected species of the walnut tree (*Juglans sp.*) are illegally being cut down by the locals in Anantang, in Kashmir, northwest India. Sources said that the local authorities are not enforcing the law strictly against the illegal clearance. Under the preservation of Specified Tree Act 1969, the chopping of certain tree species such as Juglans, Morus and Platanus is illegal and punishable.

Jun 11

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

IMMEDIATE ATTENTION TO SAVE ENVIRONMENT

Two member panel of the judges in Gulmarg, west northern India has made call for the immediate actions to conserve the environment of Gulmarg, the world famous tourist destination for skiing, as it is located amidst forests and meadows. The court has ordered to all stakeholder and responsible authorities to act on conserving the magnificence and beauty of Gulmarg to maintain its standard in all its original status.

Jun 11

<https://bit.ly/2MPnUf5>

ONE LAKH PILGRIMS USED TARAKOTE MARG

At least one lakh on-foot pilgrims have used Tarakote marga, Jammu, northwest India in less than one month during their journey of Holy Cave Shrine of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi from Katra. To address the demand of Pilgrims, three additional stalls have been set up to make available of hot and cold beverages and ice-creams for pilgrims. The route was opened for public on 13th of May. The visitors have expressed satisfaction due to the beautiful ambience, scenic view of the surrounding areas, gentle gradient of the 6 meter wide track, modern infrastructure and the logistics put in place by the Shrine Board.

Jun 11

<https://bit.ly/2K9kEtw>

WILDFIRE: A SERIOUS ISSUE

Environment Awareness Forum (EAF), an environment activist organization, expressed concern over the death of animals in wildfire in Trikuta hills, Jammu, northwest India. EAF condemned the attitude of the authorities of Mata Vaisno Devi Shrine Board for taking no preventive or rescue operation to save wildlife from being charred alive and appealed the chief minister of the state to constitute an inquiry for repeated wildfire and animal deaths.

Jun 11

<https://bit.ly/2yt5aPw>

FLOOD HITS ASSAM

A massive flood hit the state of Assam, northeast India affecting about 4 lakh people in at least 668 villages from Hojai, Cachar, Golaghat, Hailakandi, Karimganj, East Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts. The floodwaters has destroyed houses, damaged National Highways, inundated agricultural lands and caused landslides in the area. The Railway transportation has been cancelled and search and rescue operation is underway in the area.

Jun 16

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

China Himalaya

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ROAD FOR A REMOTE VILLAGE

The local government of Tibet, southern China has decided to invest about 3.1 million USD for the construction of a new road in Lhalung village in Shigatse city. The existing road is of poor conditions and villagers are facing worst transportation. The roads are frequently damaged by rain. Villagers are happy expecting that the new road will lead them to better life.

Jun 15

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

CULTURAL HERITAGE EXHIBITION IN TIBET

The Culture Department of Tibet Autonomous Region organized an intangible cultural heritage performances and exhibition in Tibet Buddhist College, Lhasa, Capital City of Tibet, southern China on June 9th. There are at least 460 items of regional-level intangible cultural heritages on the list and it is also reported that the 137 items have been added on the list. The purpose of the exhibition is to conserve intangible cultural heritage of the region through dancing and singing performances, display boards and publicity materials, and improve public awareness of protecting cultural heritage.

Jun 15

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

Bhutan-Himalaya

CAMPAIGN TO BAN PLASTICS

The Dzongkhag administration has initiated a campaign to ban plastics in Tsirang, southern Bhutan, by carrying Clean Bhutan's biodegradable jute bags to the Sunday vegetables market. The campaign has also supported by different sector heads along with the students which focused on promotion of the biodegradable bags and to minimize the plastics usage. While many were positive of the initiative, some vendors suggested a complete ban on the use of plastic bags would work rather than awareness.

Jun 11

<https://bit.ly/2K6ISsP>

WORLD DENDROCHRONOLOGY CONFERENCE HELD IN THIMPHU

10th World Dendrochronology Conference was held in Thimphu, West Bhutan to provide a platform for tree ring researchers and scientists to share latest research findings and to build a stronger research network for the first time in a developing country. The five-day program was jointly organized by Department of Forests and Park Services, Columbia University and Cambridge University and there were at least 170 participants from various country. On the same occasion, Status report of UWICER based on research of two years of watershed management, and a documentation of historically significant trees of Bhutan was launched.

Jun 11

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

INITIATIVES TO REDUCE ORGANIC WASTE

Initiatives have been started to reduce the organic waste in Thimphu, western Bhutan from March this year. According to an environmental officer, the district is promoting to composting and gardening which is expected to reduce the cost of waste management. Around 52.9 of the total waste is organic waste in Thimphu alone.

Jun 12

<https://bit.ly/2tjr7M7>

PLASTIC BAN NOT EFFECTIVE

It has been 19 years since Bhutan first banned plastic use, the country is still struggling to manage plastic waste which demonstrates the inefficacy of the plastic ban. In a Cleaning program organized on the occasion of the world environment day alone, 0.783 tons of the plastics were collected from six districts. Bhutan spends around 2.9 percent of the GDP for environment protection however waste management practices are not satisfactory in terms of collections, reuse, recycle recovers and other aspects.

Jun 12

<https://bit.ly/2Mfl02q>

RICE SHORTAGE IN BHUTAN

Agricultural statistics of Bhutan has shown that only about 47% of the total demand of rice is supplied from national production. Land use change and urbanization are among the factors blamed for low production of rice. Experts have warned that if appropriate measures are not taken on time, the entire south Asia may face rice shortage in future. Some of the priorities the experts proposed for increasing productivity were use of quality seeds or varieties, develop irrigation infrastructure and water management, improve soil fertility and nutrient management, and pest and disease management.

Jun 13

<https://bit.ly/2JU6v6u>

FLASH FLOOD DAMAGED ROADS AND BRIDGES

The flash flood of 13th June at Jarey gewog, Lhuentse, eastern Bhutan has damaged five roads and two bridges disrupting the transportation system. The students and villagers could not reach to their destination and it is also said that at least 35 students couldn't attend their schools. However, there were no casualties and crops were not damaged. Parents are worried about safety of their children commuting to school, due to poor roads and damaged bridges.

Jun 16

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

NO WATER FOR PADDY CULTIVATION

Paddy (*Oryza sativa*) cultivation has been seriously affected due to shortage of the water in Trashigang, east Bhutan which has forced farmers to leave paddy field uncultivated. Due to water shortage, the rate of the production of the paddy has been declining over the years and last year just four household cultivated but this year onwards the cultivation stops totally. Besides the irrigation, villagers have been facing lack of water for drinking propose.

Jun 16

<https://bit.ly/2MO2K1g>

OPPOURTUNITY FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUTH IN KHYBER PAKHTUNWALA

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Government in northern Pakistan has offered an internship program aiming to engage unemployed educated youth in the province. Around five thousand youth will be benefited from the program, each receiving about 205 USD as stipends every month. The application can be submitted electronically and Masters Degree holders of age up to twenty-nine could apply for the internship.

Jun 14

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

WILDLIFE AT RISK

The valleys and mountains of District Ghizer, northern Pakistan bestow rich diversity of wildlife including markhore, ibexes (*Capra species*), snow leopards (*Panthera uncial*), doves (*Zenaida as.*) which add to the natural beauties of the region and promote ecotourism. However, it is claimed that these species are in danger of extinction due to the absence of the conservation strategy and illegal hunting. It is understood that some of the migratory and seasonal birds are also at risk of extinction. To check the illegal hunting, government should enforce the laws more effectively and should promote public awareness for wildlife conservation.

Jun 16

<https://pamirtimes.net/2018/06/16/protecting-wildlife/>