ment hospital of Alwar from where

he was transferred to the govern-

ment hospital in Jaipur under police custody. This time I deputed a

ounch of more effective personnel lest the last episode gets repeated

Our team staved there till Khvali

got fully cured and discharge cer

tificate was issued duly signed by

lagers through their leaders were

pressurizing the police officials, but

this time they could not enjoy any

favour from police as Khyali was

not cooperating with them. Now

they resorted to organize a huge

public meeting close to Siliberi

Fortunately, this time the district

administration showed cooperation

by deploying enough police force at

he meeting spot, under control of

the SDO and Dy S, Rajgarh. In the

meeting the local leaders mounted

huge pressure upon us to allow

grazing in the area but it could not

deter us from our commitment to

save the critical tiger habitat. The

crowd instigated by these politi

cians' showed resentment and

threatened of dire consequences

but as a custodian of the tiger land,

राष्ट्रदुत

#AWARD

Rambagh Palace: World's No. 1 Hotel

Rambagh Palace has been rated as the World's No. 1 Hotel in the coveted 2023 Travellers' Choice Awards by TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site.



Preserving heritage and

When it comes to promoting

Rambagh Palace's commit-

ecosystem nurtured at the

palace, encompassing flora,

fauna, and nature. The hotel

takes significant strides

preservation, including avoid-

ing the use of plastic, planting

more trees, and implementing

water conservation measures

These initiatives exemplify

their dedication to preserving

the natural beauty that sur-

In terms of culinary offerings,

Rambagh Palace is constantly

innovating to provide guests

with a delightful gastronomic

experience with eateries like

Steam, Suvarna Mahal,

Verandah Café, among others.

One exciting addition to their

menu is the introduction of

millets such as iowar and baira. These nutritious grains

will be actively promoted, and

a millet food festival will be

organized to showcase their

versatility and health bene-

fits. Recognizing the impor-

tance of including these

grains in the younger genera-

tion's diet, the hotel aims to

educate visitors from around

the world about the culinary

As Rambagh Palace continues

to evolve and embrace its role

as a custodian of heritage and

sustainability, it remains an

enchanting destination that

embodies the grandeur and

cultural richness of Rajasthan.

Palace has hosted celebrities

like Queen Elizabeth II. Lord

Mountbatten, former US

President Bill Clinton and fam-

ilv. and ex-Twitter boss Jack

Dorsey, among many others. "The USP of this property is

that there is no renovation, but

only restoration; we have pre

while royals", Rathore said.

served the legacy of the erst-

treasures offered by millets.

Preserving the legacy

Culinary Innovations

rounds the palace.



and preserving the state's rich heritage, Rambagh Palace goes above and beyond. The notel takes dedicated initiatives to promote Rajasthan's Rambagh handicrafts, culture, art, and Palace, has stepped artisans. In collaboration with UNESCO, they actively gracefully through many royal transicontribute to the promotion of intangible heritage. Guests at tions-from home of the queen's Rambagh Palace are treated favourite handmaiden, to to immersive experiences royal guesthouse and hunting with handmade carpets, handlodge, and later as the resimade blue pottery, folk dence of the Maharaja Sawai dances, and music. Even dur-Man Singh II and his queen, ing the challenging times of the pandemic, the hotel Maharani Gavatri Devi. This remained steadfast in sup-'Jewel of Jaipur', often hailed as the epitome of luxury and porting all artists and artigrandeur, has recently added sans, ensuring that none of another feather to its cap by their performers were laid off. winning a prestigious award Rambagh Palace has been ment to a sustainable and ecorated as the World's No. 1 friendly future is equally Hotel in the coveted 2023 noteworthy. The hotel boasts Travellers' Choice Awards by an environment teeming with TripAdvisor, the world's life, with over 200 peacocks argest travel site. The calling it home. This serves as Travellers' Choice Awards a testament to the healthy

beyond, based on the reviews and opinions collected from travellers and diners around the world on TripAdvisor over a 12-month period. On the occasion, Ashok Rathore, Area Director – Rajasthan and General Manager, Rambagh Palace, Jaipur, said, "We are delighted and humbled that Rambagh Palace, Jaipur has been recog nised as the No.1 Hotel in the World by TripAdvisor's Travellers' Choice Awards 2023. This global honour is a true reflection of world class hospitality in an authentic palace setting brought to life by the iconic brand Tai and a testament to the trust our guests have placed in us over the years. We remain commit-

honour travellers' favourite

rants, things to do, and

destinations, hotels, restau-

Tajness' in the times to come.' Further adding to the sentiment, he remarked at a recent presser organized at "Despite having received numerous awards in the past, this particular achievement is special and unique. It holds great significance for us, setting us apart from others. Rambagh Palace is a living testament to our Delving deeper into the impact of this award on the

ted to delighting our guests

and spreading the magic of

state, he emphasized the wideranging benefits it would bring. "Winning this award will not only benefit the state of Rajasthan in terms of increased tourist arrivals but also the entire country." he explained. "We are the only Indian hotel featured among the top 25 on this list, and foreign tourist arrivals will see a much-needed boost after the pandemic. We are already getting several queries for celebrity weddings etc."

Ashok Rathore with the team of Rambagh Palace.

What role does forest play in politics? It becomes the guinea pig of the politicians and poachers who leave no stone unturned to encroach and exploit it. What can a forest officer do to save his forest? Keep running from the pillar to the post!



ariska is a huge reserve with lots of dense forest wealth in the form of grasses, herbs. shrubs and trees. In the entire Rajasthan it is the only area which has very dense forest and that too to the tune of 14 sq.km. Anogeissus pendula (Dhok) is the dominant tree species covering over 90 per cent of the reserve's area. Salar and Gurjan grow in

rocky patches. Khair (Kattha), though rare in pure patches, is found commonly in valleys. Bamboo, though spread over the entire reserve, can be seen along springs and moist hills. Some val-(Zizyphusmauritiana) trees.

During summer when most of the grasses become dry and nonpalatable, the dry leaves of dhonk fall from trees on the forest floor and provide the best possible nutritious food to sambar, spotted deer and blue bull. Capparissppalso plays an important role in providing green fodder to animals during peak summer when most other plants dry up.

Fifty five species of grass enrich important ground flora of Sariska. These are scattered over the entire reserve and play an important role in the distribution of wildlife. From floral richness's point of view, the main Sariska-Kalighati-Slopka and Umari-Siliberi valleys deserve special mention. Richness of faunal species in these valleys attribute to this specialty of floral diversity. On one hand this floral diversity attracts cattle-rearing people and on the other the rich fauna lures hunters/shikaris. This rich natural wealth is the chief cause of settlement of huge number of villages/cattle camps in side and on the periphery of the reserve.

Intensive Patrolling There are around 300 odd villages located within a radius of 5 km from the reserve boundary (with more than 1.5 lakh people and 2.75 lakh livestock). They depend largely upon the reserve to meet their day-to-day forest-based requirements. This resource dependence has led to large-scale deterioration and degradation of the habitat in the peripheral as well as core areas

The reserve administration has adopted several strategies to put a check on illicit grazing, wood cutting by villagers and poaching of wild animals by shikaris for personal consumption or money-making. As one of the measures, several forest protection posts have been created in interior jungles by the reserve authorities. On foot and vehicular patrolling is done on a regular basis. This has led to organized jungle crimes by the affected villagers especially in the cases of cattle grazing and wood poaching In late 1980s, Siliberi forests were the worst affected from this point of

such crimes In order to foil such illegal active ities, utilizing a shikar hodi built during the reign of the erstwhile

OF A FORESTER

earning job but duty-bound as I was, I could not afford to keep peointoxicated with political power.

On the contrary these encroachers instigated the villagers to graze their cattle forcefully in the reserve forest resulting in to our regular scuffles with them. This led a section of these people to approach the court at Alwar. Unfortunately, they succeeded in getting temporary

It was a matter of serious concern for us as this rampant grazing Fortunately, we did seek relief from the high court of Rajasthan, which remanded the case back to the Alwar court for proper hearing. Now we succeeded in getting the earlier decision reversed. This tug of war had added fuel to fire which could not be extinguished in spite of

One morning in the last week of September 1994, several offenders attacked Siliberi chowki. Head guard Battu Lal and few other guards got injured. They were threatened blatantly with their life if strict vigilance against the forest offenders was not lifted. We reinforced our position by intensive patrolling in this belt

September 1994, several offenders attacked Siliberi chowki. Head guard Battu Lal and few other guards got injured. They were threatened blatantly with their life if strict vigilance against the forest offenders was not lifted. We reinforced our position by intensive patrolling in this belt. **Settling Score**

In the meantime, one evening

Rajgarh township and villages.



o this eastern side and had climbed this plateau all alone. The experienced Battu Lal decided to wait for him at this exit to Kaimala forest After a patient wait, they saw the stout middle-aged shikari Khvali Lal carrying a headload of meat of the slain wild boar, wrapped in a cloth-potli. After searching for some time when the shikari was ound, Battu Lal asked him to surrender. This took Khyali by surprise but he instantly gathered courage and tried to flee away to evade the arrest. The dedicated officials chased him. Now realizing the trap, Khyali played a trick. He entered a pond and throwing the headload away took out the butcher knife-like sharp-edged weapon and asked the raiders to disperse threatening to slit his own throat. Though this unexpected move took Battu and party by surprise but they did not lose courage and start ed moving inch by inch towards the poacher. Understanding that escape was not possible, Khyali slit his

Blood started oozing from the

slit throat. This sudden act of slitting his throat shocked Battu Lal and the guards momentarily but soon they gathered their wits. They offered him medical aid and pleaded to cooperate but the poacher did not allow them to come closer. Khyali Lal still holding the weapon close to his throat was persistently threatening to kill himself. The officials got really scared. They decided to leave the site immediately les the revengeful poacher really kills himself to get these officials implicated in the murder or a police case. They also hid the incident from their superiors including their range officer. Secretly they were following the developments in this through some personal sources. It was only on the third day that they learned that the poacher had survived but lodged a com-

plaint against them in the police The police had booked them under the grievous charge of 'attempt to murder'. I was informed of this quite late. A scared Battu Lal and both the

guards fled to evade arrest. I was try-

ing hard to contact them but they were untraceable. Apparently, the poacher had cut his throat but very cleverly had saved the wind pipe. So it turned out to be a minor injury and under no condition could be termed fatal. But initially he did not intentionally go for treatment in order to make a strong criminal case against the reserve staff. And later on, his family members and other villagers tried to settle score with the reserve personnel by depriving him of medical treatment I narrated the facts to the super-

intendent of police in Alwar who showed all sympathy with the reserve personnel but could not do much except delaying the arrest for some time. Eventually the poacher developed a septic in the throat region. Had he died, no one could have saved my staff. I deputed some efficient staff personnel to get the poacher admitted in the hospital and to get him the best possible treatment to ensure his safety. It was not less than a miracle that my officers succeeded in getting him admitted in the government hospital of Alwar and ensured proper treatment. I met the concerned medical officers in person who assured me of fully curing the patient. We were bearing all the medical expenses also.

Encashing The Situation A bunch of reserve personnel were deputed in this hospital to attend and keep an eye on the poacher round the clock. Fortunately, this arrangement worked well and the poacher's condition started improving. I was assured by the medical team that Khyali would be all right with few more days of treatment. But the very next day I got the shocking news that the preceding night itself Khyali had fled from the hospital with the aid of hiskinsmen, leaving the treatment incomplete. It was clear that his relatives and other villagers did not want

him cured lest it dilutes the case

government machinery but for our against the Sariska personnel. All of them were interested in encashdepartment was witnessing this as a mute spectator, as if they had nothing to do with the safety of

Within two days, pus had begun to hang from his throat. To add fuel Khvali or the tiger land and its proto the fire, these people started exhibiting the pus hanging from On our end at state level and also Khyali's slit throat to even the through the chief wildlife warden, neighbouring villagers. I requested all possible efforts were on to presthe SP and the collector to get the surize the concerned authorities to rescue Khyali. Ultimately, we sucpoacher transferred to hospital for

reatment to save his life. But they ceeded in waking up the district seemed helpless against the mob. administration and the sub divi-With great effort we succeeded in sional officer and deputy superinpersuading some influential polititendent of police. Raigarh were cians of that area but this too did deputed for this rescue operation. They camped at the site and finally What our informer revealed was with persistent efforts that lasted unbelievable. Khyali was unmarfor about 18 hours, they succeeded in the mission. Later that night the wanted to get treatment at an earlivictim was admitted in the governest but his other two brothers inter-

ple were camping at Khyali's house. All were waiting for him to die. The situation had become so scary that our staff was not ready to stav at the Siliberi chowki lest they get attacked by these mischief nongers. One day, taking advantage of this volatile situation, these offenders collectively attacked the chowki and forcefully entered with their flocks of cattle on the prohibited area by demolishing the nasonry wall and the gate.

ested in his land share of 10 bigha from the family property, did not

want him to recover. The local

politicians were instigating people

against us. Thousands of such peo-

Siliberi nullah is lifeline of this area.

ing the situation

not work.

They also blocked the non-metal motorable road connecting Siliberi o Baleta (our another naka) and Malakheda. They wanted to deprive us of any assistance from our outposts of this area as well as from Aalakheda police station. However. we were prepared. Fortunately, the SP of Alwar now cooperated and we could clear this route with the help of police assistance, as we faced pearable resistance. Also, we could e-instate our Siliberi chowki with the additional police force. Cattle vere pushed out by us but we could not afford to be too strict and antagonize these agitators at this sensitive time when the seriously ill Khvali was still being used by them to mobilize people against us. By now Khvali had understood the situation better than earlier but the people surrounding him won't let him have medical aid as their interest was vested in his death and not

the authorized doctor. His death meant arrest and mur-Our staff took leave from this duty only after Khyali's safe deliv der trial against the reserve staff. That would in turn demoralize our ery at his home in the presence of work force forever, leading to several villagers and the local chances of unrestrictive use of forpolice officials. est resources including poaching of Still the pending police case wild animals. Khyali's brothers against our personnel had to be conwould have hugely benefited by tested. Though the concerned vil-

grabbing his 10 bigha land. **Protecting The Morale**

Day by day his condition was deteriorating. I left no stone unturned to persuade the district administration to rescue Khyali and in writing made it clear that had Khyali died, the district administration would be chiefly responsible for his death and the aftermath. Ironically, we were pushed on the backfoot for no fault of ours as we were merely discharging our duties with sincerity. Khvali was being killed by the greedy brothers and the villagers for their personal gains. The entire

> did not bow down to their As anticipated, the meeting got dismissed without any result Though scuffles with the mischief mongers could not be stopped thereafter but despite the immense pressure on police, after some time we succeeded in getting the criminal case dropped against Battu Lal and the other personnel. Thereafter we also succeeded in building back the broken boundary wall at Siliberi sealing illicit grazing once again in this valley. That evening we had a little bonfire celebration at Siliberi with the chowki staff. The daring, committed boys deserved a pat on

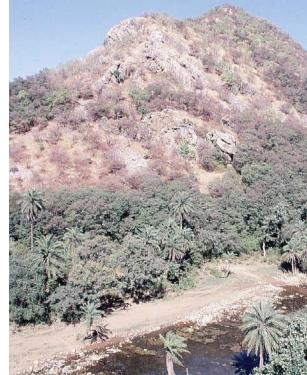
Though in those six months we had to undergo real bad times due to this shikar incidence but the best part was that despite of all kinds of pressures, not only could we protect the morale of our personnel, work ing under such harsh conditions and with little or no resources, but also succeeded in demoralizing the shikaris and other mischief mon

Those living in cities and other urban areas may not be able to appreciate as to how challenging is the job of dedicated forest personnel especially in the wildlife

But today when I look back at these incidents. I feel proud to have played my part with utmost satisfaction to contribute to the pious

cause of nature conservation

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



The Siliberi jungle highly vulnerable for shikar

The Prey, the Poachers and The Politics

rulers, an outpost was created some

time back by the reserve authori-

ties at the tail of the precious Umri-

Siliberi vallev. It is a red fort-like

the bank of the stream which col-

lects huge water from Pandupole

hills to discharge in to Baleta dam,

passing through Umri-Siliberi val-

ley. A number of small and big vil-

ages are located around this huge

earthen dam. While those belong-

ing to cattle-rearing communities

depend solely upon their cattle for

ivelihood, many others engaged in

farming also rear cattle to enhance

their economy. During the rule of

the princely state, a total ban was

enforced on grazing, wood poaching

in the forests of Siliberi area. The

villagers abided by these rules for

many years even after independ-

ence as there was enough fallow

land available in their villages for

grazing their cattle. But with grow-

ing population this fallow land

legally or illegally went under

plough for raising agricultural

crops. Consequently, Siliberi forests

fell victim to encroachment for cat-

Field Director, the sensitivity of the

issue struck me. This Siliberi-Umri

and Siliberi-Rotkyala valley being

important tiger areas had to be pro-

tected against all kinds of distur

bances. Protection measures were

strengthened by posting additional

field personnel. I too started camp

wall was erected at Siliberi gate to

put complete brake on entry of vil-

lage cattle in to the Siliberi-Umri

valley. I knew it was a displeasure

In 1991, on my joining here as

stupendous building, standing on

ple happy at the cost of the reserve. As anticipated, scuffles between the reserve personnel and the mischief mongers increased. Many a times our staff faced wrath of these villagers. Also, people who were fond of wild meat were growing restless as strict patrolling had marred their chances of killing animals for their pot. I was aware of the growing tension and held several meetings with these villagers and advised them to get their charnaut (village grazing lands) vacated from the illegal occupants. I also requested the district collector to evict the encroachers but everybody seemed helpless against these muscle men

relief also from the court.

One morning in the last week of

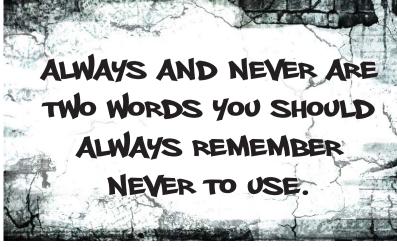
Battu Lal Meena, in-charge of this Siliberi chowki got a secret message through an informer that a shikari (hunter) had entered the Deori forest, on a plateau not very far from here

Battu Lal was a strong young man, full of enthusiasm and dedication. It took him and his two friends more than an hour to reach Deori plateau. This plateau on its western side joins Bhensota plateau which further leads to Kalighati. On its southern side it drains in to plains of Jahaj forest and Nadu village leading to Tehla. On its east, a luxuriant forest of 'Kaimala plateau' has a 6 km stretch, till it drains in to lains of Boretha, situated towards This dare devil shikari belonged

Cattle grazing is chief area of conflict between villagers & Park Management

YOU

KNOW ..



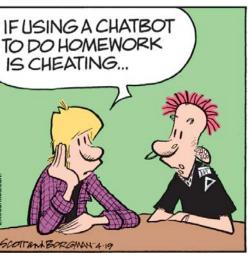
BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott NOTHING.



ZITS



BUT A.I. TECHNOLOGY IS SOMETHING WE





By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

THE WALL

