IndiaWilds®

Newsletter

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Forest Conservation Act: Soon to lose all its teeth

In the past few years, in the name of ease of doing business, there have been multiple attempts to amend our acts which stand in the way of vested interests decimating our forests and wild-life. Recently MoEF has proposed a set of amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 which will sound a death knell on our wilderness areas and wildlife.

Forests to give way to plantations:

The present ruling dispensation had earlier tried to obfuscate the definition of forests and had included plantations in the assessment of total areas in India covered under forests. As a result, it was being shown that the total area under forests and tree cover is growing even though large swathes of forest land was being diverted for industries, dams, roads, mines and other projects. So it is indeed funny to see some proposal regarding changing definitions of forest.

A simple tree plantation will not create a forest. Plantations don't have the complex ecological linkages that natural forests have. Of course, when plantations are left wild and unmanaged for years and remain inviolate ie. devoid of human presence, then over many years the species diversity can increase primarily due to natural seed dispersal by birds. Plantations that are adjacent to forests have a role to play in dispersal of wildlife as they can often use these areas.

In the Godaverman vs Union of India case, the Hon'ble Supreme Court had said that any land

Eucaluptus plantation in Shola

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Cover Page Photograph:

Makhana by Sabyasachi Patra

which has trees would be considered as a forest and the land for all practical purposes will be considered as a forest land. So the law for forest protection and diversion of lands for non-forest use were applicable.

The proposed amendments to the Forest Conservation Act says that there is considerable apprehension is raised about prosecution of people for cutting forests. However, a cursory look at any newspaper will show that despite thousands of people protesting cutting down of large hard growth trees in cities, tree cutting goes on unabated. No one is persecuted. People also start pruning and chopping off the portions of the tree trunk so that trees die and then they easily cut off. Clearly the issues raised about apprehensions of private people about seeking permission to cut down trees in their land to cause wholesale changes in the forest conservation act is unwarranted.

If the Government succeeds in changing the definition of forests and excludes private property with forest cover from it then it will ensure that the lands which saw compensatory afforestation will no longer be protected.

Also, Government can then use it as a loophole and then divert forests and then create plantations like palm oil or other such produce for purely commercial reasons. We all know how Malaysia's bio-diversity has been devastated by its push for converting pristine forests into palm oil plantations. India too is following in the same path.

The authors of the proposed amendments to the FC Act perhaps are not aware climatic conditions in India and the nature of our land. Else they would not have written "It is also a fact that India being largely a tropical country, there is a natural tendency of a land to grow spontaneous wild growth of vegetation, which if left on its own will develop a forest like vegetation over a period of time, bringing such unattended lands under the category of deemed forest as per dictionary meaning. Such lands would continue to attract provisions of the Act. Therefore, people in general have a tendency to prevent any tree like vegetation growing on their land."

For the record, 69% of India's geographical area amounting to 228.3 Million hectares is under dry land (arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid) and 32% of India's total land is affected by land degradation. Out of this 81.45 Million Hectares or 24.8% of India's total geographical area is affected by desertification. https://www.indiawilds.com/diary/indiawilds-newsletter-vol-9-issue-vi/

Injecting Cancer :

The point B. 5 says "*Alongside many roads and railway lines, strip plantations have been*

developed and notified as forests. In many areas road/rail side amenities/habitations have been developed all along such lands. These facilities (both private and government) need access (approach roads/rail) and that invariably pass through the strip of notified forest area along the road/rail line. Since the activity is a non-forestry use of forest land, these require prior approval of Central Government. The requirement of forest land in each case is around 0.05ha. Ministry is of the view that, an exemption up to 0.05ha for each such accesses may be allowed to alleviate the hardship of the residents/ business owners."

The above proposed amendment to allow clearing up 0.05 hectares of land for non-forestry use is meant to insert a loophole to destroy our forests. This loophole will ensure that simultaneously 0.05 hectares of land in different areas would be cleared up to pock mark the forest. Then later some more would be cleared up adjacent to the already cleared up land. This will ensure wholesale clearing up of forest land. This proposal is like inserting cancerous cells in the body of our forests as well as Forest (Conservation) Act. With time, these small 0.05 hectares will fuse together to ensure that our forests will become decimated and Mother India will get a bald look.

The proposed amendments don't take into consideration that fragmentation of our forests is the biggest bane of genetic diversity and survival of our species. Forest fragmentation due to creation of linear projects like roads, railways, dams, industries etc result in many species not able to move in their habitat and causes problems in genetic diversity. There are many wildlife mortalities when animals as well as herpeto-fauna try to cross a road. Loss of forest cover also impacts existing wildlife corridors and hence natural dispersal of wildlife to other forests is stopped. When wildlife on their own try to move from one forest to another they come in contact with human beings and there is conflict resulting in loss of life. Wish the authors of the proposed amendments to the forest act had the well-being of wildlife and ecologically fragile forests in mind.

Need for Perpetual No Go areas:

The proposal to include a "enabling provision in the Act to keep certain pristine forests showcasing rich ecological values intact for a specific period" is a double-edged sword given the track record of the Government in decimating our forests. In the better part of the last decade, the NBWL (National Board for wildlife) has been acting as a clearing house of forest diversion proposals. Filled with yes men and women, there is rarely a proposal which gets rejected. In many cases, NBWL Members don't even get the proposals before hand to study. Given this background, it is feared that inserting protection of a forest for a specific period, even though with a pristine classification, there are chances of review and divestment after the specific period is over. India is famous for its "jugaad" or ingenuity and we can find loopholes and intentionally misinterpret clauses. So, it would be important to create a clear "Perpetual NO GO" area for forests in ecological fragile areas and those which has rich ecological values.

Defence use:

These days no project, howsoever detrimental to wildlife and ecology of the area may be, if a project is said to be beneficial for defense needs, then the projects are immediately cleared. Too often, defense personnel are not aware of the ecological value of a place and dependencies of wildlife on the area. Defense decide on setting up base or creating defense infrastructure in an area or completely take over an area based on whatever they think is right. Only when such a project proposal

comes up to the ministry for clearance the conservation community gets a chance to raise their voice. So, the decision of the ministry to give blanket approval for projects that are deemed to be of strategic and security interest will lead to decimation of our wilderness areas and wildlife. It can also lead to extinction of species like in the case of development of a base impacting the Narcondam Hornbill– a bird which is endemic to Narcondam island in the Andamans.

Fait accompli:

A number of ecologically fragile areas have been destroyed by the argument of fait accompli. Many private players as well as Government agencies have used the *Fait Accompli* route to argue that they have already spent lot of money in the project and hence they should be given forest clearance. Most of the dams in Uttarakhand and elsewhere, road projects, mining projects, Sethusamudram project to name a few have used this argument that already hundreds of crores of money has been sunk in the project and hence to avoid losses they should get the permission to divert forest land. The Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 should be amended to clearly say that in no case fait accompli argument would be valid ground for seeking forest permission. Often Government officials with or without the pressure of political masters and in collusion with private sector allow work to start in non forest areas adjacent to forest and then seek permission. In many cases, work has started even in forest areas without the necessary forest clearance. This needs to be plugged. However, given that the present Government is keen in opening up our forests for exploitation, conservationists are not very hopeful.

Extended Reach Drilling: A retrograde move

The proposed amendment reads “New technologies are coming up such as Extended Reach Drilling (ERD), which enables exploration or extraction of oil & natural gas deep beneath the forest land but making drilling holes from outside the forest areas and without impacting the soil or aquifer that supports the forest in the forest land. Ministry considers use of such technology is quite environment-friendly and as such should be kept outside the purview of Act.”

Allowing ERD (Extended reach drilling) in forest areas is going to be a disastrous for our ecologically fragile areas. No studies have been conducted to understand the impact on our wildlife and wilderness areas. It is known that lot of animal communication is in sound frequencies that are beyond our human hearing range of 20 Hz to 20Kz. Elephants, tigers etc. communicate through infrasound which are lower than our hearing range of 20Hz. Similarly bats and many species can hear ultrasound. Animals, birds, herpetofauna are very sensitive to vibrations. With loud noise there is higher palpitations. Often it leads to miscarriage in animals. Animals often desert those areas. Allowing Extended reach drilling will cause problems for wildlife. Extended reach drilling is also likely to cause diversion of underground natural water flow channels and can be detrimental to the ecologically fragile forest lands. Hence, it should not be allowed.

Reclassifying Non-forestry activities as Forestry

The clause 2.11 in the proposed amendment will be seriously detrimental to the health of our forests and wildlife. It proposes “*The clause of explanation to 'non-forestry use' in Section 2 of the Act, identifies activities which are to be regarded as non-forestry activity and which are not for the purpose of that Section. It is understood that activities which are ancillary to conservation of forests and wildlife should not be considered as non-forestry activities. Accordingly, it has been proposed that, establishment of zoos, safaris, Forest Training infrastructures etc should not come within the meaning of "non*

-forestry activity" for the purpose of Section 2(ii) of the Act."

The above proposed amendment wants to change the definition of non-forestry activities and want to make zoos, safaris, forest training buildings etc. as forestry activities. If allowed, this would be a big blow to forest and wildlife conservation. Erecting any kind of concrete structure inside forests and ecologically fragile areas should be frowned upon. Based on our experience, we have seen first forest department creates a concrete house and then slowly the place becomes very big. In many of our premier national parks like Corbett, Parambikulam etc what was once a place where we used to sight huge congregation of animals, today we find forest buildings. In Similipal, I saw the sad sight of forest ranger and staff chasing away elephants that were grazing inside the forest range office compound wall.

Most of these buildings are done at ecologically fragile areas and come as a big blow to our wildlife. Also, one needs to question why do you need huge buildings in this digital era when people have smartphones and laptops? Take the people on a trek and teach.

These days, forest authorities are more concerned about increasing their revenue. So, they want to create zoos and fenced safari drives so that tourists can move in the fenced enclosures in vehicles to see animals and feel they are viewing wild animals. These fenced enclosures give an illusion that all is well with our wildlife as people don't realise that they are visiting a zoo adjacent to a national park. Perfectly healthy animals are captured and kept in zoos so that they can get more revenue from tourists. It is surprising, that a nation which suffered immensely under British rule and has been celebrating its freedom since 1947, is unable to appreciate what freedom means to other species. Why do we need to keep wildlife under captivity just for our pleasure? As such zoos have outlived their utility as they no longer primarily aid in species reintroduction in the wild. Also, people learn more from wildlife films than watching a bored and stressed tiger inside a tiny cage.

If we allow establishment of zoos, safaris, forest training infrastructure etc. to be reclassified as forestry activity, then there will be proliferation of such activities and our forests will be decimated.

Our wildlife need inviolate spaces to breed and thrive. Unfortunately, it is proposed that Survey, reconnaissance, prospecting, exploration or investigation inside reserved forest land will not be categorized as non-forestry activity. Clearly this is done at the behest of large corporations who want to explore for oil, minerals, gems and other such activities for their own gains. These activities once removed from the non-forestry list will be allowed unhindered and hence will cause even more disturbance to our wildlife. This would be an anti-wildlife move and is highly condemnable.

Penal Provisions:

The proposed amendment says that "offences under Section 2 is now proposed to be made punishable with simple imprisonment for a period which may extend to one year and the offence shall be cognizable and non-bailable. It has also been proposed to introduce the provisions for penal compensation in addition to the punishment under section 3A to make good for the damages already made."

We are of the view that imprisonment of three years would be a serious deterrent along with a minimum financial penalty of

Rs. 10 lakh. These days selling one big teak tree results in lakhs of rupees. So, the financial penalty has to be increased along with a minimum period of imprisonment of three years. This will make the people think twice.

The FC Act should also be amended to include that if any Government servant allows permission for work to start in projects without first obtaining forest permission then those persons would be prosecuted. Too often we find bureaucrats process the files knowing that they would retire soon and hence chances of giving explanations for circumventing the rules may not arise. Given the general inclination of authorities, we don't expect this to ever be included in the rules. Nevertheless, everyone in a democracy should be accountable.

The MoEF has given less than a month to provide the feedback on the proposed amendments. There is also a confusion about the email id where the feedback should be sent. It is not sure if all the submissions are going to be considered. If the Government goes ahead with the proposed changes in the Forest (Conservation) Act, then it would be disastrous for the health of our forests and wildlife. Our forests and wild lands are our natural heritage. India's culture and religion is inextricably linked with its forests. We need to retain our forests in pink of health for posterity. Any action to damage the health of our forests is anti-national. It would be the biggest act of sacrilege that one can commit. So, we urge the Government to change its mind and drop these proposed changes to our Forest (Conservation) Act else our forests will be decimated.

Conservation News -

Paddy straw generated in Punjab, Haryana and U.P. expected to come down significantly this year

Steps taken towards reduction in paddy straw generation is yielding positive results. The total paddy area in the states of Haryana, Punjab and eight NCR Districts of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) have come down by 7.72 per cent during the current year as compared to last year. Similarly, total paddy straw generation from the non-basmati variety is likely to be reduced by 12.42 per cent during the current year as compared to the previous year.

Both Central and State Governments of Haryana, Punjab and U.P. have been taking measures to diversify crops as well as to reduce the use of PUSA-44 variety of paddy. Burning of paddy straw from the non-basmati variety of crops is the prime concern. Crop diversification and moving away from PUSA-44 variety with short duration High Yielding Varieties are part of the framework and action plan for control of stubble burning.

As per data received from the State Governments of Haryana, Punjab and U.P., the total amount of paddy straw generated will come down this year. The total paddy straw generation is likely to come down by 1.31 million tonnes (from 20.05 million tonnes in 2020 to 18.74 million tonnes in 2021) in Punjab; by 0.8 million tonnes (from 7.6 million tonnes in 2020 to 6.8 million tonnes in 2021) in Haryana and; by 0.09 million tonnes (from 0.75 million tonnes in 2020 to 0.67 million tonnes in 2021) in the eight NCR districts of U.P. this year.

The total quantity of straw generated by the respective states was 28.4 million tonnes in 2020 which is now expected to come down to 26.21 million tonnes in 2021.

The decrease in non-basmati variety is expected to be even higher. Paddy straw generation specifically from the non-basmati variety of crops is expected to decrease from 17.82 million tonnes in 2020 to 16.07 million tonnes in 2021 in Punjab and from 3.5 million tonnes in 2020 to 2.9 million tonnes in 2021 in Haryana.

The Commission through a comprehensive framework had directed the respective State Governments to promote short duration and early maturing varieties of crops since they can be managed quite efficiently and provide a much wider window for paddy straw management. As per recommendations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, CAQM had actively pursued with State Governments for promotion of the same.

Apart from this, the Crop Diversification Programs are also being implemented in the states of Punjab and Haryana along with the NCR Districts of U.P. to divert the area of water-guzzling paddy to alternate crops.

World needs rapid and transformative actions

18th October 2021

Participating virtually in the Like Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) Ministerial meeting titled "'Preparations for COP 26 on Climate Change – Expectations and Challenges' today, Union Minister for Environment Forest and Climate Change,

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Shri Bhupender Yadav today called for rapid reduction of emissions by developed countries in this decade.

Shri Yadav in his address noted that world needs rapid and transformative actions, in view of the fact that the remaining global carbon budget is meager and will be exhausted within this decade at the current rate of global emissions. He also noted that the commitments of carbon neutrality and to raise ambitions in nationally determined contributions to be in line with climate justice and principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC).

The Environment Minister highlighted the ambitious climate actions taken up by India in areas of renewable energy, energy access, and efficiency, sustainable transport including e-mobility, sustainable agriculture, enhancing green cover, etc. He noted that India has achieved a reduction of 24% in emission intensity of its GDP between 2005 and 2016, thereby achieving its pre-2020 voluntary target.

Minister pointed that the accelerated climate action by developing countries like India requires the contingent provision of climate finance, technology, and other means of implementation support. He also highlighted the importance of global partnerships and cooperation and requested the LMDC countries to join the initiatives of International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) launched by India.

The ministerial level Like-Minded Developing Countries group meeting has been hosted by Plurinational State of Bolivia ahead of upcoming crucial upcoming 26th climate change conference to be held in Glasgow, UK from October 31 to November 12, 2021. LMDC comprises of around 25 developing countries from Asia and other regions.

A ministerial statement was endorsed by the LMDC Ministers during the meeting, expressing their full support to COP26 Presidency and willingness to work closely and constructively with all other Parties and stakeholders towards a successful COP26 through the multilateral process that is conducted in an open and transparent, inclusive, Party-driven and consensus-based manner.

At COP 26, all important pending issues should be resolved mutually taking into account national priorities and circumstances

21st October 2021

Stressing on the urgency of strong climate actions the Union Environment Minister, Shri Bhupender Yadav underlined the need for initiating the process of setting the long-term climate finance for post-2020 and the fulfilment of the goal of USD 100 billion committed by developed countries at the bilateral held in New Delhi with H.E. Mr. Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice President- European Green Deal, European Union.

Both sides discussed a wide range of climate issues relating to COP26, EU and Indian climate policies, bilateral cooperation

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between the EU and India.

On the upcoming COP-26 the Environment Minister stated that in the COP 26, all important pending issues like Article 6, Common Time Frame, Enhanced Transparency Framework, etc. should be resolved mutually taking into account national priorities and circumstances.

Both sides acknowledged that India and the EU should work together to achieve a successful outcome of COP26 to enable full and effective implementation of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

Shri Yadav also highlighted India's ambitious climate action plans under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi towards a green transition covering the priority areas of renewable energy, sustainable transport including e-vehicles, energy efficiency, forest, and biodiversity conservation, etc.

Applauding, India's leadership on Climate Actions, Mr. Timmermans said that the whole World is in admiration of India's ambitious target of 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030.

Both sides may explore to further strengthen the bilateral cooperation on climate and environment, especially on ways and means which help in promoting low carbon pathways.

COP26 should be the COP of action and implementation

22nd October 2021

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav today assured India's full support to the UK COP Presidency for the meaningful outcome of COP, and said that the upcoming COP26 should be the COP of action and implementation.

Shri Bhupender Yadav, had a bilateral meeting with Right Honourable Ms. Elizabeth Truss, UK Foreign Minister, toady in New Delhi. In the meeting, they discussed crucial issues COP26, UK COP26 initiatives, India UK Roadmap-bilateral cooperation, Commonwealth Declaration on Climate Change, and other related issues.

In the Meeting, Shri Yadav said that the huge expectations in COP 26 include arriving at a consensus on unresolved issues of the Paris Agreement Rule Book, long-term climate finance, market-based mechanisms, etc.

Stressing that COP26 should also initiate the process of setting the long-term climate finance for the post-2025 period, Shri Yadav stated that India welcomes the UK COP 26 Presidency's five key initiatives on sustainable land use, energy transition, low emission vehicle transition, climate finance, and adaptation.

In the Meeting, both sides underlined the need for strengthening bilateral partnership and collaboration to facilitate the

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collective R&D of cutting-edge technologies and the transfer of proven technologies to drive low carbon pathways.

Both sides also agreed to explore ways and means to also strengthen global climate initiatives including the International Solar Alliance, Coalition Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT Group), Call for Action on Adaptation and Resilience, and Mission Innovation.

Project to control air pollution from dispersed sources in Delhi

Considering the large number of non-point dispersed sources contributing to air pollution in Delhi, a Project to control air pollution from dispersed sources will be implemented in Delhi with special focus during the coming winter season.

The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) with the support of an NGO, Air Pollution Action Group (A-PAG), had initiated a Pilot Project with the active help of South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) in its jurisdiction in the month of December, 2020 to abate air pollution from large number of non-point dispersed sources.

The progress of the Pilot Project by SDMC was reviewed by CAQM on 22nd September, 2021 and based on the learning and outcome of the project, NDMC, North DMC and East DMC have expressed their interest in replicating the project in their respective jurisdictions.

Based on the learning from the Pilot, the Project is now being upscaled and replicated in North DMC, East DMC and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) areas to control dispersed sources air pollution in the coming winter season. The Project envisages easy identification, allocation and resolution of air pollution-related issues arising out of large number of non-point dispersed sources.

At the Review Meeting held by the Commission on 21st October, 2021 with Delhi Government Officials and Commissioners / Chairpersons of Municipal Corporations /New Delhi Municipal Council, it has been decided that the project will go live in North DMC, East DMC and NDMC w.e.f. 27th October, 2021 with improved inter-agency coordination among Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC), Nodal Officers and support from other agencies concerned. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has also been formulated for this purpose.

SUCCESS OF PILOT

Supported by a robust review & monitoring program, the Pilot Project was successful in identifying about 17,290 issues in 104 wards of South DMC, out of which 10,900 (63%) of the issues pertain to the SDMC and the rest 6,400 (37%) issues have been assigned to other agencies. Under this pilot project, SDMC has successfully resolved 95% of the issues pertaining to its own jurisdiction. The project *inter-alia* focused mainly on the following steps:

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- **Sensitization Exercise** to help ground-level officials understand the linkages between their daily tasks and the quality of air
- **3rdParty Survey** to identify issues that contribute to spike in air pollution levels
- **Allocation of issues** identified and further tag them to the agencies concerned
- **Ground-level reporting** of resolution of the issues by the authorities concerned
- **Enhancement of SmartCity 311 App** to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the complaint redressal processand
- **Review Process** to follow through on-ground survey procedure and ensure high standards while resolving the issues**.**

The major pollution sources addressed under this pilot project are: garbage dump sites, overflowing dhalaos, burning of garbage, construction & demolition sites, debris dumped on public land, road dust from unpaved roads, barren lands, industrial emissions, vehicular pollution etc.

Viewing the need for technological advancement as the most crucial step towards transforming the whole complaint redressal process, SDMC with technological support of A-PAG brought enhancements to the SDMC's 311 Live Dashboard and upgraded it into an advanced 'SmartCity 311 App' for efficient and effective monitoring of dispersed sources of air pollution.

With the introduction of this advanced App, issues can be conveniently raised with a single tap. The 'SmartCity 311 App' carry a number of enhanced features like a simplified transfer protocol to reassign issues to other agencies, validation check to mark resolution has been introduced, updated reporting formats for easier monitoring, feature to track progress on long term issues and features to ensure officials are present at the issue site while uploading the resolution proof.

Citizen participation is an important aspect of collection of information from different sources in real-time. This not only strengthens the process of citizen-led issue identification but also expands the reachability of the system. Apart from on-ground 3rd party surveys, the SmartCity 311 App will also allow and encourage the citizens to raise complaints and help the municipal bodies in taking necessary steps to redress the issues concerned.

Besides sensitization workshops for increased understanding of air pollution issues arising out of dispersed sources, special focus has been laid by the SDMC on long term issues affecting the air quality during the Pilot Project. The progress of the Pilot Project by SDMC was reviewed by CAQM on 22ndSeptember, 2021 and based on the learning and outcome of the project, NDMC, North DMC and East DMC have expressed their interest in replicating the project in their respective jurisdictions.

As per reports received by the Commission, the Air Pollution module is now live on the citizen app in SDMC & EDMC.

Equipment Discussions -

DJI launches Ronin 4D – integrated gimbal camera

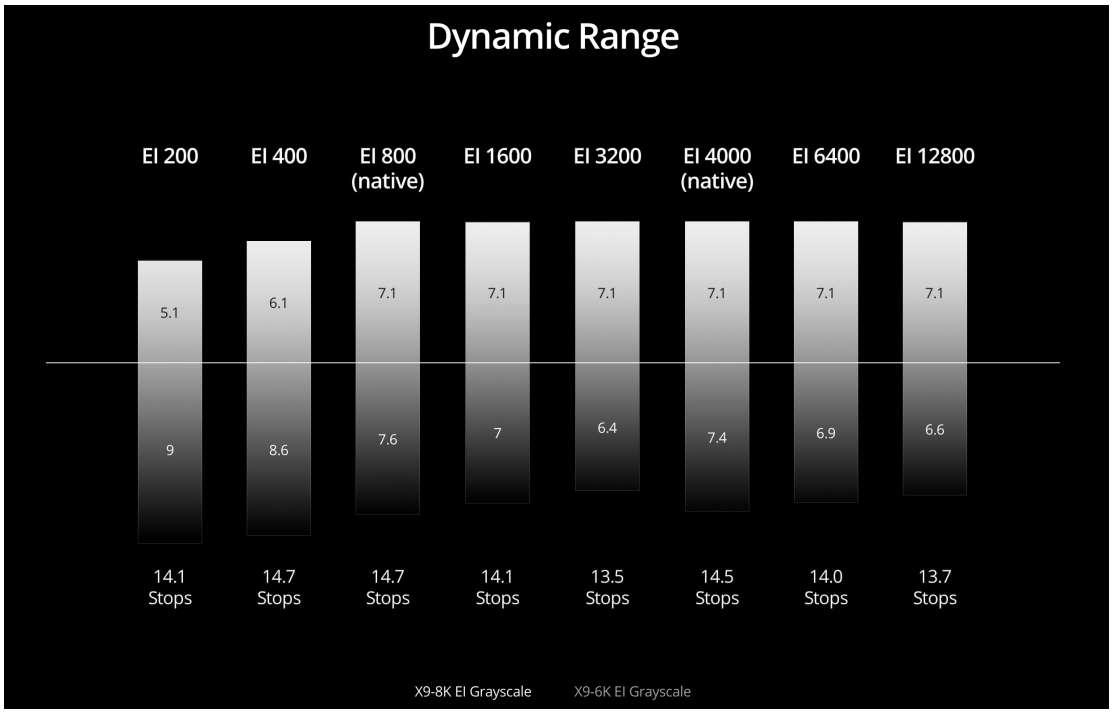
Global Availability

DJI, the world leaders in consumer drones, has launched an integrated camera gimbal calling it the Ronin 4D. It is a completely unique design which integrates a camera with physical gimbal stabilization and focus systems along with wireless transmission. So instead of attaching a camera and lens on a gimbal and taking time to set up for perfect balance, one can simply pick up the integrated Ronin 4D systems and start shooting.

Ronin 4D has Zenmuse X9, which is DJI's flagship full-frame camera. It also features DJI's latest image processing system, CineCore 3.0. This system uses DJI's proprietary chip to provide advanced processor architecture, offering extremely high-performance computing power in a compact cinema camera. CineCore 3.0 allows Ronin 4D to support internal recording of Apple ProRes RAW, ProRes 422 HQ, and H.264 video. It also supports up to 8K/75fps and 4K/120fps video recording, helping deliver multiple options for professional-level creation.

DJI claims that there is 14+ stops of dynamic range. The X9-8K camera has dual native ISO of 800 and 4000 which should give clean shots in low light. The X9-6K camera has dual native ISO of 800 and 5000.

Equipment Discussions -



Lidar Range Finder:

There is a Lidar range finder attached which gauges the distance and the attached X9 focus motor helps in getting the focus right.

DJI Ronin 4D makes manual focusing easier than ever. The visualized focus assistance technology displays the ranging points on the main and remote monitors in a simplified top-down view. This provides an innovative and intuitive LiDAR Waveform to locate focus points quickly and allow focus adjustments with extreme precision. Even operators with little or no experience can become adept at manual focusing quickly.

According to DJI the LiDAR Range Finder can cast up to 43,200 ranging points within a 10-meter detection range. [8]Compared with phase detection autofocus (PDAF), Ronin 4D's LiDAR Focusing System can

Equipment Discussions -

focus faster, without compromising the image quality or relying on the surface texture of the subject. This is especially useful in low-light environments and results in exceptional focusing capabilities compared to other cinema cameras.

With the new LiDAR Focusing System, Ronin 4D is able to maintain focus even when there is severe motion blur caused by subjects moving quickly. With the focus motor mounted, autofocus is available even on manual lenses. [6] Continuous autofocusing on subjects can be enabled together with ActiveTrack Pro, making it especially convenient for solo operators.

There is an Automated Manual Focus (AMF) mode which gives the operator the accuracy and flexibility of manual focus with the convenience of autofocus. The focus wheel will rotate in sync as the focus point changes, but cinematographers can take manual control at any point. The focus wheel on the right hand grip even features dynamic damping with electromagnetic technology. This gives cinematographers a physical sense of focus changes, providing a more intuitive and modern focusing experience that is unrivaled in the industry today.

Built-in ND Filters:

The X9 camera of DJI Ronin 4D has 9-stop built-in high-quality ND filters (ND 2 to ND 512, or ND 0.3 to ND 2.7) that can be quickly and easily switched thanks to an internal motorized system. These filters were also designed to match and compliment the color science of Ronin 4D.

With the DJI Cinema Color System (DCCS) and robust computing power provided by CineCore 3.0, Zenmuse X9 is able to give images a cinematic look by retaining authentic and accurate colors. It also supports the industry-standard ACES workflow for effortless compatibility with the color tones of other cinema cameras.

DJI Lenses:

X9's standard DL mount supports three compact full-frame prime lenses. The housings are made of lightweight, monocoque carbon fiber, so each lens weighs just 180 g. More DJI lenses will be available in the future.

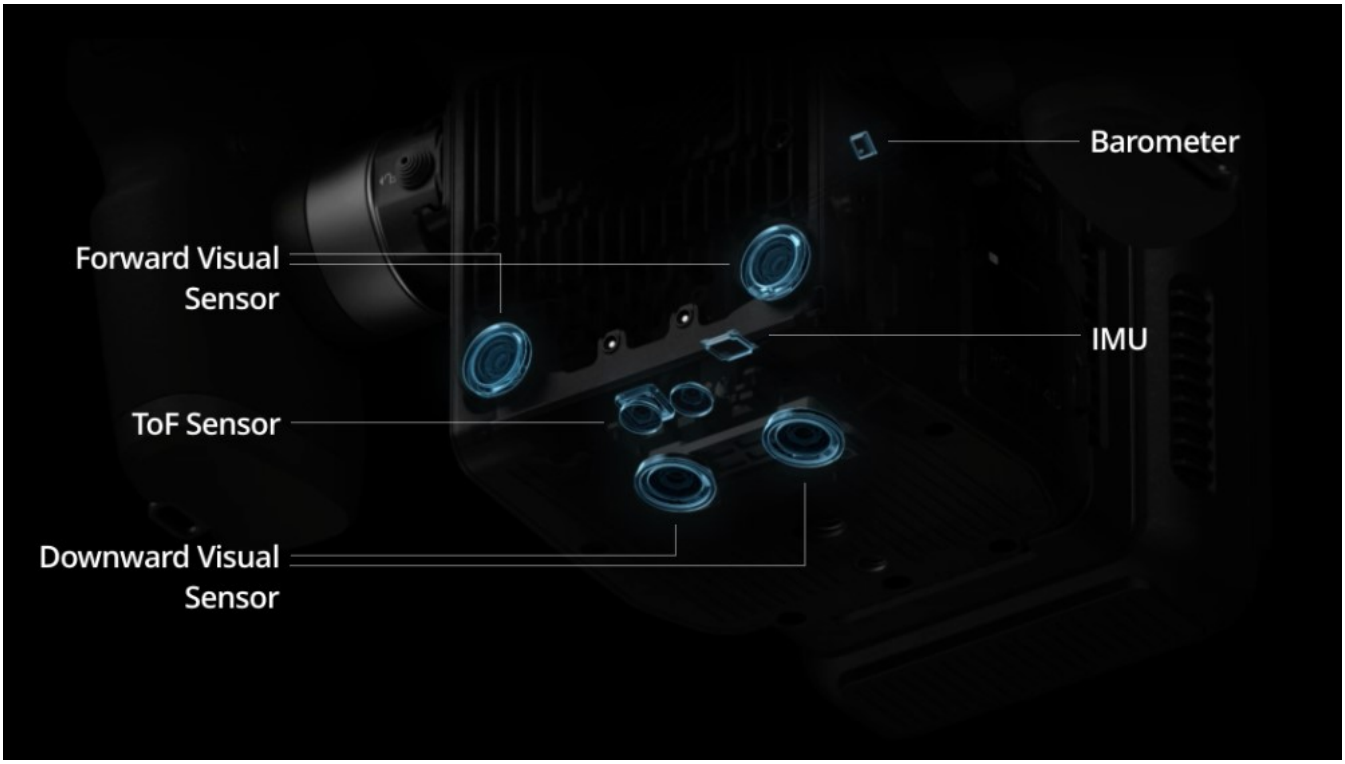
Equipment Discussions -

Interchangeable mount:

X9 supports interchangeable lens mounts, including DJI's proprietary DL mount as well as third-party mounts like Leica M. Ultra-wide, f/0.95 large-aperture, electronic zoom, macro, and anamorphic lenses [5]that are compatible with traditional cinema cameras also work on X9, [6] providing flexible lens options.

4-axis Stabilisation:

DJI Ronin 4D adds a Z-Axis to the traditional 3-axis gimbal, which effectively decreases vertical camera shake and offers stabilization performance on par with a dolly. The four axes work together with a downward ToF sensor, forward and downward dual-visual sensors, a built-in IMU and barometer, and an advanced new algorithm to bring the overall stabilization to a whole new level.



Ronin 4D integrates the imaging and stabilization systems while keeping only the sensor and necessary optical components in the gimbal camera. The tilt axis of the gimbal uses dual symmetric motors, whereas both the pan axis and the roll axis are designed with an additional stiffness buffer.

Video Wireless Transmission:

Ronin 4D uses the all-new DJI O3 Pro Video Transmission technology, which offers a 20,000-foot transmission range [10] that would be unimaginable on traditional solutions. In addition to 2.4GHz and 5.8GHz, it supports the DFS frequency band and an AES 256-bit encryption algorithm that can output a 1080p/60fps FHD feed to multiple remote monitors simultaneously with significantly enhanced security, stability, and anti-interference capability.

Equipment Discussions -

The 4D Video Transmitter [1] can be directly mounted onto Ronin 4D and powered by the battery of the main body. With a built-in wireless video receiver, the High-Bright Remote Monitor [1] has a 7-inch, 1,500-nit high-bright, wide color gamut touchscreen display that can output both HDMI and SDI signals through the expansion module. [1] Its compact and light-weight body provides optimum portability and efficient setup so users can start shooting immediately.

The High-Bright Remote Monitor supports one transmitter with multiple receivers for video and audio feeds. Two transmission modes are available. The first is Broadcast mode, which sets no limit on the number of receivers and is suitable for monitoring with large crews. The second is Control mode, which supports the coordinated operation of two receivers.

The High-Bright Remote Monitor can connect to the Hand Grips of Ronin 4D, DJI Master Wheels, DJI Force Pro, [11] or the new DJI Three-Channel Follow Focus. [12] This enables remote control of focus and gimbal movements with high precision, starting and stopping of recording, and camera setting adjustments to meet the highest standards of coordinated shooting on sets. In addition, the built-in gyro sensor turns the monitor into a remote motion controller for the gimbal of Ronin 4D.

Mirror Control Mode gives the High-Bright Remote Monitor an identical control interface as the main monitor, including all advanced features such as source clip playback, and camera and gimbal settings, which can now be remotely adjusted even when Ronin 4D is mounted to expansion platforms such as a jib, cable cam, or vehicle mount.

The High-Bright Remote Monitor has a built-in microSD card slot that supports independent recording of video at up to 1080p/60fps. When several remote monitors are used in conjunction, each monitor can play back clips separately without interfering with other monitors.

Equipment Discussions -

Storage:

Ronin 4D has a built-in CFexpress Type-B slot along with a USB 3.1 Type-C expansion port for recording directly to an external media disk. [14] It also offers internal recording of the highest-specification videos with DJI PROSSD 1TB, which can be directly connected to a computer via USB-C cable to access media without a traditional SSD reader. These storage choices provide solutions for high cost-effectiveness and to those who want an unrivaled combination of performance and stability.

Sound:

Ronin 4D is equipped with built-in microphones that support dual-channel 24-bit audio recording. It also provides 3.5mm jacks and XLR microphone ports for more audio input solutions.

Battery:

Just like Ronin 2 and Inspire 2, DJI Ronin 4D uses TB50 Intelligent Batteries, which offer up to 2.5 hours of shooting time and can be fully charged in just 1.5 hours. Auto-heating is also supported to enable reliable functionality in severely cold conditions

Price:

The DJI Ronin 4D 4 axis Cinema camera 8k combo kit is priced at **$11499.**

https://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/1667440-REG/dji_cp_rn_00000177_01_ronin_4d_4_axis_cinema.html/BI/19990/KBID/13252

The DJI Ronin 4D 4 axis 6K combo kit is priced at **$7199.**

Equipment Discussions -

Sony launches 33 Megapixel Alpha 7 IV mirrorless full frame camera

Sony has announced an update to its popular Alpha *7* III camera by launching the alpha 7 IV fullframe mirrorless camera with 33 megapixel sensor. We expect this to be popular like its predecessors.

Following are the salient features of the Sony Alpha 7IV camera.

Sensor: 33 megapixel full-frame back-illuminated Exmor R™ CMOS

Processor: BIONZ XR™

Mount: Sony E mount

ISO: from ISO 50 - 204,800

Claimed dynamic range: 15 stops

Burst shooting speed: upto 10fps with AF/AE tracking

AF points: 759 phase detection points covering 94% of image area.

AF tracking: Real-time AF can track birds and animals eye for still and movie shooting. 30% higher accuracy than A7III.

Equipment Discussions -

Picture profile: S-Cinetone™ from cinema cameras

Movie: 4K 60p in Super 35 mdoe. 4K 30p from 7K oversampling in full frame mode.

Bit depth: 10 bits, 4:2:2

Duration: Continous video recording for more than an hour in 4K 60p 10bits at 4:2:2

XAVC S-I™ intra-frame and XAVC HS™ H.265 long-GOP

Breathing compensation: New feature to compensate for lens focus breathing throughout the focus changes.

Image Stabilisation: 5 axis optical in-body image stabilization leading to 5.5 step shutter speed advantage.

Media: CFexpress Type A cards

Viewfinder: 3.68 million dots OLED Quad-VGA viewfinder. It is 1.6 times higher resolution than A7III.

LCD: 3-inch (3.0-type) 1.03 million-dot (approx.) side-opening vari-angle touch rear LCD

Body: Magnesium alloy

Pricing: **$2500 US Dollars** (body only) and **$2700 US Dollars** with Sony's FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS zoom lens

Availability: December 2021

Sony Electronics' Alpha 7 IV Goes Beyond 'Basic' with 33-Megapixel Full-frame Image Sensor and Outstanding Photo and Video Operability

Sony Electronics - 10/21/2021

SAN DIEGO, Oct. 21, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Sony Electronics Inc. today announced three new additions to its imaging line-up: the Alpha 7 IV interchangeable-lens camera (model ILCE-7M4) with a newly developed 33-megapixel (approx., effective) full-frame image sensor, as well as two new flashes – the HVL-F60RM2 and HVL-F46RM.

The Alpha 7 IV takes "basic" to the next level for full-frame cameras with excellent image quality and performance, redefining the lofty standards set by the acclaimed Alpha 7 III. The new model features many of Sony's most advanced imaging technologies, including the latest BIONZ XR™ processing engine and advanced AF (autofocus) capabilities from the flagship Alpha 1 combined with streamlined operability and enhanced reliability for photos and movies, making it the perfect all-around camera for today's imaging enthusiasts and professionals. The Alpha 7 IV also boasts a 33MP (approx., effective) image resolution, rich movie expression and various features to support the growing demand for remote communication,

bringing new meaning to what a "basic" camera can accomplish.

"Since its introduction over three years ago, the Alpha 7 III has made tremendous impact in our industry, completely redefining the expectations for what can be accomplished with a 'basic', or entry-level full-frame camera," said Yang Cheng, Vice President, Imaging Solutions, Sony Electronics Inc. "Now, it's time to break through all existing boundaries again. The Alpha 7 IV brings together the best of Sony imaging technologies in both photo and video to deliver a high-end experience to a wider range of customers. This gives today's creators a new level of freedom to capture, create and share in ways that they've never been able to before, no matter the situation in which they find themselves."

Alpha 7 IV: Innovation Never Ends

The new Alpha 7 IV is an exceptional hybrid camera packed with outstanding still image quality and evolved video technology with advanced autofocus, enhanced operability and improved workflow capability. The model was developed with the environment in mind by using Sony's original recycled plastic SORPLAS™ for the camera body and packaging with recyclable[i] materials and less plastic.

Outstanding Image Quality

Thanks to a newly developed 33MP (approx., effective) full-frame back-illuminated Exmor R™ CMOS image sensor, superior image quality and Wide ISO sensitivity range expandable to ISO 50 - 204,800 is achieved. The high resolution enables the Alpha 7 IV to express smooth gradation, fine details and textures of the subject while reducing noise, and its 15-stop dynamic range allows a wide expressive range while Creative Look settings can help create original looks effortlessly for both stills and video.

Next-Level AF performance

The latest BIONZ XR™ processing engine is the same that is used in Sony's flagship Alpha 1, delivering high-speed AF, uninterrupted continuous shooting up to 10fps[ii] with AF/AE tracking and a large buffer for a prolonged shooting experience. The Alpha 7 IV tracks subjects with tenacious Real-time Tracking and 759 phase-detection AF points in a high-density focal plane phase-detection AF system that covers approximately 94% of the image area. Additionally, for the first time, Real-time Eye AF can now track birds' and animals' eye for both still images and movies, in addition to humans. The Alpha 7 IV also has face and eye detection accuracy for humans that is improved by approximately 30% compared to the Alpha 7 III.

Evolved Movie Technology

The Alpha 7 IV inherits technology taken from real-world movie production, including the S-Cinetone™ picture profile adopted from Sony's highly regarded Cinema Line cameras. This delivers a rich, cinematic look that has become popularized by a broad range of cinematographers and filmmakers who are shooting on Sony. High quality movie is achieved with 4K 60p recording in Super 35mm mode and up to 4K 30p recording with 7K oversampling is available in full-frame mode. The new camera also features 10-bit depth 4:2:2 color sampling to enable natural gradation, XAVC S-I™ intra-frame encoding for more efficient editing workflows and XAVC HS™ H.265 long-GOP for doubled compression efficiency.

Equipment Discussions -

To meet the growing need for precise autofocus performance when shooting videos, unique AF features are achieved when using the Alpha 7 IV with a Sony E-mount lens, including AF Assist[iii] that supports focus transitions when using AF, and Focus Map that visualizes depth of field. For the first time in the Alpha series, the new camera features Breathing Compensation[iv] to combat focus breathing and maintain a consistent angle of view throughout focus changes and can be switched on or off.

Advanced Operability as a Genuine Hybrid Model

The Alpha 7 IV is a hybrid still and video camera with outstanding operability and reliability that easily allows the user to switch from photo to video and back at their convenience. New to Sony's lineup of Alpha cameras is a dual-layer mode dial, with a lower layer for selecting Still/Movie/S&Q and a top layer for Auto/P/A/S/M and MR (Memory Recall), enabling users to quickly select and switch between the dedicated settings. It also has 5-axis optical in-body image stabilization for a 5.5-step[v] shutter speed advantage, an improved grip for greater comfort, and a CFexpress Type A compatible media slot to support media with faster writing and clearance. Additionally, the 3.68 million-dot (approx.) OLED Quad-VGA viewfinder is 1.6 times the resolution of the Alpha 7 III viewfinder, benefiting users with an upgraded live-view image quality that minimizes false color and increases resolution.

Videographers can record 4K 60p 10-bit 4:2:2 video continuously for more than an hour thanks to the camera's heat-dissipating structure. Optical 'Active Mode'[vi] image stabilization further stabilizes movie shooting. They can also benefit from the 3-inch (3.0-type) 1.03 million-dot (approx.) side-opening vari-angle touch-panel rear LCD monitor, top-panel REC button and high-capacity Z-series battery.

The Alpha 7 IV body is built with magnesium alloy to achieve a robustness while minimizing its weight. In addition, the redesigned structure and lens lock button contribute to enhanced dust and moisture resistance[vii].

Enhanced Workflow Capabilities

By offering a variety of connectivity options, the Alpha 7 IV enables on-the-spot streaming and sharing of high-quality content to meet the growing need for remote communication in real-time without sacrificing excellent image and sound quality. The connection between the camera and Imaging Edge Mobile™ application[viii] is simplified via Bluetooth, and fast data transfer is possible by 5GHz/2.4.GHz Wi-Fi.

The camera also has a new feature called "Shot Mark" to enable easy access to the marked scenes in a video clip, within camera and on Sony's Catalyst Browse/Prepare applications.[ix]

Moreover, the camera has a range of new features to support live streaming and remote communication without needing dedicated software. UVC (USB Video Class) and UAC (USB Audio Class) turn the Alpha 7 IV into a high-performance live streaming camera when connected to a computer or smartphone[x]. High image quality such as 4K 15p and 1080 FHD 60p deliver realistic video for remote sharing and the Alpha 7 IV's digital audio interface can be paired with a range of mics and accessories to deliver high quality sound.

Equipment Discussions -

Finally, Sony plans to offer a new cloud service next year, "AI Video Editing Studio", for automated editing with AI technology. To allow creators to focus on more creative tasks, "AI Video Editing Studio" automatically performs initial editing in the cloud, using AI technology. Sony will continue to strive to offer a wide variety of imaging experiences and services through the active integration and advancement of cameras, cloud and AI.

Designed with the Environment in Mind

In line with Sony's environmental efforts based on the "Road to Zero" initiative, environment was an important factor in the development of the Alpha 7 IV's design, production and packaging. The camera uses recycled plastic, SORPLAS™, which does not depend on non-renewable resources and is produced at the sites by using renewable energy such as solar power generation. The product packaging also adopts recyclable plastic-reduced materials.

HVL-F60RM2 and HVL-F46RM: Powerful Flashes to Evolve Alpha Lighting System

The HVL-F60RM2 with GN 60 and 20-200mm[xi] coverage and HVL-F46RM with GN 46 and 24-105mm[xi] are powerful wireless flashes to offer precise control, enhanced high-speed and intuitive operability. They are designed to meet the needs of both professional and advanced content creators when shooting with a Sony Alpha camera, including the Alpha 7 IV, to offer the ultimate Alpha Lighting System by the detailed communication between cameras and external flash.

Both flashes have upgraded continuous shooting flash performance, up to 200 consecutive flashes at 10 frames per second[xii] for the HVL-F60RM2 and 60 times for the HVL-F46RM. The optimized flash algorithm ensures both flashes are overheat-resistant, and a set of four Ni-MH (Nickel-metal hydride) batteries can power up to 240 flashes with a 1.7 second recycle time for the HVL-F60RM2 and up to 320 flashes with a 2.0 second recycle time for the HVL-F46RM[xiii].

When used in combination with an Alpha camera, they allow users to experience the unique communication and system benefits of the Alpha Lighting System that sets a new standard for mirrorless camera lighting systems. For example, with the Alpha 7 IV, P-TTL flash control metering for every frame in Mid, and Hi continuous mode has become possible in addition to Lo continuous mode. The flash release time lag is also shortened to capture momentary facial expressions and movements of the subject.

With the Alpha 1, the HVL-F60RM2 achieves a phenomenal up to 20fps of continuous shooting[xiv] and approximately 20 flashes per second can be produced for more than 10 seconds with the external flash battery adapter FA-EBA1 (sold separately). When the Alpha 1 is used with Sony's flashes, including HVL-F60RM2 and HVL-F46RM, users can sync up to 1/400 second shutter speed to expand expressive capabilities when shooting in full-frame mode. In addition, with the silent electronic shutter of the camera, silent flash shooting is possible when absolute silence is required.

Other system benefits of HVL-F60RM2 and HVL-F46RM with an Alpha camera include:

- Flash parameters controlled directly from the menu of a compatible camera[xv]
- Flash control linked to camera face detection[xv]
- Automatic correction of white balance based on the color temperature information from the flash

Equipment Discussions -

Both flashes also feature improved robustness and operability. The Multi Interface shoe with Sony's unique metal shoe foot with rugged side frame significantly increases strength and reliability. Shoe sealing helps the flashes to be more dust and moisture resistant[xvi]. The HVL-F60RM2's original rotating head mechanism, "Quick Shift Bounce," that enables flexible positioning and optimum lighting control has also been improved to prevent unintended change in the bounce angle.

They support wireless radio communication and can control up to 15 flashes and/or receiver units in 5 groups via wireless radio communication for enhanced lighting control versatility.

Visual Story is now Supported on Android

"Visual Story" is a mobile application for professional event photographers and video creators to enable immediate and automatic delivery of photos and movies[xvii] to their clients after an event through gallery creation, utilize AI (artificial intelligence) assistance for easy image selection, upload assets online and more. While the Visual Story app is already available to iOS users, Android user can now also take advantage of the benefits Visual Story provides to professional photographers and videographers.

When using the Alpha 7 IV, "Shot Mark" is also supported by Visual Story on iOS Version 2.1.

Visual Story on iOS is available to download for free HERE
Visual Story on Android is available to download for free HERE

Pricing and Availability

The new Alpha 7 IV will be available in December 2021 for approximately **$2,500.00 USD and $3,200.00 CAD**. It will be sold at a variety of Sony's authorized dealers throughout North America. The PCK-LG2 Screen Protect Glass Sheet accessory for the Alpha 7 IV will be available at the same time.

A kit version with Sony's FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS zoom lens will also be available for approximately **$2,700.00 USD and $3,400.00 CAD**.

The new HVL-F46RM will be available in November 2021 for approximately $400.00 USD and **$550.00 CAD**. It will be sold at a variety of Sony's authorized dealers throughout North America.

The new HVL-F60RM2 will be available in November 2021 for approximately **$550.00 USD and $750.00 CAD**. It will be sold at a variety of Sony's authorized dealers throughout North America.

Natural History -

COUNTRY NOTEBOOK: Spring in the Jungles: M.Krishnan:- 12-04-1953

The Sunday Statesman (shared by Shri. Saktipada Panigrahi)

"SUMMER has taken us by surprise in these parts. Usually this advent is both gradual and sudden; it creeps up through February and March with occasional halts during showers, and then in April, leaps in with a formal little pounce. This year, however, the pounce was early and savage. In the last week of March we were congratulating ourselves on a slow summer, in spite of dry weather, when one day the temperature shot up by almost 10 degrees, overwhelming us with a grasping lassitude. The optimistic, their senses enervated and lax, talked of a heat wave- but with the coming of April and little abatement in the heat, it is clear that this is no passing wave, but summer in all its glory.

And, quite possibly, it is also spring, the loveliest and least defined of seasons in our hill-dotted plains. We know when it is the rainy season- it is when the monsoons arrive, and their tardiness or prematurity only changes its timing. There is a brief winter in December; even autumn, if one goes by a certain mellow serenity in the air, is a definite season in many places, about October. But when is it spring?

The vernal season:

Mere botanical knowledge cannot answer this question, and knowledge of the flowering peaks of garden plants is even less helpful since we are not concerned with a horticultural season. Spring has symptoms celebrated in the classics, and it is futile considering it apart from its classical background. The setting of a gentle fragrant southern breeze, a restive amatory urge and blossoming of certain trees and the voice of koel are the accredited tokens of the vernal season. The gentle southern breeze is a reality more refreshing than poetic fancy can ever be, as those who have been out on a sweltering day in April will know, but it is local in its balmy range.

Other trees like 'Asoka', and even shrubs like 'jesmine', are listed in description of spring but undoubtedly the 'mango' is most symptomatic of them. And this year, in places far apart, I found the wild mango in lavish bloom in the middle of February, when the numerous koels of those tracts were resting their voices for a while! Nor are the Hindu festivals more specific in fixing the season- right from Holi (end of February), to the Tamil New Year Day (in the second week of April) each of them has some vernal connotation.

Peak in flowering:

Perhaps this gives us the clue. Spring is an extensive season, marked by a florescent urge in nature. The herbaceous vegeta-

tion is in bloom for many months, but probably December-January marks a peak in their flowering. By March most herbs are drying up, and from February to June a number of forest trees burst into flower with dramatic extravagance. The voice of the koel, also representative of the season, varies with locality as much as the flora, but I have never heard the cock in full voice before mid-April. Spring proper seems to begin before summer, and to coexist with its earlier months.

Not all trees that flower in summer are conspicuous, and some, like the 'neem', commence to bloom in February and go on till April. The chaste, white blossoms of the neem are used in vernal festivals, but it is red flowering of certain forest trees that seems most expressive of sultry, provocative spring. Some of these red-flowered trees are traditionally associated with the season, and quite three of them are known, vaguely and descriptively, as "flame of the forest".

Recently I was in a block of jungle which has its own character, no doubt, but which is so wholly uninfluenced by climatic extremes or any attempt at forestry that one can take its naturalness for granted. The jungle was dry and brown, most of the trees leafless, but there was vivid declarations of spring here and there. All the three trees are called or miscalled "flame of the forest" are found here- and hotter flames as well. Forest fires, unchecked except by the conformation of hills, water courses and prevailing winds, take toll of the under-shrub every year. There was an extensive fire on the night of my arrival here, a magnificent and saddening sight.

The 'Asoka (Saraca indica)' is the most delicate of all red proclamations of spring, and is intimately associated with the season traditionally, but the tree is not to be found in the jungle. From early in February the 'Indian Coral tree (Erythrina indica)' was in blossom- an ugly tree, to my eyes, too florid and thick-branched, but the pure scarlet of its flowers is probably unmatched for brilliance. The Coral's bloody crown is enhanced by lack of leaf- but then, most trees flowering in the heat are leafless. The true "flame of the forest", 'Butea frondosa' is unforgettable when seen in the jungle. It was later in bloom than the 'Erythrina', but by mid-March it was in full flower and, of course, without leaf. The rounded crown of orange-red flowers, with dark calyces, looks Chinese vermilion against the sun-brown hillsides, seen from afar- somehow, in an avenue, the tree never has scope for its vivid charm. The 'Gul Mohur (Poinciana regia or delonix regia)' was still in leaf when I left. In May it will be in extravagant bloom, its flat flaming crown spread on outflung branches, blazing fiercely in the forest. This, too, required a wild setting for its flame- I have always thought it a pity that people should plant it along the roadside. Incidentally, the 'Poinciana' has no association with spring in poetry or tradition- but the flamboyant 'Butea' has.

I will mention only one other tree that I saw here. Late in February we were going up a hill-road laboriously. A recent fire has scorched the earth, there were heavy, black rocks on either side, and the sparse jungle was brown and seemed withered beyond redemption. Round a bend in the road we came suddenly upon a group of 'Yellow Silk Cotton' trees- three crooked little trees, with burnt, gnarled trunks and tortured branches, the very tips of which alone were purple and turgid with life, and bore great, opulent yellow flowers of the purest aureolin, with hearts of red-gold stamens. I cannot describe the contrast of gracious, unstinted beauty of those flowers against that ground of charred and twisted desolation- we stopped wordlessly in our tracks to stare, unmindful of all else. To one blessed with greater faith than I, the experience could have been a revelation; surprised by such loveliness, a poet could have found a lasting joy in the sight, in a recollective, Wordsworthian manner.

But after the first glad stare, what came to me was no sense of rapture or thankfulness, but only a sharp memory from a painful past, when I had been at the foot of the systematic botany class. I turned to my comrades in triumph; "Cochlospermum gossypium," I announced to them, with finality. However, they did not hear me, or if they did, they were wholly insensible to the bathos of my remark- they just stood there, staring. There are times when the impercipience of others is merciful."

- M. Krishnan

Wildlife Photography -

Leopard on Rock by Sabyasachi Patra

Leopard Snarling by Shyamala Kumar

Wildlife Photography -

Gaurs by V S Sankar

Changeable Hawk-Eagle by Mrudul Godbole

Wildlife Photography -

Lizard by Arun Acharjee

Common nawab butterfly caterpillar by Prajwal Ullal

Spare a Thought

This is the 154th issue of IndiaWilds. An image of an angry charging wild elephant adorns the cover page of this issue.

Unlike the African elephants, in India female elephants don't have tusks. Some male elephants too don't have tusks and are knowns as makhna. The forehead part of makhnas or tuskless male asiatic elephants is more well developed than the other elephants. With more and more elephants being illegally hunted down, researchers find that Makhnas or tuskless elephants have more chance of survival in the wild. It would be a tragedy if in a few decades we lose all our majestic tuskers and only makhnas and female elephants survive in the wild.

Culturally our elephants are seen as a symbol of prosperity and peace and associated with divinity. The King of Gods, Lord Indra has Aairavat elephant as his vehicle. Goddesses of wealth Laxmi has elephant as her vehicle. The God of learning and destroyer of all impediments Ganesha has an elephant head. Despite all this today our wild elephants are a persecuted lot.

Elephants with their huge bulk and less efficient digestion process require them to feed major parts of the day and night. So, elephants need vast space to roam around in search of food. Their age-old migratory pattern was based on availability of different types of plants, fruits according to season. Unfortunately, today most of their traditional migratory corridors have been appropriated by people and the landscape modified for our own use. So elephants no longer have access to these lands as well as those seasonal fruits, flowers, shrubs, creepers, and other vegetation is no longer available. Elephants have also realised that they get more calories from cultivated food grains. So, they easily take to grazing in the agriculture fields.

On top of this, the species diversity inside the forest has also decreased. Alien weeds like lantana camara, prosopis etc have colonised large part of our wild areas and native vegetation is decreasing. This creates a huge shortfall in food supply for these megaherbivores. The conflict with humans is inevitable. Every year more than 500 people die in elephant conflict. Similarly many elephants too lose their life.

We understand the core problem. Unfortunately, the Government hasn't shown enough will power and resources to secure the elephant habitat. Unless civil society and the Government join hands, these conflicts will continue to increase. Together we can. Else, history will not be kind to our generation.

Touche.

I look forward to your inputs and support in preserving the last tracts of wilderness and wildlife of our beautiful country. For other interesting articles and images check - *http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/* To post in the IndiaWilds forums, you can register free of cost using your Full Name as user id at -

http://www.indiawilds.com/forums/register.php

If you are already a member of IndiaWilds and have forgotten you user id and/or password you can mail administrator@indiawilds.com

Regards,
Sabyasachi Patra

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