AMENDMENTS TO APPENDICES I AND II OF THE CONVENTION

Other Proposals

A. PROPOSAL

Inclusion of Melursus ursinus in Appendix I.

B. PROPONENT

The Republic of India.

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxonomy

11. Class: Mammalia

12. Order: Carnivora

13. Family: Ursidae

14. Species: Melursus ursinus (Shaw. 1791)

15. Common Names:

English:	sloth bear
French:	ours lippu
Spanish:	
German:	Lippenbar
Hindi:	Bhalu, Reechh

16. Code Numbers: ISIS No. 5301412002003001001

2. Biological Data

21. Distribution: The sloth bear is found in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. Two subspecies are recognised, viz.

i. Melursus ursinus ursinus (Shaw)
ii. Melursus ursinus inornatus Pucheran

M. u. ursinus is distributed widely in the forested tracts of the Indian main land barring the hilly areas. Its distribution eastward is bounded by Assam (Brander, 1923). It has also been reported in the forests of Sylhet, Chittagond, Cox's Bazar and Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh (Rahman, in lit., 1988). It is reported to occur in the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal.

M. u. inornatus or the Ceylon sloth bear is the subspecies peculiar to Sir Lanka. Its range is practically confined to that part of the lowlands that lies in the dry zone. Until recent times it was found in fair numbers in suitable forest country over the Northern, North-Central and Eastern Provinces as well as in the South-eastern part of the Southern Province. Large scale opening up of the dry zone forests, outside the national reserves and sanctuaries during the past 2-3 decades for irrigation-settlements and other development projects, has resulted in severe depletion and fragmentation of forests in its range. The Ceylon sloth bear is today almost entirely confined to the national reserves and a few large sanctuaries in its range in Sri Lanka (Madawela, in lit., 1988).

22. Population: In the IUCN Red Data Book, the animal has been given "Indeterminate (I)" status which means that the animal is "Endangered", "Vulnerable" or "Rare" but not enough information is available to determine its proper category (IUCN), 1988).

221. India: Exact population of the sloth bear in India is not known for want of any systematic enumeration of this species throughout its range. Population of sloth bears in some tiger reserves in India is as follow (1987):

1. Bandipur	32
2. Corbett	27
3. Palamau	46
4. Ranthambhore	67
5. Indravati	87
6. Nagarjunasagar	300
7. Dudhwa	80
8. Kalakad	11

Population figures of the sloth bear in some sanctuaries in Rajasthan are also available (1987):

1. Mount Abu	88
2. Kumbhal garh	83
3. Kaila devi	43
4. Darrah	6

Three wildlife sancturaries set up in Gujarat to protect sloth bears, have the following populations:

1. Ratanmahal	43
2. Jessor	225
3. Shoul paneshwar	35

Population of the sloth bear is believed to have dwindled considerably during the last few decades due chiefly to the shrinkage of its habitat and partly to indiscriminate hunting. It is no longer to be found in many forests where it was known just 25 years ago (Krishnan, 1972). A conservative estimate puts it around 5,000 individuals in India.

222. Bangladesh: No detailed investigation has so far been conducted on bear in Bangladesh and so authentic information about their population is not available. However, it is reported to be very rare (Rahman, in lit., 1988).

223. Sri Lanka: National parks, sanctuaries and reserved forests which still harbour the sloth bear in any significant numbers, are:

Northern Province

1. Madhu Road Sanctuary (bears were plentiful 20 years ago)	26,677 ha
2. Ninthavil Reserved Forests	8,125 ha
3. Veppal Reserved Forest	10,519 ha

North Central Province

1. Wilpattu National Park (known for bear)	131,667 ha
2. Harulu Reserved Forest (bear is rare now)	25,512 ha

Eastern Province

1. Somawathiya National Park (poaching of bear is rare)	37,762 ha
2. Wasgamuwa National Park (bear poaching is rare)	37,062 ha
3. Maduru Oya National Park (bear is rare now)	58,850 ha
4. Anaolandawa Reserved Forest (bears were plentiful 20 years ago)	29,641 ha
5. Kantale Reserved Forest (bear is rare now)	98,861 ha

South-East Sri Lanka

1. Gal Oya National Park (bear population is fair)	25,900 ha
2. Ruhunu National Park (bear population is fair)	126,791 ha

The present bear population both in national reserves and in unprotected areas outside, could be estimated to be not more than 500 to 600 animals (Madawela, in lit., 1988).

224. Nepal: Population estimates of the sloth bear in Nepal are not available. However, a minimum of 55 bears or a crude density of 0.1 per sq km was estimated in the 544 sq km Royal Chitawan National Park in the Nepal terai. During peak concentrations in the low lying riverine forest/tall grass habitat in March, the ecological density was 0.5 per sq km (Laurie & Seidensticker, 1977).

23. Habitat: Sloth bears occur in semi-evergreen, wet evergreen, moist and dry-decidous forests. They live where there is sufficient forest to provide food and favour places where outcroppings of rock and tumbled boulders offer them shelter during the hot weather and the rains. In Sri Lanka the bear habitat is reported to be consisting of open scrub, grass lands, villus and high forests.

Throughout its range, the habitat of the sloth bear is reported to be shrinking due to cultivation, human settlements, irrigation projects and other developmental activities. Raising of exotic species or monocultures over forest areas has also altered its habitat to a great extent. Overgrazing by domestic live stock is yet another strain on bear habitats.

3. Trade Data

31. National Utilization:

311. In India, sloth bears have been hunted in the past for the sake of trophies or for obtaining bear bile (gall bladder) which is believed by some tribals to have medicinal properties. However, hunting as well as trade in respect of sloth bears and their derivatives is now legally not permitted in India. Sloth bears can now be seen in circus or zoological parks for entertainment and education of the public. Some people in India - mainly nomadic tribals, tame bear cubs and use them for "street shows".

312. In Sir Lanka all sport hunting has been banned since 1956. Poaching of the bear for commercial purpose is insignificant. However, local people value bear claws (nails) and teeth to be worn on the body as "charm" to ward off evils and bear fat for medicinal purposes (Madawela, in lit., 1988).

313. There is a common belief in South Korea that bear gall bladder is a cure for digestive problems, inflammation and blood purification and as such thousands of practitioners of "hanyuk" (Korean system of medicine) seek this item (Milliken, 1985).

314. Similarly, in the Japanese system of medicine known as "Kampoyaku", bear gall bladders are widely utilised for treatment of ailments of liver, stomach and intestine. The popularity of this item from Japan is so high that on an average 1,000 kg of bear gall bladder is imported by Japan every year from China, Hong Kong, Nepal, etc. Bear-paw cuisines are served in many restaurants in Japan (Milliken, 1985).

315. Use of bear gall bladders in traditional medicines is also practised in China and many other countries of South East Asia.

32. Legal International Trade: Legal export of a few live specimens of sloth bears from India and Sri Lanka for zoological gardens abroad is known to exist. From Sri Lanka only 2-3 pairs of bears are exported annually by the local zoos. However, there is no legal export of sloth bears or their derivatives for commercial purposes from any of the countries of origin.

33. Illegal Trade:

India: It may be mentioned that internal trade in as well as export of live specimens of all species of bears and their derivatives is prohibited in India. Therefore, all cases of trade or export involving sloth bears of India can be categorized as illegal. In fact, not many cases have been detected in India as far as illegal trade of this species of bears is concerned. In 1977, an exporter in Delhi was convicted for illegally possessing 73 pieces of bear biles. In 1973, another exporter in Amritsar (Punjab) was convicted and 52 kg of bear biles (species not known) was seized from him. In the same year, the police in

Manipur seized two parcels containing bear biles being sent to Calcutta by air. In 1988, the State Wildlife Authorities seized two live sloth bears from a person in Delhi.

Much of the information relating to illegal export of gall bladders of sloth bears from India has been received through TRAFFIC (Japan) who relied on the customs statistics of Japan. Until January 1988 imports of bear gall bladder were recorded in Japan under the category "30.01-100 Fel ursi and toad-cake". Fel ursi stands for bear gall bladders and toad-cake (called 'sense' in Japanese) denotes dried secretions obtained from toad species of the genus Bufo and they are both used for Chinese medicines. According to Japanese dealers and the Ministry of Health and Welfare of Japan, all of the trade from India comprises bear gall bladder and does not contain toad-cake. According to them, toad-cake is imported only from China. Since January 1988, a new category viz. "30.01-10-100 Fel ursi" is being used by the Japanese Customs to record imports of bear gall bladders (Song, in lit., 1988). The following table gives an idea about the volume of bear gall bladders of Indian origin reported to reach the markets in Japan as revealed by the Customs statistics of Japan.

Japan's Import of Bear Gall Bladders of Indian Origin

Year	Quantity	Value in Yen
1978	310 kg	174,086
1979	169 kg	88,003
1980	150 kg	51,731
1981	71 kg	19,794
1982	81 kg	20,669
1983	40 kg	8,960
1984	10 kg	2,201
1985	50 kg	11,018
1986	50 kg	8,260
1987	50 kg	7,029
1988	10 kg (until Feb.)	1,264
Total	681 kg	

All this trade is illegal as the export of gall bladders of bears from India is banned. According to the Japanese Government, bear gall bladders of India origin are re-exported from Singapore and Hong Kong. The invoices indicate that these gall baldders are of the sloth bear (Melursus ursinus) and importers also declare them as such (Kawashima, in lit., 1988). Since Japan ratified CITES in November 1980, a total of 365 kg of bear gall bladders of Indian origin have been imported by Japan between February 1981 to January 1988 which is equivalent to 4,800 bears taking the average weight of the bear gall bladder at 75 grams. It is difficult to believe that all of this trade actually represent the sloth bear. Since sloth bear is not covered under CITES and it is not possible to distinguish gall bladders obtained from various species of bears, the traders seem to be taking advantage of this by declaring the species as sloth bear (Melursus ursinus) to circumvent the provisions of CITES (Song, in lit., 1988).

Nepal: The customs statistics of Japan also indicate the following imports of bear gall bladders of Nepalese origin, also feared to be illegal:

1978	658 kg
1979	139 kg
1980	340 kg
1981	-
1982	-
1983	-
1984	10 kg
1985	-
1986	-
1987	-

Although the Japanese Customs statistics do not reveal any import of bear gall bladders from Nepal since 1985, it can be suspected that some part of the bear gall bladders allegedly reaching Japan from India might have originated in Nepal.

Bangladesh: There is no record or document on export of sloth bears from Bangladesh. There is not evidence of illegal trade or export in respect of sloth bears in Bangladesh (Rahman, in lit., 1988).

Sri Lanka: Export of any bear or any part of any bear from Sri Lanka is restricted by the ordinances for purposes of promotion of scientific knowledge, etc. Nevertheless, illegal exportation of a small number of bear skins annually from Sri Lanka is not ruled out (Madawela, in lit., 1988).

34. Potential Trade Threats: Most of the international trade in sloth bears from the countries of origin is illegal. Moreover, almost the entire trade is in form of gall bladders which implies killings of sloth bears. According to the estimates of TRAFFIC (Japan), the Japanese import of bear gall bladders from India between February 1981 and January 1988 has accounted for the decimation of about 4,800 bears over 7 years, that is to say, over 650 bears per year. Actual numbers of sloth bears being killed for trade may not be so large. But considering the fact that there are only about 5,000 sloth bears in India and another 1,500-2,000 sloth bears in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, it can be seen that the international trade in bear gall bladders at the present rate is capable of wiping out the entire population of sloth bears in the very near future. Threat to the sloth bear (Melursus ursinus) on account of international trade is, therefore, evident.

4. Protection Status

41. National:

India: The sloth bear is included in Schedule-II (Part-II) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and, therefore, live specimens as well as their derivatives can not be trade inside India. Hunting permits for sloth bears are not being issued in India. Also, export from India of sloth bears and the products obtained therefrom is prohibited.

A large number of sanctuaries and national parks in India provide protection to sloth bears and other wild animals. Three wildlife sanctuaries in Gujrat viz., Ratanmahal (55.65 sq km) Shool panesh war (1508.72 sq km) and Jessor (180.66 sq km) have specifically been established for sloth bears.

Bangladesh: The sloth bear is included in the third Schedule of the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) Amendment Act 1974 and so it can not be hunted, killed or captured (Rahman, in lit., 1988).

Sri Lanka: The Ceylon sloth bear is provided with special protection status under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance. Is is included in Schedule IV of the Ordinance as an animal which shall not be shot or killed except on special licence issued by the Director of the Department of Wildlife Conservation. However, all sport hunting has been banned in Sri Lanka since 1956 and no such licence is being issued. Export of any bear or any part of any bear is restricted by the Ordinance for purpose of promotion of scientific knowledge, etc. Main bear populations are now confined in the few national reserves, sanctuaries and reserved forests (Madawela, in lit., 1988).

Nepal: Legal status of the sloth bear in Nepal is not known but Chitawan National Park and other wildlife reserves provide protection to this species.

42. International: The sloth bear has been included in Appendix III of CITES with effect from 21 September 1988 on a proposal from India.

43. Additional Protection Needs: TRAFFIC (Japan) has estimated that India and Nepal and possibly other countries of the sub-continent have lost over 5,000 bears during the last few years to meet the demand of gall bladders in the markets of Japan. Hong Kong and Singapore have been reported to be the intermediaries for the trade. Japan has expressed its helplessness to control trade in the sloth bear (Melursus ursinus) which did not exist even in Appendix II prior to September 1988 (Kawashima, in lit., 1988). Considering the rather small population of sloth bears throughout its range, it is imperative that it should be provided protection against the onslought of commercial international trade by including it in Appendix I of CITES.

There is yet another reason to justify the inclusion of this species in Appendix I of CITES. According to the information received from TRAFFIC (Japan) and the Japanese Government, gall bladders of Selenarctos thibetanus or Helarctos malayanus which are already in Appendix I of CITES are being passed off by unscrupulous traders as gall bladders of Melursus ursinus (a non-CITES species) in order to circumvent the provisions of CITES because it is not possible to distinguish gall bladders obtained from different species of bears. Hence, inclusion of the sloth bear (Melursus ursinus) in Appendix I of CITES is necessary not only to provide protection to this species but also to other endangered species of bears covered under CITES.

5. Information on Similar Species

There are two known subspecies of sloth bears viz. Melursus ursinus ursinus found in India, Nepal and Bangladesh and Melurus ursinus inornatus found in Sri Lanka. Three other species of bears are found in the sub-continent:

i) Himalayan brown bear, Ursus arctos isabellinus Horsefield.
ii) Black bear, Selenarctos thibetanus (G. Cuvier)
iii) Malayan sun bear, Helarctos malayanus (Raffles)

All the three species are already covered under Appendix I of CITES. Live specimens of various species of bears can be distinguished easily. The sloth bear can be distinguished by its elongated muzzle and lower lip, long unkept hair and breast patch and usually the muzzle and the tips of the feet are dirty white or yellowish. The claws always longer on the forefeet, are ivory white (Dharamkumar Sinhji, 1952).

Identification sheet No. A-112.002.003.001 is available for the sloth bear.

However, gall bladders and other products obtained from various species of bears may not be distinguished easily.

6. Comments from Countries of Origin

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have supported the proposal and their comments have been incorporated at appropriate places in the text of this proposal. No comments have been received from Nepal. Though Pakistan does not have sloth bears, it has also supported the proposal as it might help in the conservation of other species of bears as well (Rao, in lit., 1988). The Federal Republic of Germany has also offered to support the Indian proposal (Klos, in lit., 1988).

7. Additional Remarks

Compared with North American bears, sloth bears have an extremely low reproductive rate. The small litter size (average 1.5 cubs), the long period of time cubs spend with their mothers (until their second year or even later) and the delay in sexual maturity (sixth year or later) contributes to the low reproductive rate. This make them extremely vulnerable to the pressures of hunting and environmental manipulation. The population of the sloth bear is not only threatened in its distribution range, but also in zoological gardens. There is not enough breeding success to maintain the present population (Rahu, 1988).

The proposal is made under Article II(1) of the Convention.

8. References

Anon., 1985. Wild India. Colling. London.

Anon., 1988. Red list of threatened animals. I.U.C.N., Morges, Switzerland.

Blanford, W.T., 1888-91. The Fauna of British India, Mammalia, London.