

## **Wildlife Trader Sentenced to Four Years in Prison**

*Rajender Joshi, a wildlife trader belonging to Jalpaiguri district along Indo-Bhutan border in West Bengal, was today sentenced to four years in prison along with a fine of 10,000 rupees. Joshi, son-in-law of the notorious Ratiram Sharma, was accused of possessing and trading in wildlife articles.*

New Delhi, Delhi, March 29, 2008 /[India PRwire](http://www.indiaprwire.com)/ -- Rajender Joshi, a wildlife trader belonging to Jalpaiguri district along Indo-Bhutan border in West Bengal, was today sentenced to four years in prison along with a fine of 10,000 rupees. Joshi, son-in-law of the notorious Ratiram Sharma, was accused of possessing and trading in wildlife articles.

Joshi was arrested from his residence in Jaigaon on August 9, 2006 in a raid conducted by a team of forest and police officials led by Suranjan Sarkar, Range Officer, Kodal Basti Range under the supervision of Utpal Kumar Nag, Assistant DFO, Coochbehar Division. Ivory including a circular section of the tusk and a hog deer skin was recovered from his possession.

final arguments in the case started on February 13 and were led by Saurabh Sharma, Advocate of the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), who was appointed as Additional Prosecutor by the State Government to argue the case on behalf of the forest department. He was assisted by Samir Majumdar, Additional Public Prosecutor, Alipurduar.

“There were five prosecution witnesses and six defence witnesses in this case which was hotly contested. Finally, justice has been delivered in a relatively short time with indispensable support from Dr PCBhutia (CF), MC Biswas (DFO, Coochbehar) and WTI,” said Sharma, following the judgement.

“Punishment to wildlife traders and that too in such a short time increases the faith of the common man on the judicial system of the country,” said Nag, after the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate of Alipurduar, West Bengal, Nirvan Kheshang, handed out the sentence.

The accused reportedly functioned from his residence in Jaigaon, an important transit point in the wildlife trade route from India to south-east Asian countries. During interrogation, he had revealed that wildlife articles were brought in from Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Haryana and the north-eastern states and taken to the customers via Bhutan and Nepal with Jaigaon and Siliguri being the respective transit points. He had also revealed that the circular section of tusk seized from his possession was mainly used a sample for the customers in China, Singapore and Thailand.

This is the third wildlife crime case involving Schedule I species in three consecutive years where WTI assisted the West Bengal forest department in successful conviction of the accused. In November 2006, Ratiram Sharma, a notorious wildlife trader and Joshi's father-in-law, was convicted and sentenced to five years RI. Similarly in March 2007, Ganesh Oraon and Nando Kumar Ghosh were sentenced to four years RI after being arrested a few months earlier with a rhino horn, two swamp deer skins and several pieces of elephant tusk.

### **Notes to Editor**

Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) is a not-for-profit Charity organization in India. The organization works across the country in the field of wildlife conservation, Rescue, Rehabilitation, Enforcement assistance etc.. to ensure a better future for the Wildlife in India.

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