

MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY, HELD UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH, HON'BLE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS ON THE 1ST OF MARCH, 2011 IN THE CONFERENCE HALL OF THE NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY, NEW DELHI

The sixth meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority was held under the Chairmanship of Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister for Environment and Forests on the 1st of March, 2011 in the Conference Hall of the NTCA, New Delhi. The list of participants is at **Annexure-I**.

The Chairman welcomed the participants and the deliberations commenced with a condolence resolution on the sad demise of Shri Fateh Singh Rathore, ex-Director, Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. Details of agenda wise deliberations are as below:

Agenda Item No. 1

Confirmation of minutes of the fifth meeting and observations received from Members

The minutes of the fifth meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) were confirmed.

Agenda Item No. 2

Action taken on the decision of the fifth meeting, recent updates and proposed expansion of the NTCA, presentation by the APCCF & MS (NTCA)

The NTCA took note on the action taken on the decisions made during the 5th meeting of the NTCA, besides the update on other initiatives.

- (1) The Chairman emphasized that the tiger translocation protocol, once approved, should be strictly adhered to, so as to ensure that there is no dissent on the same. The MS (NTCA) highlighted the process / consultations done in finalizing the said protocol. Dr. Aparajita Datta, Member (NTCA) stated that the observations on the target animals made by her and another independent Member in the context of Ranthambhore have not been followed. Dr. K. Ullas Karanth, Member (NTCA) highlighted the fact that under the wild conditions, it would be difficult to pinpoint a particular target animal for translocation and hence a thumb rule would be better in such

- situations. Dr. Y.V. Jhala, Scientist, WII expressed similar views, stating that the same has been incorporated in the translocation protocol. The Chairman directed for sharing the said protocol with all the Members. The MS (NTCA) informed that the same has also been placed in the official website of NTCA / Project Tiger.
- (2) It was decided that since Shri Santosh Bagrodia was no longer a Member of the NTCA, Dr. Jyoti Mirdha may undertake the visit to Ranthambhore for an appraisal of the ongoing village relocation.
 - (3) On the issue of tiger monitoring protocol, it was decided that 'M-STrIPES' should be extended to Sariska Tiger Reserve as well. Dr. K. Ullas Karanth stated that the monitoring protocol should be adapted to our field situations.
 - (4) Dr. Jyoti Mirdha expressed concern on the fate of an adult tiger caught from the Corbett landscape which has been housed in a small enclosure at the Nainital Zoo. The MS (NTCA) provided an update on the factual status relating to the capture of the said tiger. The Chairman directed that the said tiger should be provided to Madhya Pradesh for re-introduction in the wild after discussion with the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State.
 - (5) In response to another intervention from Dr. Jyoti Mirdha, the MS (NTCA) explained the factual position relating to the use of baits for luring tigers to prevent man-tiger conflicts, based on his recent visit to the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. The Chairman directed for providing a report in this regard to the Member.
 - (6) While ratifying the buffer areas pertaining to 20 tiger reserves (Annexure-2 of the Agenda), Dr. K. Ullas Karanth desired that the buffer areas as notified by the States should be delineated on a map. The Chairman directed for the needful.
 - (7) Dr. Jyoti Mirdha stated that the update on tiger deaths should also include details regarding tigers eliminated as 'man-eaters'.
 - (8) Dr. Urmila Pingle, Member (NTCA) expressed concern for the high rate of tiger mortality. In response to a query from the Chairman, Dr. K. Ullas Karanth stated that on an average, the mortality rate is around 15% amongst wild tigers, which have a high turnover. The Chairman desired that a table indicating the confirmed 'tiger births' should also be included in the update alongwith mortality.

- (9) Shri P.K. Sen, Member (NTCA) did not favour the creation of new reserves like Nagzira-Navegaon and Bor. The MS (NTCA) stated that it was crucial to save the habitat under Project Tiger, to prevent their diversion for other non-forestry uses which would harm the corridor value. Further, it was also articulated that several areas like the Sanjay-Dubri Tiger Reserve may not hold a very high population of tiger but have a crucial 'stepping stone' value and hence such areas need protection under Project Tiger. Dr. Y.V. Jhala highlighted that the 'Guru Ghasidas' area in Chhattisgarh should also be brought under Project Tiger. Dr. K. Ullas Karanth desired to put in place an appropriate filtering process before declaring tiger reserves. The Chairman directed for further refining the guidelines relating to declaration of new tiger reserves.
- (10) Dr. Urmila Pingle expressed concerns regarding the violation of FRA 2006 [Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006] in areas like BRT Tiger Reserve, Sunabeda, Mudumalai, Melghat and Sariska. The Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka informed that no relocation of people has been undertaken in the BRT Wildlife Sanctuary. The Member was also informed that the Sunabeda Wildlife Sanctuary is not a tiger reserve. The ADG (Wildlife) informed the Members regarding a forthcoming meeting convened on the 4th of March, 2011 to discuss the compatibility of village relocation from protected areas vis-à-vis the FR Act. The Chairman informed that there is no forced relocation of people from protected area. Dr. K. Ullas Karanth stated that if people residing in protected areas voluntarily agreed for relocation, the same should not be stopped. The representative from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs desired that a common platform between the said Ministry and the MoEF is required for dealing with issues relating to individual and community rights.

Agenda item No. 3

(a) Approval of budget expenditure / schedules for the year 2009-10 and schedules of already approved budget expenditure for the year 2008-09.

(b) Approval of funding support from Grants-in-aid to NTCA

The NTCA approved the above agenda items as proposed in the Agenda notes.

Agenda item No. 4

Agenda items proposed by Shri Valmik Thapar, Member, NTCA

The agenda item was not taken up for discussion since the Member could not participate in the meeting.

Agenda item No. 5

Agenda items proposed by Dr. K. Ullas Karanth, Member, NTCA

Dr. K. Ullas Karanth, Member (NTCA) highlighted the need for rigorous monitoring of tiger source populations in tiger reserves and in areas which are not notified as tiger reserves. He also flagged the issue of more allocation of funds towards voluntarily relocation of people from reserves like Nagarahole. The importance of declaring Kudremukh National Park as a Tiger Reserve was also highlighted by the Member.

The Chairman informed that in-principle approval has already been accorded to the State for declaring Kudremukh as a Tiger Reserve, while soliciting a proposal under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The MS (NTCA) highlighted the steps taken for involving expertise outside the system in tiger monitoring. The Chairman directed for finalizing the phase-IV monitoring in consultation with Dr. K. Ullas Karanth, WII and other experts.

Agenda item No. 6

Agenda items proposed by Dr. Urmila Pingle, Member, NTCA

The Member reiterated her concerns regarding the violation of FRA, while relocating people from tiger reserves. She also highlighted the need for providing benefits from eco-tourism to local people. The Chairman directed for bringing out a status report on village relocation from tiger reserves. The MS (NTCA) stated that the views of the Member on eco-tourism would be considered by the Committee constituted for evolving the eco-tourism guidelines. The following suggestions were also received:

1. Placing the detail protocol followed for declaring a critical tiger habitat in the NTCA website.
2. Including social scientist in the committees constituted for monitoring village relocation, besides placing the details of the process on the NTCA website.
3. A compliance report should be given by the State Government relating to each tiger reserve regarding recognition and

determination of rights during relocation as prescribed under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, for tracking statutory compliance to avoid violations.

Agenda item No. 7

Agenda items proposed by Dr. Prakash Murlidhar Amte, Member, NTCA

The agenda item was not taken up for discussion since the Member could not participate in the meeting.

Agenda item No. 8

Agenda items proposed by Dr. Aparajita Datta, Member, NTCA

The Member desired to know the status on the implementation of recommendations made by independent Committees in the context of nine problematic reserves. Further, she also expressed concern on several issues relating to the Namdapha Tiger Reserve, creation and functioning of Tiger Foundations and providing updated information in the public domain. The MS (NTCA) apprised the Member on the letters sent at the level of the Chairman to the respective Chief Ministers for needful action on the recommendations made by the independent teams regarding specific tiger reserves. He also stated that the Member has been actively involved in the finalization of the Tiger Conservation Plan of Namdapha Tiger Reserve, and related issues. The Chairman directed for convening a separate meeting with the State officials from Arunachal Pradesh alongwith the Member for addressing the issues.

The Member also desired that the temporary staff / labourers working in Namdapha should be provided special status with enhanced payment. The MS (NTCA) informed that under Project Tiger, States were provided central assistance for wages, which is disbursed by them as per their prevailing wage rates. The Secretary (E&F) desired that the issue needs close examination.

The Member also wanted to expedite the NOC from NTCA regarding the proposal for translocating pygmy hog from the Manas Tiger Reserve for their breeding which is already ongoing in a facility in collaboration with an NGO, besides updating the official website of Project Tiger/NTCA. The MS (NTCA) apprised the Authority for needful action in this regard.

Agenda item No. 9

Approval of the Tiger Conservation Plans of Pakke, Namdapha and Dampa Tiger Reserves

This agenda item was not taken up for discussion since the Tiger Conservation Plans of the above Reserves were not finalized by the specially constituted Committee.

Agenda Item No. 10

Any other item with the permission of the Chair

The Secretary (E&F) highlighted the fact that the benefit of tiger conservation must accrue to the local people. He emphasized that it was essential to engage the local people as 'protectors' by providing good incentives linked to tiger status, and a pilot initiative in this regard should be undertaken.

The Chairman wrapped up the discussion as below, while directing for follow up action on decisions taken against various agenda items:

- (1) All NTCA Members (including independent experts involved in crack teams) should give a declaration for not having any financial or other interest relating to tiger / wildlife, which may affect his / her functioning as a Member of the NTCA.
- (2) Sub-committees of NTCA Members should be constituted on different issues for frequent meetings to resolve the same.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair and participants.
