



**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL TIGER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY, HELD UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SMT. JAYANTHI NATARAJAN, HON'BLE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS, ON THE 12<sup>TH</sup> OF OCTOBER, 2012 IN ROOM NO. 403, MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS, PARYAVARAN BHAWAN, NEW DELHI**

The eighth meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was held under the Chairmanship of Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister for Environment and Forests on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, 2012 in Room No. 403, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi. The list of participants is at **Annexure-I**.

The Member Secretary, NTCA welcomed the Hon'ble Chairperson and other members of the Authority, while highlighting the agenda items. He requested the Chairperson for her introductory remarks to initiate the deliberations.

The Chairperson welcomed the members and initiated the deliberations. It was stated that the meeting has been called at a short notice for apprising the NTCA regarding the comprehensive set of guidelines under section 38O 1(c) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for 'Project Tiger and Tourism in Tiger Reserves', which has been submitted to the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in an ongoing Public Interest Litigation. While recalling the interim order of the Hon'ble Apex Court for notifying the said guidelines before 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2012, the Chairperson solicited the approval of the Authority on the same, which has been listed as an Agenda Item No. 2.

The Chairperson congratulated the NTCA for their ongoing good work and innovation, while recalling her recent visit to the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve. The Members were informed that a grant of Rs. 1 crore is being provided to Kaziranga for boat procurement (4 speed boats and 5 country boats) to address the flood related problems, besides providing support under Project Tiger for a 24X7 'e-surveillance' on the lines of the initiatives taken in Corbett Tiger Reserve. Further, the said reserve would also be supported under Project Tiger for taking up a pilot initiative to use small, unmanned aircraft towards surveillance to step up protection, besides addressing livelihood and human-wildlife interface issues in the peripheral / buffer areas of the tiger reserve.

The Chairperson also apprised the Authority regarding the recent review of Phase-IV tiger reserve level monitoring done with the Field Directors of Tiger Reserves, while expressing her appreciation for the initiatives taken by Field Directors. The recent approval of the competent authority on amendments to the



Wildlife (Protection) Act for strengthening the CITES implementation, besides incorporating amendments for consultation with Panchayati Raj Institutions.

The Chairperson stated that the meeting has been convened at a short notice to comply with the order of the Hon'ble Apex Court, and in the near future the Authority would meet again for a longer duration, preferably in a tiger reserve.

This was followed by an introduction of the newly appointed non-official experts / members and discussion on the agenda items as detailed below:

### **Agenda Item No. 1**

#### **Confirmation of minutes of the seventh meeting of the NTCA**

The Member Secretary (NTCA) apprised the members on the action taken on the decisions taken in the seventh meeting of the NTCA. The Authority was informed that the Ministry of Finance has not accorded approval for procurement of vehicles as well as creation of posts for Multi Tasking Staff as approved by the NTCA. The progress made on the creation of a national repository of tiger camera trap photo database and standardizing its protocol was also apprised, besides the central assistance provided under Project Tiger for village relocation from the core / critical tiger habitat of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (Keladevi area).

Shri Brijendra Singh, Member, NTCA stated that there has been a downsizing of budgetary allocation for Project Tiger, while highlighting the need for enhanced funding support. The Secretary, Environment and Forests informed that there has been no curtailment of budgetary allocation, but the available allocation to the Ministry has been proportionately allocated. Further, savings within the Ministry amounting to around Rs. 94 crores would be made available for tiger conservation.

*The NTCA confirmed the minutes of its seventh meeting.*

### **Agenda Item No. 2**

#### **Appraisal / approval of Comprehensive Guidelines under section 380 (c) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for Project Tiger and Tourism in Tiger Reserves**

The MS (NTCA) made a presentation on the comprehensive guidelines under section 380 1(c) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for Project Tiger and Tourism in Tiger Reserves, while highlighting its salient features:



- Earmarking a tourism zone within core area (maximum 20% but not exceeding the present usage)
- Preparation of tourism plan as part of TCP by States
- Computation of carrying capacity (reserve wise)
- Intervention for inflating animal abundance in tourism areas prohibited
- Provision for constituting Local Advisory Committee by States
- Preparation of State level tourism / ecotourism strategy and review by Steering Committee in the State (within one year)
- Recycling of gate receipts
- No new tourism infrastructure in core and phasing out of existing ones in a time frame to be decided by LAC
- Monitoring ecologically sensitive areas around TRs
- Giving priority to forest dwellers in ecotourism
- Tourism plan should include temple tourism etc. in TRs
- Identifying zone of influence by LAC to ensure environmental friendly norms
- Buffer area to be fostered for ecotourism to benefit local people
- Tourism should be under the overall control of TCF

#### Notable Points:

- Use of only 20% core area for tourism (national average of ongoing tourism in most visited TRs = 20%, with no deleterious effect on tiger density as per empirical data)
- 'Inviolate' interpreted for the core areas to mean : that which does not violate tiger conservation, such activities, strictly regulated still leaving the core area 'inviolate' in the context of tiger biology
- Recycling of gate receipts
- Contributions from lodge owners to benefit conservation and local people (slab structure suggested : Rs. 500-3000 per room per month during the season)
- Temple boards to share revenue with local communities through Gram Sabha (minimum 10% of gross revenue)
- State to prepare tourism plan, compute carrying capacity, create LAC, prepare its strategy, conduct review by Steering Committee
- More delegation to States with an oversight by NTCA

Shri Brijendra Singh, Member, NTCA articulated on para 2.2.9 of the guidelines relating to tourism regarding phasing out of permanent tourist facilities within core/critical tiger habitat on a time frame to be decided by the LAC. The Secretary (E&F) informed that the phasing out pertains only to the tourism infrastructure and is not related to tourist visitation or official visits.



The Chief Wildlife Warden, Madhya Pradesh expressed concerns on some sections of the guidelines relating to tourism, while agreeing with the guidelines:

- (i) Levying of fee from private lodges would require legislation and hence the same can be collected at the entry gates.
- (ii) The LAC membership includes Gram Sabha which is a large elected body. It would be impractical to include the entire Gram Sabha members in the LAC.
- (iii) The limit on tourism in core areas restricting to present levels (but below 20% of the core area) would curb tourism in newly constituted reserves where tourism is yet to pick up.
- (iv) Members of Zilla Panchayat, Superintendent of Police and Pollution Control Board should be included in the LAC.
- (v) Many temples / religious places in tiger reserves are not under any Trust and in most of them entry is free, hence their contribution as envisaged in the guidelines would not be feasible to implement.
- (vi) Some mechanism for conflict resolution involving the NTCA is required.

The MS (NTCA) informed that relaxing the 20% area limit (vis-à-vis the total core/critical tiger habitat area) would not be possible as this is based on a national average in the context of most visited tiger reserves. The Chairperson intervened that the point raised by the Chief Wildlife Warden pertains to restricting tourism to existing levels in new tiger reserves where the same has not picked up. The MS (NTCA) clarified that such issues can be addressed in the reserve specific Tourism Plan forming part of the Tiger Conservation Plans, which also provides a mechanism to resolve conflicts and issues raised vis-à-vis the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

The Chief Wildlife Warden, Tamil Nadu expressed his agreement with the guidelines, while pointing out that the LAC should be permitted to be chaired by an equivalent official in States where Divisional Commissioner system is not in vogue. The Chairperson directed that an official equivalent to the Divisional Commissioner may be nominated by the State in this regard.

Shri P.K. Sen, Member, NTCA pointed out that it would be appropriate to nominate a senior official from the administration as Chairman of the LAC, to ensure implementation of the guidelines by agencies which are not within the purview of the Forest Department.

The Director, Ministry of Tribal Affairs stated that the issue of corridor connectivity does not fall within the purview of tourism guidelines and hence



should not be included in the same. This was not agreed to by most of the members, who pointed out that the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for the NTCA to address corridor related issues.

The Director, Ministry of Tribal Affairs further stated that the procedure followed for establishing 'critical wildlife habitat' should be adhered to for tiger reserves also. He also expressed his concern that no relocation of people living in core areas should be done without recognizing and settling their rights. Further, it was stated that the phrase 'consumptive use' has been included in the guidelines with an implicit meaning to differentiate tourist visitation from people residing in core areas who use the natural resources, which is contrary to the fact that the people have been coexisting with wild animals. The area requirement of 800-1200 sq. km. of inviolate space for tigers is also not met in case of smaller reserves.

The Chairperson informed that the rights of the forest dwellers would not be compromised at any cost, and relocation is a voluntary process and many States are demanding central assistance for the same. Hence, it would not be proper to presume that the guidelines would affect the rights of local people. Further, the involvement of local people and ensuring benefits to them, have been articulated amply in the guidelines.

The MS (NTCA) clarified that the core/critical tiger habitat is included only in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, and is different from the critical wildlife habitat as defined in the FRA. He also articulated on the scientific, empirical basis of arriving at 800-1200 sq.km. of inviolate space for a viable population of tiger. It was stated that in the context of tiger reserves, the identification of the core/critical tiger habitat is done on the basis of such scientific criteria as envisaged under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, while establishing them as inviolate entails due recognition of rights and their settlements as required under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and FRA. It was also informed that no guideline can ever override an Act, and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs would be appropriately assured again in this regard.

Shri Brijendra Singh, Member, NTCA stated that many States are demanding allocation for voluntary relocation.

The Chairperson reiterated the rights of the forest dwellers would not be affected at any cost and this would be ensured. She also informed that the phrase 'non-consumptive' has been used in the guidelines only in the context of tourism related activities.

The Joint Secretary, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes articulated on the relocation / rehabilitation package with options. He stated that land is an asset for



the tribal society, and hence should be invariably provided as compensation against land accrued for them. Further, forest dwellers should not be displaced without settlement of their rights and livelihood options for such people should also be assured after resettlement.

The Chairperson informed that the financial package provided as an option is for voluntary relocation of people who are willing to go on their own. Further, every effort has been done that the tourism happening in tiger reserves should benefit the community. Several members also echoed the views expressed by the Chairperson.

Shri J.T. Rajappa, Member, NTCA informed that being a member of a tribal community living close to a tiger reserve (Nagarahole), he is well aware of the benefits of village relocation from core areas of tiger reserves. Hence, more funding support should be provided for voluntary relocation of people from core areas, since such people are subjected to extreme hardship in a wildlife habitat. It was also stated that tourism should not be promoted in such areas.

The Chairperson informed that the tourism should be well regulated in such areas.

Shri A.P. Shibu, Member, NTCA stated that people living in core areas of tiger reserves are deprived of basic facilities while being subjected to man-wildlife conflicts. Therefore, more funds should be provided to tiger reserves for relocation of communities from core areas.

Most of the members appreciated and supported the interventions made by Shri J.T. Rajappa and Shri A.P. Shibu.

***The NTCA approved the comprehensive guidelines under section 380 1(c) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for Project Tiger and Tourism in Tiger Reserves.***

### **Agenda Item No. 3**

**Approval of budget / expenditure schedules for the year 2011-12 and revised schedule of 2010-11 (as suggested by CAG)**

***The NTCA approved and ratified the following:***

- ***Ratify / approve the form of financial statements together with balance sheet, income and expenditure account, receipts and payment statements as at Annexure-II for the year 2010-11.***



- *Ratify / approve the form of financial statements together with balance sheet, income and expenditure account, receipts and payment statements as at Annexure-III for the year 2011-12.*
- *Approve the allocation of Rs. 14.30 crore to the NTCA for the year 2010-11, and the expenditure incurred therein leaving an unutilized amount of Rs.7,25,73,818/-.*
- *Approve the allocation of Rs. 14.71 crores to the NTCA for the financial year 2011-12.*

Shri Brijendra Singh, Member, NTCA stated that the NTCA has done a good job in framing the comprehensive set of guidelines on Project Tiger and Tourism in Tiger Reserves.

The Chairperson wrapped up the discussion while thanking the members. She also reiterated that the Authority would meet for a longer duration preferably in a tiger reserve.

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

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## Annexure-I

### List of Participants

1. Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, Chairperson (NTCA) & MEF, Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi. (e-mail: mosefgoi@nic.in)
2. Dr. T. Chatterjee, Secretary (E&F), Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi. (e-mail: t.chatterjee@nic.in)
3. Dr. Rajesh Gopal, ADG (PT) & Member Secretary (NTCA), National Tiger Conservation Authority, Annexe No. 5, Bikaner House, Shahjahan Road, New Delhi. (e-mail: rajeshgopal8155@gmail.com)
4. Dr. P.K. Shukla, PCCF (WL) & CWLW, Madhya Pradesh, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Pragati Bhawan, Zone-I, MP Nagar, Bhopal (e-mail: pccfwl@mp.gov.in)
5. Shri R. Gunasekaran, IFS, PCCF / CWLW-I/c, Panagal Building, Saidapet, Chennai-600015, Tamil Nadu. (e-mail: gunasekarancf@gmail.com)
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7. Shri A.P. Shibu, Member, NTCA, Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad. (e-mail: shibuwnd@gmail.com, shibu256@yahoo.in)
8. Shri J.T. Rajappa, Member, NTCA, #8 Shettalh, Heenagodu Hobli, Hunsur Taluk, Mysore District, Karnataka.
9. Ms. Susan D. George, Director, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, Jeewan Prakash Building, K.G. Marg, New Delhi-1. (e-mail: sd.george@nic.in)
10. Dr. Shyam Agarwal, Secretary, National Commission for Scheduled Castes, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Lok Nayak Bhawan, Khan Market, New Delhi-110003. (e-mail: secretary-ncsc@nic.in)
11. Shri Anil Goswami, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001.
12. Shri Aditya Mishra, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, 'B' Wing, Lok Nayak Bhawan, Khan Market, New Delhi-110003. (e-mail: mishra0077@hotmail.com)
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