

**SUMMARY RECORD OF MEETING OF THE
FIELD DIRECTORS' OF TIGER RESERVES AND CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDENS' OF TIGER RANGE
STATES HELD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2018 AT NEW DELHI**

A meeting of the Field Directors' of tiger reserves and Chief Wildlife Wardens' of tiger range states was held under Chairmanship of the ADG (PT) and MS (NTCA) on November 19, 2018, in Tagore Hall of SCOPE Complex, Lodhi Road New Delhi. The meeting was attended by officials as per Annexure.

At the outset, the ADG (PT) and MS (NTCA) welcomed the participants and outlined the agenda for the day. Keeping in view prevailing circumstances in the country in context of tiger conservation, he emphasized the need to gear up to manage the challenges that lay ahead. In brief, he highlighted the following areas which require attention of the States;

1. Tiger Conservation Plans, submission and implementation thereof
2. Submission of documents to finalize pending tiger mortality cases
3. Submission of proposals for notification of eco sensitive zones around tiger reserves
4. Notification of Tiger Conservation Foundations in tiger reserves where it is yet to be created
5. Submission of remaining data in context of the All India Tiger Estimation 2018
6. Submission of APOs for tiger bearing areas outside tiger reserves through the source tiger reserves
7. Special mention of compliance of the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between the State, the Field Director and the NTCA was made

The ADG (PT) and MS (NTCA) discussed recent events which had tarnished the otherwise unblemished record of tiger conservation in the country. He stressed the need on giving importance to interface issues in an inclusive manner as there were significant number of stakeholders involved. He went on to introduce the Interface Agenda, and requested Dr. Rajesh Gopal, Secretary General, Global Tiger Forum, to outline a strategy for management of the same.

Dr. Rajesh Gopal, Secretary General GTF, highlighted the interface agenda and how it poses to be a major challenge facing wildlife managers in the future. He divided his presentation into three parts namely, (i) the reasons resulting in the aggravated interface, (ii) behavioural alterations in tigers as a result of this aggravation and the (iii) strategy to limit and mitigate adverse consequences of this aggravated interface.

In context of reasons for increased levels of human wildlife negative interactions, following points were deliberated upon;

1. Loss of productivity of forested ecosystems resulting in degradation in quality of habitat
2. Creation of Edge Forests due to anthropogenic interventions such as linear infrastructure
3. Right burdened forests which lead to higher number of interactions between humans and wildlife



4. Reduction in quality of domain expertise and fieldcraft which is compounded by insufficient capacity building of frontline forest personnel.
5. Disturbance in historical conduits resulting in negative interactions during dispersal of wildlife

In so far as behavioural changes are concerned, following atypical behaviour were described by Dr. Rajesh Gopal;

1. Operant Conditioning: Learned behaviour which occurs due to rewarding or punishing an animal
2. Habituation: Habituation is where an animal becomes steadily used to a stimulus or situation.
3. Classical Conditioning: This is a specific response elicited by an animal to a repeated stimulus which is exemplified by the famous Pavlovian experiment in dogs
4. Imprinting: Imprinting is the tendency of young animals to follow the first moving object they see.

Dr. Gopal went on to implicate the above behaviour in the recent episode in Yavatmal in Maharashtra wherein, right burdened forests probably resulted in habituation of the tiger, resulting in loss of critical distance and fear of humans.

With regards to a strategy to mitigate interface issues the following line of action was suggested;

1. Land use mapping around source areas needs to be done at the earliest in order to identify stakeholders involved, besides the kind of corridors that are available for movement of wildlife. He broadly classified corridors as follows;

- i. Those that permit only movement
- ii. Those that permit movement as well as temporary residency
- iii. Those that permit movement, residency as well as breeding

As an example, Dr. Gopal highlighted the Atlas prepared by the NTCA-WII for the Eastern Vidarbha Landscape (EVL) in Maharashtra.

2. Once this landscape level mapping is completed, Tiger Reserves/Protected areas should be identified by the States which have necessary welfare factors for holding tigers in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure on Active Management of Tiger Populations issued by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.

3. At the local level, an Interface Cell should be instituted at the Tiger Reserve/Protected Area level with linkage at the State level. This Interface Cell, headed by the TR/PA manager should address the interface problem at the following three levels;

- i. Frontline Personnel: Aggressive capacity building of a team in wildlife behaviour, immobilizing protocols, weapons training, driving and legal requirements
- ii. Village level stewardship: The village communities should be actively engaged through the time tested micro planning exercise which should stress on creation of



spearhead teams which are trained and guided by the Interface Cell envisaged. These spearhead teams should maintain a village level wildlife/tiger register to report wildlife movement in an area so that pre-emptive action can be taken by authorities concerned. The microplan should also generate a crop cover plan/NTFP calendar in order to ascertain temporal trends in conflict so that requisite action can be taken. The microplan should also explore possibilities of financing through Climate Funds/CAMPA so that action such as Conservation Easements can be affected wherein compensation can be provided at incentivized rates for farmers who are willing to leave their land fallow to facilitate wildlife dispersal during sensitive periods.

iii. Panchayat level: Wildlife/Tiger Champions should be identified in consultation with the local Government. Centrality of Panchayati Raj Institutions should be maintained in formulating the suggested microplans and benefits through a *quid-pro-quo* basis be ensured by exploring innovative financial mechanisms.

Following Dr. Rajesh Gopal's presentation, an update on the fourth cycle of the All India Tiger Estimation was provided by the AIGF (NTCA) and Dr. Y.V. Jhala from the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun. Timelines were reiterated and States were advised to strictly adhere to these for timely completion. It was highlighted that barring a few regions in Karnataka, there was adequate sampling vis-a-vis previous efforts. The AIGF (NTCA), Regional Office Bengaluru was requested to get the deficient areas completed at the earliest.

This was followed by a presentation on management of human wildlife conflict in the Pilibhit landscape by the Field Director, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve. As the tiger reserve received assistance from conservation partner, Wildlife Trust of India, Shri Samir Sinha, from the organization gave a presentation on the analysis of conflict in and around the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve with a special reference to People Response Teams (PRTs) which assisted in management.

This was followed by a case study by the Field Director, Periyar Tiger Reserve on Operational Guidelines for effectively utilizing the Tiger Conservation Foundation, as per Section 38 X of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The same were circulated to all present.

The Field Director, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve gave a presentation on use of the Patrol Module of the Monitoring System for Tigers, Intensive Protection and Ecological Status (M-STrIPES) which the NTCA has been insisting upon. The Field Director, Kanha Tiger Reserve also chipped in with his experiences of using the same. All Field Directors were reminded to implement the same in their jurisdiction to ensure greater accountability.

The DIG (NTCA) gave a presentation on issues pending at the State/Tiger Reserve level and requested compliance at the earliest. He briefed on the output-outcome format as desired by the NITI Aayog and requested abidance for the same.

Open house discussions were followed by the following points in summation;

1. Strict submission and adherence to the Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding



2. Submit pending data in context of the All India Tiger Estimation as per timelines decided. Further, it was advised that under no circumstance should any conversation be started with the media on the Estimation as well as MEETR (Management Effectiveness Evaluation of Tiger Reserves) process or results, as it may result in an embarrassing situation at a later date
3. Abstract of Annual report of the tiger reserve should be submitted along with the APO to apprise the IFD. Further, Phase IV records and crime data as per format provided earlier should be kept in readiness. It was advised to submit relevant documents for release of second instalment besides being prepared to submit APO for the next financial year. A checklist for submission of the same shall be prepared by the AIG, NTCA, Regional Office, Bengaluru
4. Patrol module of M-STripes should be implemented in right earnest at the immediate. Monthly reports of the same should be made available to the NTCA.
5. Monthly reports are being received only from a few tiger reserves, these should be strictly submitted by all reserves. The NTCA shall re-circulate a list of these reports as there are several new incumbents
6. Tiger deaths should be communicated to the NTCA on receipt at the immediate besides submitting final reports to finalize and close cases. Also, human deaths due to tigers should also be reported on receipt at the earliest
7. Monitoring reports of developmental projects should be submitted quarterly vis-a-vis suggestions of the NTCA and the NBWL to ensure that tiger conservation in adjoining landscapes is not hampered
8. Tiger Reserves should strictly adhere to Standard Operating Procedures of the NTCA and also capacity build their adjoining territorial personnel regarding them. It was decided that due to frequent change in incumbents of tiger reserves as well as for addressing the interface agenda, short capsule courses at regular intervals can be explored by the NTCA in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, at periodic intervals. The States were also advised to translate the SOPs in the vernacular for benefit field level functionaries
9. Special courses, especially with respect to weapon training and handling should be conducted by the States in collaboration with relevant authorities concerned.
10. In order to address certain grey areas with respect to the SOP to deal with emergency arising out of tigers straying in human dominated landscapes, it was decided that the NTCA shall explore constituting a committee to address the same.
11. With regard to the Interface Agenda, it was decided that the NTCA shall frame a set of guidelines based on the strategy outlined by the Secretary General, GTF in the meeting.
12. The States were advised to expeditiously respond to factual status, updates and progress in matters which are solicited from time to time to apprise the Chairman NTCA

The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks by the Chair.

