

**Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) held on 04.09.2017 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Harshvardhan, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, New Delhi in Mahanadi Conference Hall, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jorbagh Road, New Delhi**

The 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was held on 04.09.2017 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Harshvardhan, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India in Mahanadi Conference Hall, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jorbagh Road, New Delhi.

The list of participants are annexed as **Annexure-I**.

The Hon'ble MEF&CC and Chairperson, NTCA welcomed members and asked the Additional Director General (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary, NTCA to initiate proceedings.

The Additional Director General (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary, NTCA made a presentation and gave an overview of different aspects of tiger conservation in India, *inter alia* including initiatives taken by the NTCA/Govt. of India. He further initiated the deliberations on agenda items as follows:

**Agenda Item No 1**

**Confirmation of minutes of thirteenth meeting**

The Chairperson solicited comments on minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NTCA. In an objection raised by representative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs regarding diversion of TSP funds for relocation of non-tribal forest dwellers, it was informed that in case of Satpura Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, TSP funds were utilised for relocation of tribals and no other case has been reported from any other tiger reserve in the country.

The committee took note of the above observation and confirmed minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NTCA held on 19.09.2017.

**Agenda Item No 2**

**Action taken on minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NTCA**

The Additional Director General (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary, NTCA briefed the committee about the following mentioned points:

- a. Despite pursuance at all levels, the erstwhile funding pattern of 100% central assistance for village relocation, Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) and anti-poaching activities was not concurred by the Finance Ministry, Govt of India.
- b. Service tax and Income tax on Tiger Conservation Foundations has to be re-visited in light of implementation of GST.
- c. Fabrication of technology used for tiger conservation has been initiated by development of customized drones/UAV in collaboration with WII, Dehradun.

- d. Based on CAITS, an elaborate process of identifying gaps in management of tiger bearing areas outside Tiger Reserves, has been initiated. This would facilitate funding support to potential tiger bearing areas outside Tiger Reserves. For inter-state co-ordination amongst neighbouring tiger States, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been circulated to all tiger range States.
- e. The matter of Indo-Myanmar co-operation is under consideration of Govt. of Myanmar and bilateral engagements are being coordinated by the GTF. A meeting in this regard is proposed in the month of October, 2017.
- f. A proposal has been approved by the NTCA Technical Committee based on reports of Canine Distemper Virus from Pilibhit, Panna and Corbett Tiger Reserves.
- g. A committee has been constituted to identify criteria for a rational scaling up of the existing rehabilitation package for voluntary village relocation.
- h. The Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun has been entrusted to formulate Landscape Management Plan for the Ken-Betwa river interlinking Project at the Panna Tiger Reserve and surrounding landscape.
- i. Assessment of carrying capacity of tigers in tiger reserves is being addressed through Tiger Conservation Plan of concerned tiger reserves.
- j. For providing restorative managerial interventions in respect of identified corridor areas, prescriptions are being incorporated in the conservation plan of the overarching and legally mandated Tiger Conservation Plan.

The NTCA took note of the matter.

### **Agenda Item No 3**

#### **Updates/Initiatives**

A presentation was made by the Additional Director General (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary, NTCA deliberating on technological advancements and initiatives such as Central assistance to the tiger States under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger, commencement of training of trainers for 4<sup>th</sup> round of Country level Assessment of tiger, prey and habitat, finalisation of 4<sup>th</sup> round of Management Effectiveness Evaluation in 2018 and completion of economic valuation work of 10 tiger reserves, updates on tiger deaths and steps taken to address poaching, scheduled bilateral meeting with tiger range countries of Cambodia and Myanmar, issuance of SOP to tiger states, 7 meetings of the NTCA Technical Committee, Workshops for capacity building of field personnel in collaboration with WII, fabrication of a trainer drone and commencing of use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle in 13 Tiger Reserves, a special training for computer technicians in context of M-STRIPEs platform, extension of Tiger Cell MoU till 2019, update on TCP, TCF and Constitution of State Level Steering Committee, Status regarding notification of core/buffer areas of tiger reserves, deployment of Special Tiger Protection Force, Security audit of Tiger reserve and celebration of Global Tiger Day etc.

The NTCA took note of the matter.

#### **Agenda Item No 4**

##### **Approval of budget/expenditure schedules for the year 2016-17**

The NTCA ratified the form of financial statements together with balance sheet, income and expenditure account, receipts and payment statement and approved the allocation and other receipts of Rs. 8,8152732.00 to NTCA for the year 2016-17 and expenditure incurred of Rs. 65872682.00 leaving an unutilised amount of Rs. 22280050.00. The Chairperson stressed for complete utilisation of allotted budget in future.

#### **Agenda Item No 5**

##### **Denotification of area from notified buffer of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (RTR) for ACC Limestone Mining at Lakheri as requested by Govt. of Rajasthan**

The ADG (PT) & MS (NTCA) initiated the deliberations.

It was brought to notice of members by the DGF&SS that as per decision taken in the 42<sup>nd</sup> meeting of Standing Committee of NBWL on dated 15.05.2017 to examine the technicalities of the proposal, a meeting was held on 01.06.2017 in which the PCCF (WL) and other forest officials of Rajasthan Government participated.

The officials from Rajasthan Government submitted that a portion of the buffer zone which included the ACC Cement mines was included by mistake within the buffer zone of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and therefore they have proposed to withdraw the same.

The matter was examined on merit based on technical considerations only. It was felt that the buffer zone is necessary for connecting Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve and Mukundra Tiger Reserve. At present, there is no tiger in Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve. However, this connectivity may allow tigers from Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve to Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve. The buffer zone has two ridges. The northern ridge is an undisturbed area and can serve as a corridor for tiger movement whereas the valley and the southern ridge are populated and disturbed. There are several villages in the valley and on the outer edge of southern ridge, the limestone quarry has been operating for quite sometime. It was felt that for tiger conservation, community involvement is essential since about 10-15 thousand people are working in the said mine, closure of which would severely impact their livelihood opportunities. It is in the interest of tiger conservation not to antagonise these people.

It was observed that on one hand it is highly unlikely that the southern ridge and valley would serve as a tiger corridor due to so many disturbances and on the other hand inclusion of the same in the buffer zone would severely impact the communities who are generally sympathetic and sensitive to tiger conservation. The northern boundary as such can serve as a corridor and if necessary could be further enriched.

The above matter was placed before the NTCA and deliberated upon. Some of the members wanted to examine whether the above step would set a precedence, but the committee was convinced that in this particular case, the above strategy is the best option available given the peculiar and special circumstances of the situation. This shall not be quoted as a precedence.

In view of the above, it was decided to denotify the said area from notified buffer subject to the outcome of decision of Hon'ble NGT in O.A. No. 431/2016, Babulal Jajoo Vs. Union of India and Others, besides other relevant orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in relevant cases from time to time in context of the matter.

The NTCA took note of the matter.

## **Agenda Item No 6**

### **Agenda items proposed by NTCA members**

The Hon'ble Minister, EF&CC suggested that people's participation and ownership for Project Tiger should be ensured through soliciting sponsorships of routine management intervention like water facilities through solar pumps. He also advised to explore the possibility to formulate SOP/Guidelines to deal with emergencies arising out of wild animal attacks on tourists. Shri Nagendra Singh, Hon'ble Member of Parliament opined that a special mechanism is required to be in place to cross check if the advisories or SoPs issued by the NTCA are adhered to or not.

Shri Sanjeeb Patjoshi, Joint Secretary to Govt. of India, MoPR observed that the forest dwellers should be exposed to activities of the NTCA so that they can be benefited to the maximum extent possible. He also suggested that Panchayati Raj Institutions be involved in the decision-making.

While addressing a question on satisfaction of functioning of the NTCA from the Hon'ble Chairperson, Shri T. Chaterjee, member NTCA lauded the efforts of NTCA and stated that each decision made in NTCA, is based on thorough deliberation at the tiger reserve, state and central levels; which result in robust outcomes. He also suggested that similar to the funding dispensation in the context of DRDA, a mechanism can be thought of for tiger reserve.

Sri Hemendra Kothari credited the NTCA and frontline forest staffs for effective protection measures for safeguarding tiger and wildlife and drew comparisons with the African scenario wherein protection is not as satisfactory. He also stressed the importance of tiger reserves *vis-à-vis* their role as catchment of our rivers, besides the need to augment voluntary village resettlement and anti-poaching operation.

Shri Ravi Singh, Member NTCA pointed out the issue of selection and posting of Field Directors of tiger reserves in consultation with the Centre/ NTCA for effective management of Tiger Reserves. He quoted the provisions laid down in Tripartite MoU in which it has been mentioned that motivated officers preferably wildlife trained, should be posted as Field Directors of Tiger Reserves.

Sri M. C. Malakar, Retd. PCCF(WL) & CWLW, Assam stated that the compensation paid to the owners of the cattle killed/lifted by tiger is not at all sufficient to elicit the required support of the neighbouring communities. So he proposed that the compensation should be at par with the market price of the kill. He also suggested that SOP should be prepared for proper authentication of the kills and the compensation also should be paid at the earliest. Further he stressed the need of constituting the Special Tiger Protection Force for the other Tiger Reserves also in Assam as has been done in case of Kaziranga TR. In response, he was informed that the amount of compensation to be paid against the kills can be decided by the respective states only.

Shri A. N. Jha, Secretary, MEFCC urged the need to finalise pending tiger mortality cases on priority as per SOP of the NTCA.

The NTCA took note of the matter.

### **Agenda Item No 7**

#### **Agenda item with the approval of the Chair**

Sh. Rajpal Singh Tanwar, Member sought to hold NTCA meeting twice in a year and to include a member from the people who actually live in and around the forest area of tiger reserves and it was decided to hold next meeting soon after next budget session in 2018 at some of the tiger reserve of India. He also sought to dovetail the voluntary relocation programmes with various schemes to make it more lucrative. He suggested that the policy should be framed to regulate use of camera traps which are currently being used by all and sundry to observe wildlife for vested interests, be it tourism or crime.

The DGF&SS said that the tiger is an iconic symbol and the best measure of the services it provides is witnessed in the country's water security. He also mentioned the convergence of various state and central level programmes with the voluntary village resettlement schemes to make it more attractive.

Sh. Raghav Chandra, Secretary, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, while appreciating voluntary relocation said that the package needs to be significantly enhanced to make core/critical tiger habitats inviolate while at the same time, exposing tribal communities to welfare schemes of the govt.

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

## ANNEXURE-I

### List of participants:

1. **Sh. A. N. Jha, Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.**
2. Sh. Nagendra Singh, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha).
3. Sh. Siddhanta Das, DG (Forest) & SS, MoEF&CC.
4. Dr. Debabrata Swain, ADG (PT) & MS (NTCA)
5. Sh. Soumitra Dasgupta, IG, Wildlife Division, MoEF&CC
6. Sh. Tishyarakshit Chatterjee, Director, Indian Institute of Public Administration.
7. Sh. Bijoy Kumar Patnaik, Retd. PCCF (WL) & CWLW, UP.
8. Sh. K. Biswal, Additional Secretary.
9. Sh. Punati Shridhar, PCCF, WL, Karnataka.
10. Sh. Bharat Jyoti, APCCF & CWLW, Bihar.
11. Sh. Sanjeeb Patjoshi, Joint Secretary to Govt. of India, MoPR
12. Sh. Hemendra Kothari, DSP, Black Rock & Wildlife Conservation (WCT)
13. Sh. Rajpal Singh Tanwar
14. Sh. Ravi Singh, Secy. General & CEO, WWF, India.
15. Sh. Mohan Chandra Malakar, Retd. PCCF (WL) & CWLW, Assam.
16. Sh. Raghav Chandra, Secretary, NCST.
17. Sh. Sanjay Kumar, DIG, NTCA
18. Sh. Nishant Verma, DIG, NTCA,
19. Dr. Vaibhav C. Mathur, AIG, NTCA
20. Dr. Raja Ram Singh, AIG, NTCA