

F. No. 2-7/1998 -PE (Vol.I)
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
Project Elephant Division

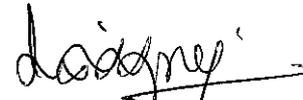
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road,
New Delhi-110003
Dated 11th January, 2019

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Sub: Proceedings of the 15th Meeting of the Steering Committee of Project Elephant held on 22/11/2018 at 14:00 hrs at Mahanadi Conference Hall, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi-reg.

The undersigned is enclosing herewith the approved proceedings of the 15th Steering Committee meeting of Project Elephant held on 22/11/2018 at 14:00 hrs at Mahanadi Conference Hall, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi. This issues with the approval of the Director General of Forests & Special Secretary, Environment, Forests & Climate Change.

Encls: As above



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Distribution:

1. All Members of Steering Committee of Project Elephant.
2. All Chief Wildlife Warden, PE States.
3. Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.
4. Director, Zoological Survey of India.
5. Director Botanical Survey of India.
6. Commissioner, Animal Husbandry, Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi.

Copy to:-

1. PS to Hon'ble Minister, EF&CC.
2. PS to Hon'ble Minister of State, EF&CC.
3. PPS to Secretary, MoEF&CC.
4. PPS to DGF&SS, MoEF&CC.
5. PPS to ADG(WL), MoEF&CC
6. IGF (WL), MoEF&CC.

**Proceedings of the 15th Meeting of the Steering Committee of
Project Elephant, held at 14:00 hrs on 22nd November, 2018 at
Mahanadi Conference Hall, New Delhi**

The 15th Meeting of the Steering Committee of Project Elephant was held at 14:00 hrs on 22nd November, 2018 at Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Shri Siddhanta Das, Director General of Forest & Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

List of participants is annexed. Steering Committee members also joined meeting from Dehradun, Guwahati, Bangalore and Chennai over video conferencing.

The DGF&SS welcomed all the participants to the meeting. He then directed the Member Secretary of the Steering Committee to take up the agenda items of the meeting for deliberations by the members of the Committee.

Agenda Item No. 1: Confirmation of the minutes of the 14th meeting of the Steering Committee:

The minutes of the 14th meeting of the Steering Committee held on 9th October, 2017 were confirmed and the Director Project Elephant presented a brief overview on the action taken on the decisions of the last meeting.

Agenda Item No. 2: Follow up Action on Decisions Taken in the 14th Meeting of the Steering Committee.

2.1: Human – elephant conflict management:

The Committee was informed that two regional level workshops for Southern India (from 11th to 12th January, 2018) and for North-East India (from 20th to 21st April, 2018 at Darjeeling, 2018) have been organized and the recommendations of the workshops are being acted upon. The third regional workshop for the Eastern and Central region is being planned in January/February, 2019.

The Committee was also informed that WII in collaboration with NTCA, NHAI and World Bank Group has come out with guidelines named “Eco friendly measures to mitigate impacts of linear infrastructure on wildlife” suggesting desired modifications in the designs of the linear infrastructures passing through wildlife rich areas. This is to ensure that the linear development agencies shall be encouraged to redesign their existing linear infrastructures through Protected Areas and wildlife habitat as per these guidelines of WII as part of the smart green infrastructure. The Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife in its

47th meeting held on 25.01.18 has recommended that linear infrastructure development project proposals being submitted to the Standing Committee of NBWL for wildlife clearances shall be accompanied with Animal Passage Plan prepared on the basis of WII guidelines and consultation with state CWLWs. The MoEF&CC vide its letter dated 13.07.18 has advised the states that no proposal of linear infrastructure project submitted to the State govt. by the user agency after 1st August 2018 should be forwarded to the Standing Committee of NBWL without Animal Passage Plan prepared in consultation with State CWLW and on the basis of guidelines named "Eco friendly measures to mitigate impacts of linear infrastructure on wildlife" of the Wildlife Institute of India.

The Committee noted the progress on the matter.

2.2: Illegal stock of ivory:

It was informed that MoEF&CC has agreed to have a tripartite agreement with Stop Ivory an organization based in Africa with expertise in establishing ivory inventory stockpiles in various countries in Africa and with WTI to create the inventory of ivory stock piles.

After discussion on the matter the Steering Committee recommended that tripartite agreement should be expedited and inventorisation shall be tried on pilot basis initially in Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

2.3: Application of Advanced Seismic Technology for mitigating threats to wild elephant population from railway tracks:

WII has been provided the funding support to implement the project. Director, WII informed that WII is working on the project with CSIR and have developed a technology for seismic monitoring of animals which also works to detect earthquakes. The field trials in Rajaji NP are showing success. The second phase is on and in next 6 months, WII should be able to demonstrate the result of the project for adoption by concerned agencies.

The Committee noted the progress and expressed its desire for completion of the project within the time frame.

2.4: Inclusion of crop depredation within the ambit of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna:

The Committee was informed that matter has been taken up with Ministry of Agriculture and a decision has been taken to include crop raiding by wild animals into the PMFBY Scheme of the Agriculture Ministry. The official

communication on the matter is awaited from Agriculture Ministry and the mechanism of implementation is being discussed.

2.5: Creation of Elephant Cell:

As decided in 14th meeting of the Steering Committee the approval of Hon'ble Minister has been obtained for the establishment of an Elephant Cell. However, as the EFC of the Project Elephant Scheme had not been cleared the approval of IFD on the matter is pending. The Chair requested AS&FA to expedite the process of the creation of elephant cell in WII to strengthen the Project Elephant Division.

2.6: Procurement of scrap railway tracks for fencing:

IGF (PE) informed that a meeting with Ministry of Railways was held on 12.09.18 to discuss on the issue. Railways have indicated that they have provisions for supplying scrap rail at a subsidized rate to Govt. institutions. The official order on the issue is awaited from Railways. Representative of Karnataka intimated that despite request to regional authorities of Railways, Karnataka FD is not able to get the scrap railway tracks at subsidized rate.

After thorough discussion, the Steering Committee recommended that the Ministry may take up this matter with Ministry of Railways again. Karnataka may submit a specific proposal to PE Division of the Ministry which will be submitted to the Ministry of Railways for consideration.

2.7: Trans-boundary dialogue between India and Bangladesh:

It was informed that the third dialogue on trans-boundary conservation of elephants between India and Bangladesh has been finalised on 29th November, 2018 where the protocol for transboundary elephant conservation and Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) will be finalised. The procedure for participation of Indian delegation comprising of two CWLWs from states and representative of MHA and MEA is under process.

2.8: Creation of Elephant Reserve:

Ministry has accorded the permission for declaration of Singphan Elephant Reserve in Nagaland. The State Forest Department has also issued a notification constituting the Reserve by Notification No. For/gen/16/2016/128 Dt 16-08-2018.

Agenda Item No. 3: Agenda suggested by Project Elephant Division:

3.1: The prayer of applicant for formation of special committee / Task Forces :Writ Petition (c) No. 489 of 2018 Prerna Singh Bindra& Ors & Union of India &Ors _reg. and Hon'ble Supreme Court Order dated 22.10.2018:

IGF (PE) briefed the Committee about the Hon'ble Court directions in its Order dated 22.10.18 in WP (C) 489 of 2018 in Prerna Singh Bindra & Ors vs. Union of India &Ors. Petitioners have requested the Court for formation of Special Committee/Body with explicit task of assisting GoI and State Govts. to implement the measures for dealing with conflicts with elephants. Hon'ble Court in its Order directed the Ministry to take remedial measures to deal with HEC in consultation with the stakeholders.

The Steering Committee, while taking note of the directions of the Supreme Court, was of the view that there is a need for regular monitoring of implementations of various directions/instructions/guidelines issued by the Ministries/Courts regarding conservation of elephants including the human - elephant conflict management. After thorough deliberations, the Steering Committee recommended that Ministry may constitute a "Central Project Elephant Monitoring Committee" to monitor the implementations of various directions/instructions/guidelines related to conservation and protection of Indian elephants issued by the Ministry. The Ministry may also consider assigning any other role viz. monitoring related to compliance of court's directions, monitoring of implementation of the work under Project Elephant funded by Govt. of India etc, as and when required, to this Committee. The Committee will function under control of PE Steering Committee. The Committee shall visit field at least twice a year and submit the report and their recommendation to Chairman Steering Committee through PE Division. In addition Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change may, as & when required, advise the committee for field inspections.

3.2: Elephant death due to electrocution and train accidents:

Director, Project Elephant informed that in India, a large number of elephants and other wild animals die annually due to accidents on railway track. From 2009 to 2018 there are 140 elephants were killed by train hits. Out of the total reported elephant deaths due to train hits, major incidents have been reported in Assam, Odisha, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

The Committee was informed that a meeting with the linear infrastructure development agencies and concerned Ministries such as Railways, NHAI, Ministry of Power and Irrigation was held on 16th November, 2018 in the Ministry wherein issues related to following were discussed and in principle agreed upon

- i. Submission of proposals for new projects by linear infrastructure development agencies to Standing Committee of NBWL along with Animal Passage Plan prepared in consultation with State CWLW and on the basis of WII guidelines in compliance of recommendations of Standing Committee of NBWL and Advisory issued by MoEF&CC vide its letter dated 13.07.2018.
- ii. Modifying/retrofitting the existing linear infrastructures according to WII guidelines and time frame for such modification.
- iii. Till the existing linear infrastructures are modified, formulation, funding and implementation of human – elephant conflict mitigation plans along these linear infrastructures in the Protected Area and other wildlife rich areas will be jointly carried out by State Forest Department and these agencies.

After deliberation, the Committee recommended that PE Division shall make efforts to implement the decisions taken in the meeting.

3.3: Writ Petition (c) No. 246 of 2018 Pradip Kumar Bhuyan & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Ors:

The Steering Committee was informed that the Hon'ble NGT directed MoEF&CC to look in to the issue by declaring all elephant corridors all over the country as eco sensitive zones by exercising its power under Environment Protection Act, 1986. Hon'ble NGT has given two weeks' time to the Ministry to look into the issue and to proceed in the matter for declaration of such areas as eco sensitive zones.

It was informed that the Ministry has already directed the states to consider declaration of the elephant corridors as eco sensitive zones. However, only states

like Tamil Nadu has taken some action in this regard. Considering the direction of NGT, the matter shall again be taken up with the states as action for declaration of eco sensitive zones lies essentially with the States. This shall help the states to regulate the activities and prohibit activities in the designated elephant corridors.

The Committee after deliberation recommended that all the elephant range states shall expedite the process of declaration of elephant corridors as eco sensitive areas. States can also consider declaring these corridors as Conservation Reserve or Community Reserve under section 36 A & 36 C of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

3.4: Preparation of Elephant Action Plan for India:

Elephant Action Plan is in existence for conservation and management of African wild elephants. Countries such as Bangladesh also have formulated the Elephant Action Plan for their country. However, India does not have a National Action Plan for conservation and management of elephants in the country.

It was decided that Project Elephant shall prepare the Elephant Action Plan for India in partnership with WTI. It has been decided to discuss with WTI on the preparation of Elephant Action Plan for the country and Ministry may take appropriate action on receipt of the proposal of WTI.

3.5: Captive elephant management:

The Committee was informed that in Writ Petition (c) No. 743 of 2014 Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Center & Ors Vs Union of India & Ors in the Hon'ble Supreme Court regarding Order dated 22.10.2018, Supreme Court has taken a view that Chief Wildlife Warden of each State must ascertain and identify elephants in captivity in their state, ascertain whether the owners of these elephants have ownership certificates and provisionally grant ownership certificates to elephant owners in the matter keeping MoEF&CC in loop.

The Committee recommended that state CWLW should expedite the compliance of Hon'ble Supreme Court's Order.

3.6: Establishment of more number of elephant rescue centres:

The members of the Committee were in agreement about the increasing incidences of human – elephant conflict leading to management problems being faced by the state govts. and also about the reports of mismanagement of

handling of captive elephants. Therefore to deal with such situations state govt. should make efforts in establishing the Elephant Rescue Centres in their states, wherever required. The states interested in establishing Elephant Rescue Centres should submit the proposals for CZA's approval as per the norms of the CZA. Once the Rescue Centre is approved, the Centre will be funded under Project Elephant.

3.7: Strategies to mitigate elephants conflicts in tea and coffee plantation in elephant range areas:

The Planters Association of Karnataka suggested that adequate steps to be taken for protecting life and property of the tea and coffee planters in the state of Karnataka.

It was decided that the proposed committee shall hold discussions with planters and farmers associations to arrive at feasible options for mitigation of human – elephant conflicts.

Agenda Item No. 4: Items suggested by State Forest Department:

4.1: Items suggested by Tamil Nadu Forest Department:

a: Securement of land in elephant corridors of Tamil Nadu:

Shri Raghunath, CWLW Tamil Nadu informed that Tamil Nadu Government has notified one elephant corridor (Segur) and also action is being taken to look into the feasibility of other elephant corridors in Tamil Nadu. MoEF had provided funding support to Tamil Nadu FD in the past for securement of elephant corridor. It was decided that the prospects of securement of land remaining elephant corridors shall be looked upon. Tamil Nadu FD was advised that they can also explore the possibility of declaring these corridor as ESZ.

b: Disposal of elephant tusk available in form of V stock:

Tamil Nadu FD further informed that the state has large number of Elephant tusk under form –V stock. It was requested that a decision be taken up by the Ministry regarding the future management of the ivory. It was informed that the last meeting of the Steering Committee (held on 09.10.2017) had decided against the destroying of ivory stock. Hence, it was decided that an inventory of stock piles shall be created and a final decision will be taken regarding the safe keeping of the ivory in the country.

c: Transfer of ownership certificate in respect of captive elephants:

CWLW, Tamil Nadu informed that as per Section 40 (2) of wildlife (protection) Act, 1972, there is an enabling provision for sale of Schedule - I captive animal with previous permission of chief wildlife warden. However, the same has been subsequently amended with another Section 40 (2A) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 limiting the transfer only by way of inheritance in respect of Schedule - I captive animals excepting live elephants implying that it will, still be governed by the spirit of original Section 40 (2) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

But Section 43 (1) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, again places embargo on any sort of sale or by any mode of commercial nature, such transfer of Schedule - I captive animal which covers live elephant. To circumvent this embargo, many requests of transfer by way of gift have also started coming in respect of live elephant.

However, it was clarified that the spirit of Section 43 (1) is for preventing any transfer of Schedule I animals. Hence the request for transfer by way of gift is not in spirit of the section which prohibits any such transactions. Further, it was decided that the matter is under consideration in the Ministry and as a short term measure will hold a meeting with concerned state forest departments on this matter.

4.2: Items suggested by Odisha Department:

a: Procurement of drugs for tranquilization of elephants:

The Committee was informed that the Odisha FD was entrusted with the task of procuring tranquilization of drugs for capture of elephants. The procedure is very tedious and time taking and the state Forest Department faced a lot of problem in procuring drugs for entire country.

It was decided that the drugs the option of procuring drugs centrally by the Central Govt. should be explored.

Agenda Item No. 5: Items suggested by Steering Committee Members:

5.1: Items suggested by Dr. K. K. Sarma:

a: Establishment of a National Body for elephant Healthcare and Captive Elephant:

Dr. Sharma suggested constituting an official body for elephant healthcare and captive elephant welfare with expertise, authority and resources under the Directorate of Project Elephant to look into captive elephant issues.

The Committee after deliberation recommended that a committee be constituted to look into the issues related to health care, welfare and management of captive elephants in the country.

b: Perspective plan on Population management:

Owing to increase in human elephant conflict and the decrease in habitats for elephants, Dr. Sharma suggested chalking out a perspective plan for conservation and management of elephant population after arriving at the ideal elephant population size in the country (region wise) and the ways to manage the population at a steady level (birth control/selective capture/translocation etc.).

It was felt that this needs detailed discussions with various elephant experts and institutions and the way forward could be decided after arriving at a consensus.

5.2: Items suggested by Shri Vinod Rishi:

Shri Vinod Rishi suggested survey and mapping of elephant congregation areas, regular movement tracks, and their seasonal variations inside and outside their fragmented habitats should be taken up in different parts of India affected by human elephant conflict. He suggested that this could be on a project mode approach and run on institutional support. Shri Rishi felt Project Elephant Division could provide technical and financial support for the study. He suggested institution/institutions could be identified to carry out such a survey and mapping exercise.

The suggestion was agreed by the Steering Committee and Project Elephant Division shall look into the issue for further necessary action.

The meeting ended with thanks to the Chair.