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**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF  
PROJECT ELEPHANT**

The 8th meeting of the Steering Committee of Project Elephant was held on April 4, 2002 in Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi. A message was received from Dr. R. Sukumar, non-official member, that he would not be able to attend the meeting as he was visiting abroad. The Commissioner, Animal Husbandry, could also not be present. The list of participants is given in the Annexure.

The meeting started with the MEF releasing the book 'A.J.W. Milroy's Management of Elephants in Captivity' brought out by Project Elephant. The MEF was also presented with copies of the special issue of the Indian Forester on elephant conservation in India and a handout on Project Elephant in *Kannad* prepared by Karnataka Forest Department. In his inaugural speech (deemed to have been read), the Minister of Environment & Forests urged the State Governments to prepare action plans for elephant conservation in accordance with the frame work provided by the National Wildlife Action Plan adopted by the Indian Board of Wildlife in January 2002. He also laid emphasis on the involvement of the scientific institutes, veterinary colleges and forestry training centres in the implementation of the Project. He advised the Chief Wildlife Wardens to take concerted efforts for protection of elephants and assured them of all necessary support from the Ministry.

**Agenda Item No.1: Confirmation of the minutes of the 7th meeting.**

The minutes of the 7th meeting of the Steering Committee were confirmed.

**Agenda Item No.2: Action taken on the recommendations of the 7th meeting.**

In reply to a query raised by Dr. Lahiri Choudhury, Director (PE) informed that the regional meetings of the Chief Wildlife Wardens and the Steering Committee members were held in Bhubneshwar, Kaziranga and Thiruvananthpuram. The MEF enquired about the decisions taken in these meetings. Director (PE) informed that the issues relating to the elephant census in 2002, establishment of elephant reserves and regional co-operation for protection of elephants were the main issues discussed in these meetings.

The MEF desired to know as to how the elephant census was proposed to be conducted and whether the issue of imbalance in sex ratio in certain elephant populations was being addressed. Director (PE) explained that the census methodology would be site specific— total count in the north-eastern States and sampling in the southern States, and necessary details about sex and age of elephants would be collected during the census exercise to work out sex ratios and other demographic parameters. The MEF enquired as to it is possible to count elephants and determine sex ratio by remote-sensing techniques using satellites, radio-collars or such other devices. It was explained by Dr. Johnsingh, Dr. Lahiri Choudhury and many other participants that visual count is the most appropriate method for census of elephants.

**Agenda Item No.3: Protection of corridors in Uttaranchal.**

The CWLW (Uttaranchal) explained the importance of Chilla-Motichur elephant corridor and advocated the shifting of the Army ammunition dump to revive the corridor. Addl.DGF (Wildlife) remarked that the shifting of ammunition dump would entail a great expenditure and the Ministry might not be able to support it. The CWLW (Uttaranchal) pointed out that the land in question was given by the State Forest Department to the Army for the purpose of a railway siding but the Army was using it for a different purpose in violation of the transfer conditions as well as the Forest (Conservation) Act. He also informed that the Uttaranchal Government was expecting to get funds from the Planning Commission for establishing the corridor in question. The MEF remarked that he had received a telephonic message before the meeting from some NGO informing him that the Army authorities were willing to move the ammunition dump. He desired that the matter should be vigorously pursued by the Ministry. He asked the CWLW (Uttaranchal) to give a detailed note on the subject immediately.

Dr. Lahiri Choudhury referred to the elephant corridor across the river Kho on Kotdwar-Landsdowne road in Uttaranchal and suggested that sign boards should be put up to mark the corridor which would alert the developmental agencies towards the importance of the corridor. The CWLW (Uttaranchal) pointed out that it was already being done.

**Agenda Item No.4: Protection of elephants.**

Director (PE) informed the Committee that on an average 63 elephants were reported to be poached every year for ivory but the figure was only 29 till 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001 showing some respite in poaching during the current year. He, however, pointed out that the cases of poisoning and electrocution of elephants were on the increase. CWLW (Jharkhand) responded by saying that the trend was indicative of increasing human-elephant conflict and suggested translocation of problematic elephants. Addl.DGF (Wildlife) pointed out that the Project Elephant had envisaged the establishment of special translocation units in all States to deal with problem elephants. Dr. Lahiri Choudhury and the CWLW (Karnataka) quoted many examples saying that the translocated elephants had a tendency to return to their home ranges. Dr. Lahiri Choudhury mentioned that the Jharkhand Forest Department was taking unduly long time to proclaim man-killing elephants under Section 11 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act. Director (PT) suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture should be approached for including depredation by wild animals under the ambit of the National Crop Insurance Scheme. **The MEF felt that the issue was a complex one and there should be an exclusive meeting of Chief Wildlife Wardens to discuss the problem of depredation by elephants, tigers, leopards and other wild animals.**

**Agenda Item No. 5: Policy about domesticated elephants.**

Director (PE) pointed out that although capturing and domestication were essential for proper management of wild elephants in the country, yet the existing laws did not encourage private ownership of elephants. Dr. Lahiri Choudhury stated that the proposed ban in the Wildlife (Protection) Act on exchange of domesticated elephants except through inheritance was against the spirit of the Project Elephant which sought to strengthen the traditional bond between the people and the elephants. Addl.DGF (Wildlife) assured the members that the Ministry was aware of the complications that might be caused by the proposed amendment in the Act and the issues would be addressed.

**Agenda Item No.6: Evaluation of Project Elephant.**

Director (PE) mentioned that the evaluation of Project Elephant was done for the first time since the inception of the Project in 1992 and help of the members of the Steering Committee, scientific institutes and representatives of the State Governments was taken for this purpose. Detailed examination of the evaluation report is being done in the Ministry and Further action would be taken after the reports have been finalised. Referring to the evaluation reports of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu, Dr. Daniel mentioned that the anti-poaching camps in Tamilnadu were functioning well but there was very little emphasis on research. He also pointed out the delay in release of funds to the field agencies.

**Agenda Item No.7: Miscellaneous.**

Dr. Lahiri Choudhury explained the background of the logo proposed by him for Project Elephant which was based on the Ashoka's edict at Kalsi. However, the MEF did not approve it and desired that the matter should be finalised in consultation with expert designers.

Dr. Lahiri Choudhury introduced the issue of unsystematic mining in Orissa and pointed out its impact on elephants. He also pointed out the large-scale human-elephant conflict in Keonjhar district as a result of haphazard mining. The MEF informed the members that Ministry was aware of the issue and necessary action would be taken in the matter.

Director (PE) informed the committee members that the West Bengal Forest Department was finding it difficult to notify Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve in South Bengal. The CCF (Wildlife) of West Bengal explained that the socio-political situation in the districts adjoining Jharkhand was quite volatile and the forest officers feared a political backlash if the Elephant Reserve was notified. Members felt that since the major chunk of the elephant range fell within Jharkhand and had already been notified as an Elephant Reserve, the Ministry could pursue with West Bengal Government to notify this Elephant Reserves.

## ANNEXURE

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE 7th MEETING OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE  
OF PROJECT ELEPHANT ON 4.4.2002.

1. Shri T.R. Baalu Minister for Environment & Forests (Chairman)
2. Shri S.K. Pande Director General of Forests & Special Secretary
3. Shri S.C. Sharma Addl. Director General (Wildlife)
4. Shri S.S. Bist IGF & Director (Project Elephant) [Member-Secretary]
5. Smt. Vandita Kaul Dy. Secretary (Finance) [Representing J.S.& F.A.]
6. Dr. J.C. Daniel Non-Official Member, Mumbai
7. Dr. D.K. Lahiri Choudhury Non-Official Member, Calcutta
8. Dr. J.V. Cheeran Non-Official Member, Trichur
9. Sh. S.K. Patnaik Non-Official Member, Bhubneshwar
10. Shri Nirmal Ghosh Non-Official Member, New Delhi
11. Shri C.C.S. Maunglang Non-Official Member, Marigaon
12. Dr. A.J.T. John Singh Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun
13. Dr. Sushant Chowdhury Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun
14. Representative of Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta
15. Representative of Botanical Survey of India, Calcutta
16. Shri Hitesh Malhotra Chief Wildlife Warden, Andhra Pradesh
17. Shri S.N. Kalita Chief Wildlife Warden, Arunachal Pradesh
18. Shri S. Doley Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam
19. Dr. A.K. Malhotra Chief Wildlife Warden, Jharkhand
20. Shri S.K. Chakraborty Chief Wildlife Warden, Karnataka
21. Shri V. Gopinathan Chief Wildlife Warden, Kerala
22. Shri Sunil Kumar Chief Wildlife Warden, Meghalaya
23. Shri K.R. Lyngdoh C.F. (Wildlife), Nagaland
24. Shri A.P. Tripathy Chief Wildlife Warden, Orissa
25. Dr. S. Thakur Chief Wildlife Warden, Tamilnadu
26. Shri A.S. Negi Chief Wildlife Warden, Uttaranchal
27. Shri U. Dasgupta C.C.F.(Wildlife), West Bengal
28. Dr. Rajesh Gopal IGF & Director (Project Tiger)
29. Shri B.S. Bonal Director, National Zoological Park, New Delhi
30. Shri Aseem Srivastava Dy. Inspector General of Forests (Wildlife)
31. Shri Shyamal Tikedar Joint Director (Project Tiger)
32. Shri Jagmohan Sharma Joint Director (Wildlife)
33. Shri K.N. Thakur Dy. Director (Wildlife Preservation), Northern Region