

F. No. 14-2/2019-PE (Part-1)

Government of India/ भारत सरकार

Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change/ पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय  
(Project Elephant Division/हाथी परियोजना प्रभाग)

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6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Vayu Wing,  
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,  
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,  
New Delhi-110003

Dated 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2022

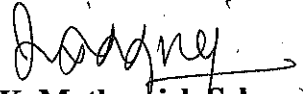
**OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

**Subject: Proceedings of the First Captive Elephant Health Care and Welfare Committee (CEHWC) held on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022 at Kalari hall, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala -reg.**

The undersigned is enclosing herewith the approved Proceeding of the First Captive Elephant Health Care and Welfare Committee (CEHWC) held on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2022 at the Kalari Hall, Peiryar Tiger Reserve, Kerala

2. This issue with the approval of the Additional Director General of Forest (Project Tiger), MoEF&CC.

Encls: as above

  
(Dr. K. Muthamizh Selvan)  
Scientist 'E' (Project Elephant)  
Email id: km.selvan@gov.in  
Telephone No. 011-24695067

**Distribution:**

- As per list enclosed.

**Copy to :**

1. PPS to Director General of Forest & Special Secretary, MoEF&CC.
2. PS to Additional Director General of Forest (NTCA), MoEF&CC.
3. PS to Inspector General of Forests (Project Elephant), MoEF&CC.

*Proceedings of*

**First Meeting of the Captive Elephant Health Care and Welfare Committee (CEHWC)**

The first meeting of the Captive Elephant Health Care and Welfare Committee (CEHWC) was held on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022 at Kalari Hall, Thekkady, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala under the chairmanship of Dr. Satya Prakash Yadav, Additional Director General of Forests, Project Tiger & Member Secretary (NTCA), MoEF&CC. The CEHWC was reconstituted by Project Elephant on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 in vide letter No 14-2/2019-PE (Part -I). The Director General of Forests and Special Secretary, MoEF&CC Shri. Chandra Prakash Goyal presided the meeting. The meeting was also attended by the members of Central Project Elephant Monitoring Committee.

**List of participants is annexed.**

Dr. K. Muthamizh Selvan, Scientist E, Project Elephant elaborated on the rationale behind establishing the CEHWC and its broad mandates. He mentioned that the captive elephant welfare is one of the stated objectives of the Project Elephant and that numerous tasks are being carried out in this regard. He elaborated on the Terms of Reference for the CEHWC, which included (i) to suggest detailed veterinary and health care plan to be implemented by both Government and Private agencies for managing captive elephants (ii) to suggest various activities for which captive elephants can be utilized while fully ensuring welfare and wellness of the captive elephants (iii) to review the functioning of the existing State-level captive elephant welfare committees (iv) verification of health status of captive elephants as and when referred by MoEF&CC and (v) to deliberate on any other issues related to captive elephants management to be decided by the Ministry.

Following this, Dr. Selvan provided details on the status of captive elephants in India. He mentioned that there are 2675 elephants in captivity in India across 27 States. He mentioned that among the 2675 elephants, 1821 elephants are in private custody. Dr. Selvan also provided details on temples that are maintained by different institutions/private agencies. Further to this, Dr. Selvan elaborated on the major challenges facing captive elephant management that included welfare concerns, health concerns, human resource concerns, legal concerns and capacity-related concerns.

The agenda items discussed under CEWHC include the following:

**Agenda-1: DNA Profiling of Captive Elephants**

To prevent the illegal capture of wild elephants and subsequently consigning them illegally by tampering with micro-chip identification, PE Division with Elephant Cell has embarked on creating a genetic database of all captive elephants in the country. The process involves

collecting biological samples from elephants and using molecular tools to assign unique genetic IDs

Dr. Mondol, Scientist E, WII presented on the ongoing efforts towards creating a genetic database of captive elephants across India. He mentioned that the primers have been developed and that samples have been collected as well. Sample collection has been fully or either partially completed for five states namely Haryana, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and Tamil Nadu. Blood samples of over 100 elephants have been obtained and sequenced at WII laboratory.

Alongside, an app called “Gajah Soochna” has been developed by Elephant Cell and the blood sample collection kits are being prepared by WII.

Dr. Parag Nigam, Scientist, WII mentioned that collecting samples from Government owned elephants was relatively easy. However, the task of collecting samples from the privately maintained captive elephants could be daunting and, in this regard, very active support of the State Forest Departments including the DFOs and veterinarians concerned would be crucial.

DECISION: The Committee acknowledged the initiative and directed to expedite sample collection. The PE Division may explore the possibility of making it mandatory when a transit permit is accorded by the CWLW.

**Agenda-2: Preparation of Recommended Operating Procedure for Post-mortem and Carcass disposal for elephant**

A sub-committee towards Captive Health and Welfare Committee had been constituted under the Chairmanship of IGF (PE) vide O.M. dated 20.05.22. The first meeting of the sub-committee was held on 08.06.2022 under the Chairmanship of IGF & Director (PE) to finalize the contents of the ROP. Subsequently, the second meeting of Subcommittee was held on 29.06.2022 under the Chairmanship of IGF & Director (PE) and the draft chapters were discussed.

Dr. Parag Nigam mentioned that the efforts are currently underway to wet the chapters and complete the compilation. He mentioned that the response of co-authors of different chapters continues to be a bit slow in view of the technical inputs required in the matter.

Committee member Dr. Eswaran emphasized on the need to have a minimum of two veterinarians while performing elephant necropsies. He also elaborated on the difficulties involved in sample collection and analysis for a variety of elephant diseases in both captive and free ranging conditions.

Chairman of the committee Dr. S.P. Yadav mentioned that an advisory would be issued by the PE Division with a template for elephant postmortem.

IGF & Director, PE, Shri. Ramesh Kumar Pandey mentioned that as suggested by Dr. Eswaran, even in the present elephant postmortem is being carried out by more than one doctor as being a big animal, single doctor may find it difficult to do the same. In any case, PE division advisory would insist on having more than one veterinarian for conducting elephant postmortem.

DECISION: The Committee acknowledged the concern and directed the PE Division to come out with a protocol to collect the samples. In the meantime an advisory may be issued to all the States that postmortem of elephants should be done by a panel of 3 veterinarians in presence of two representatives of civil society (working in the field of wildlife conservation) nominated by the CWLW of the State.

**Agenda-3: Preparing health monitoring protocol for captive elephants / guidelines to set up the rescue or rehabilitation centres for wild and captive elephants**

Presently, there is no uniform system for monitoring health of the captive elephants across the country. Similarly, no protocol/guidelines for establishing the rescue/ rehabilitation center. IGF & Director, PE informed that health of captive elephants housed at Dudhwa are being monitored systematically, similar system can be adopted to develop uniform health & welfare monitoring protocol for captive elephant across the country.

Dr. Parag Nigam called for having a better clarity between rescue and rehabilitation centres versus elephant camps. He said that the rehabilitation centres come under the purview of the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) and that the elephants maintained in rescue and rehabilitation centres cannot be used for any works.

Dr. Eswaran mentioned that elephants in captivity would probably have some minor injuries (often very superficial) and the PC Act prohibits use of elephants that have injuries. In this regard, he called for defining elephant injury explicitly.

Committee member Mr. Shajimon highlighted a variety of footcare issues that elephants face in captivity, particularly in the temples.

DECISION:Based on the best practices available, a protocol for health & welfare monitoring of captive elephants will be developed.

**Agenda-4: Conducting training workshops for Mahouts and coming up with training manual**

Mahoutry has been a diminishing art and the inter-generational knowledge transfer has reduced considerably. While we have many elephant handlers, knowledgeable mahouts that understand elephant behaviour, physiology, health and could control them using principles of positive conditioning are few. There is a pressing need to identify good mahouts, tap their experience and utilize their services as expert trainers so that the next generation of good

mahouts can be developed. The entire process of mahoutry including the best practices needs to be properly documented and disseminated as a user-friendly training manual. The senior mahouts would be indispensable for this. In this regard, regional workshops to train mahouts would be planned.

Dr. Parag Nigam mentioned that there is a mahout manual that was followed in Kerala. He said that the manual can be relooked into and consider for preparing similar guide for wider circulation later on. Further, Dr. Nigam also mentioned that there are language issues with respect to training of mahouts. Therefore, it would be better train trainers who in turn could train mahouts.

DECISION: Based on the best practices available, a protocol for training of Mahaout for handling and training of captive elephants will be developed. Modalities for conducting the regional workshop for mahouts and elephant handlers would be planned by the Project Elephant and the Elephant Cell.

**Agenda-5: Devising work plan for elephants in captivity with due consideration of welfare**

Dr. K.M. Selvan highlighted that even in forest elephant camps work schedule for elephants and mahouts is not well defined. He mentioned that the range of forestry activities performed using captive elephants needs to be deliberated and that work schedule considering physical, behavioral, and emotional well-being of both elephants and mahouts need to be prepared.

The meeting ended with thanks to the Chairman, ADG (NTCA) Dr. Satya Prakash Yadav and Shri. Chandra Prakash Goyal, DGF & SS who presided over the committee meetings.

**List of attendees**

1. Shri. Chandra Prakash Goyal, DGF & SS, MoEF&CC
2. Dr. Satya Prakash Yadav, ADG (PT), MS (NTCA), MoEF&CC and Director, WII. Chairman, CPEMC & CEHWC
3. Shri. Ramesh Kumar Pandey, IGF & Director, Project Elephant, MoEF&CC
4. Shri. Ganga Singh, PCCF & CWLW, Kerala
5. Dr. Samir Sinha, PCCF & CWLW, Uttarakhand
6. Dr. Kesheo Prasad Dubey, PCCF & CWLW, Uttar Pradesh
7. Shri. Rajesh Kumar, APCCF (Wildlife), West Bengal
8. Shri. Surendra Kumar, Member – CPEMC and PCCF (retd), Kerala
9. Shri. Digvijay Singh Khatri, Member – CPEMC and PCCF (retd), Uttarakhand
10. Shri. Kishor Kumar Bisen, Member – CPEMC and CCF (retd), Chhattisgarh
11. Dr. P. Pramod, Member – CPEMC and Senior Principal Scientist, SACON
12. Dr. Anamitra Anurag, Member – CPEMC and WWF-India, West Bengal
13. Dr. Amit Malik, IGF (NTCA), MoEF&CC
14. Dr. E.K. Easwaran, Member – CEHWC & Retired Veterinary Officer, Kerala
15. Dr. Devendra Podhade, Member – CEHWC & Assistant Professor, School of Wildlife Forensic and Health, Nanaji Deshmukh Veterinary Science University, Jabalpur, Madhya

Pradesh

16. Shri. U. Vishnu Prasad, Member – CEHWC and Elephant Owner, Kerala
17. Shri. Shajimon, Member – CEHWC and Mahout, Tamil Nadu
18. Shri. Dwipen Kalita, Member – CEHWC and Mahout, Assam
19. Dr. Parag Nigam, Scientist F, WII
20. Dr. Bilal Habib, Scientist E, WII
21. Dr. Samrat Mondol, Scientist E, WII
22. Dr. K. Muthamizh Selvan, Scientist E, PE Division, MoEF&CC
23. Dr. Prajna Panda, National Coordinator, PE Division, MoEF&CC
24. Dr. Rajendra Kumar, Scientist C, PE Division, MoEF&CC
25. Shri. Pankaj Kumar Sangwan, Deputy Director, Ministry of Power, New Delhi
26. Dr. N. Lakshminarayanan, Project Scientist, WII
27. Shri. Udhaya Raj, GIS Specialist, WII
28. Shri. Kirti Bisht, DEO, PE Division, MoEF&CC
29. Shri. Raju Rawat, DEO, PE Division, MoEF&CC
30. Shri. Vijay, Office Attendant, PE Division, MoEF&CC