

Government of India

Ministry of Environment and Forests

(National Tiger Conservation Authority)

REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION CONF. 12.5

There are 96 National Parks and 509 Wildlife Sanctuaries in India, amounting to almost 4.7% of the country's geographical area. Focussed conservation projects like "Project Tiger", "Project Elephant" are ongoing, apart from schemes like "Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries" and "Strengthening of Wildlife Division". In addition, the Wildlife Institute of India has been developed as an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Environment & Forests for carrying out research and conducting training courses in Wildlife Management. A Central Zoo Authority has also been created for ensuring normative standards in Zoos.

The problems relating to wildlife conservation include poaching and illegal trade owing to demand for wildlife products in the international market, habitat loss due to population pressure and man-wild animal conflict resulting from shrinkage of wildlife habitat and corridors, apart from site specific managerial issues.

On the basis of the recommendations of the National Board for Wildlife chaired by the Prime Minister on 17th March, 2005, a Task Force was setup to look into the problems of tiger conservation in the country and to suggest measures for improvement. The recommendations requiring immediate attention have been accepted for implementation, which interalia include strengthening of Project Tiger by giving it statutory as well as administrative powers. Further, it has also been recommended that a report relating to Project Tiger should annually be sent to Parliament so that the accomplishment under Project Tiger is reviewed from time to time.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE TIGER TASK FORCE AND OTHER INITIATIVES**

The Tiger Task Force appointed by the Prime Minister has reviewed the work done over the years and made the following urgent recommendations:

- i) reinvigorating various aspects of governance;
- ii) strengthening efforts towards protection of tiger, checking poaching, convicting wild life criminals and breaking the international trade network in wild life body parts and their derivatives;
- iii) expanding the undisturbed areas for tiger by reducing human pressure;
- iv) revive the relationship with local people who share the tiger habitat by fielding strategies for co-existence;
- v) regenerate the forest habitats in the fringes of the tigers protective enclaves by investing in forest, water and grassland economies of the people.

ACTION TAKEN

- 1) The National Legislation Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 has been amended recently by enacting the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006, which has come into force with effect from the 4th September, 2006. Based on the enabling provisions made in the said Amendment, the National Tiger Conservation Authority has been constituted with effect from the same date. The amendments made to the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 for constituting a National Tiger Conservation Authority would enable effective implementation of plans for tiger conservation, addressing the livelihood concerns of local people in and around tiger reserves, apart from addressing violations of the statutory provisions. The enacted amendment would address the ecological as well as administrative

concerns for conserving tigers, by providing a statutory basis for protection of tiger reserves and providing strengthened institutional mechanisms for the protection of ecologically sensitive areas and endangered species. The functions of the National Tiger Conservation Authority would provide complementary forestry operations in tiger habitats of forest divisions adjoining tiger reserves. It would also foster cross-sectoral approach for addressing the issue of livelihood of people in such areas while mainstreaming conservation. The Authority would ensure enforcing of guidelines for tiger conservation and monitoring compliance of the same, apart from placement of motivated and trained officers having good track record as Field Directors of tiger reserves. It would also facilitate capacity building of officers and staff posted in tiger reserves, apart from a time bound staff development plan. There are no statutory provisions available at present to address the above concerns. (The amended Act has been posted in the official website of Project Tiger: www.projecttiger.nic.in).

- 2) The **above** amendment also provide for constituting the Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau), and the process is underway in this regard. As per the amendment, the punishment for offences relating to core areas of tiger reserves has been made more stringent:
 - a) Any person, who commits an offence in relation to the core area of a tiger reserve or where the offence relate to hunting in the tiger reserve or altering the boundaries of the tiger reserve, such offence shall be punishable on first conviction with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than three years but may extend to seven years, and also with fine which shall not be less than fifty thousand rupees but may extend to two lakh rupees; and in the event of a second or subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years and also with fine which shall not be less than five lakh rupees but may extend to fifty lakh rupees.
 - b) Whoever abets any offence punishable as above shall, if the act abetted is committed in consequence of the abetment, be punishable with the punishment provided for that offence.
- 3) The All India estimation of tigers and other wild animals, including habitat status evaluation, is ongoing as per the revised, enhanced methodology endorsed by the Tiger Task Force from November, 2005. Regional workshops for training the State level spear-head teams have been organized and primary data collection has been completed in 17 tiger States of the country. The Phase-II of the process has commenced, and the final estimation figures would be available by June, 2007. It is emphasized that the results from new and old methodologies cannot be compared.
- 4) The independent evaluation of tiger reserves carried out by a panel of experts has been peer reviewed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). The report / review have been placed in the Parliament and put in the public domain (official website of Project Tiger: www.projecttiger.nic.in).
- 5) The Wildlife Institute of India has been directed to assess the core areas of tiger reserves where village relocation has to be undertaken, in addition to other protected areas of the country within a timeframe of five years. Simultaneously, action has been taken for developing a model involuntary village relocation/rehabilitation package through a professional agency.
- 6) Provision already exists for providing eco-development inputs in the buffer areas of tiger reserves to foster coexistence with local people. The States having Tiger Reserves have been asked to prepare a plan for coexistence with local people by delineating a buffer zone, with cross-sectoral eco-development inputs in such areas. The Ministry is also preparing an eco-tourism strategy so that benefits of tourism can be shared with local people.
- 7) A comparative assessment of forest cover status in the core areas of tiger reserves from 1998 to 2003, including the outer peripheral area upto a radius of 10 km from the periphery of the tiger reserves was carried out. The following are the salient findings of this study:
 - No change in forest cover of 12 reserves
 - 5 reserves recorded marginal increase (Bandhavgarh, Corbett, Nagarjunasagar, Namdapha, Valmiki)
 - 11 reserves have shown a decrease

- Marginal decrease (6): Bandipur, Dudhwa, Kanha, Palamau, Pakhui, Sundarbans
- Significant decrease (5): Nameri, Manas, Indravati, Dampa and Buxa
- Overall forest cover in 28 reserves has shown decrease of 94 sq km
- Outer surround: 2 reserves have shown increase, 5 reserves have shown no change, while 21 reserves have shown a decrease of 124 sq km

(The report has been posted in the official website of Project Tiger: www.projecttiger.nic.in).

- 8) The status of tiger habitat in the country was evaluated in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India in the GIS domain using remote sensing and field data at the taluka amplification. The study revealed that during the past 80 to 150 years, 26% of the tiger area has been lost in 80 districts within the country. During this period, the human population has increased from 2384 million to 10274 million. (The report has been posted in the official website of Project Tiger: www.projecttiger.nic.in).
- 9) The tiger mortality records as registered in States, have been collated for the country for the period 1999-2004 through an independent agency. During the period, 82 natural deaths have been recorded, apart from 130 deaths due to poaching.
- 10) A PRC delegation from the CITES Management Authority visited India in October, 2006. The issue of trafficking in tiger skins / body parts and other wildlife articles across the borders, as reported in the media, was discussed. Subsequently, an Indian delegation also visited China, followed by the visit of a PRC delegation comprising of wildlife officials. Discussions on strengthening tiger conservation took place within the ambit of the Indo-Chinese Protocol on tiger conservation.
- 11) India has a MOU with Nepal on tiger / wildlife conservation and the Parties have met several times. Draft Protocol for bilateral cooperation with other neighbouring tiger range countries have been sent to Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- 12) A meeting with representatives of border states and security agencies was held to review the measures for prevention of trafficking in wildlife body parts across borders. The security agencies dealing with border areas have been alerted and sensitization workshops have been held for their personnel in the Wildlife Institute of India.
- 13) Based on the decision taken during the first meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority held recently, advisories have been issued for filling up field staff vacancies, giving preference to local people. Several other directives have also been issued, which, inter alia, include constitution of a special committee to review the protection strategy in problematic tiger reserves.

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