

Minutes of the meeting held under the Chairmanship of DGF&SS to review the working of Integrated Regional Offices of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

New Delhi, 24th September, 2021

A meeting of the Officers of the Heads of Integrated Regional Offices (IROs) was held under the chairmanship of Director General of Forests and Special Secretary (DGF&SS), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) on 24th September, 2021 at 12:00 PM in the Krishna Conference Room at 4th Floor, Jal Wing, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj, New Delhi.

In the inaugural session, Hon'ble Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav graced the programme as Chief Guest and addressed the participants. Shri R.P. Gupta, Secretary, EF&CC also addressed the participants and discussed various issues for effective functioning of IRO and objective and time bound processing of project proposals.

The list of participants is attached as **Annexure-I**.

1. Hon'ble MEFCC urged for an open and frank discussion and asked the officers to highlight the major issues for integrating and strengthening the Integrated Regional Offices (IROs) along with possible solutions. He also emphasized that budget is not an issue, to take forward the assigned works and effectively carrying out the responsibilities. He directed to prepare a detailed proceedings of the workshop and make a presentation before him over major issues and possible solutions.
2. The Secretary (EF&CC) instructed the DDGs/ Heads of Regional Offices

to take timely decisions on forest diversion proposals under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 on merit, so that there is no pendency at Ministry level beyond the prescribed timelines. For raising EDS, he once again advised to raise all the queries at one go so as to avoid unnecessary delay in processing of the proposals. He also directed to submit well drafted counter affidavit and intimation of communications regarding various court cases well in time. Regarding integration of FSI, WCCB, NTCA and Regional Offices, he advised DGF&SS to look into integration issues and find out the reasons why it has not happened so far. He emphasized that it is not necessary that in a IRO, all cadre of officers/ staff of NTCA/FSI/WCCB/CZA should be present. The work can be allocated to the officer who is present/ posted at the concerned IRO. The incumbent officer(s) should be properly trained to take up works related to FSI/ NTCA/ WCCB/ CZA etc.

3. It was emphasised that as per Gazette Notification dated 13.08.2020 on the subject Reorganization of Regional/Sub-regional offices of various authorities and organization of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, each of the 19 Integrated Regional Offices (IROs) shall work as an integrated regional unit of the MoEF&CC in achieving the outcomes related to the mandate of this Ministry enumerated in Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules 1961 as modified from time to time. Accordingly, officers and staff of the IROs in addition to carrying out functions, duties and work already assigned to them in their respective existing regional offices/ centres of MoEF&CC or its respective subordinate offices/boards/bureaus/ authorities, shall undertake other actions, functions and works in the fulfillment of above responsibilities in an integrated and coordinated manner as directed by the Regional Offices or by the other competent authority. However, it was decided that for all practical purposes, IROs would continue to

execute responsibilities as was assigned in the Resolution 4-7/2012-ROHQ dated 08.01.2014 which are mainly categories into;

- a) Forest (Conservation) Act related functions;
- b) Working Plan related functions;
- c) Monitoring of other schemes;
- d) Environment Management and Pollution Control functions; and
- e) Miscellaneous functions

4. IGF (ROHQ), MoEFCC in his welcoming remarks made a brief presentation about the agenda items of the meeting. DGF&SS spoke about operationalization of IROs with effective merger and integration of various offices under MoEF&CC.

5. All the Heads of the Regional Offices/DDGFs/DIGFs/IGFs participated in this meeting and shared their valuable suggestions on various issues raised regarding operationalization of IROs. The highlighted issues along with important suggestions/way-out received throughout this discussion is given as follows-

6.

- i. Presently, the new 9 IROs are operating from office space of 2/3 rooms. Need of larger office space for operating the new IROs. IROs were suggested to submit proposals related to land and buildings as per requirements for approvals of the Ministry. They may explore suitable rented accommodation for office for effective functioning as acquiring/constructing a new office complex will require very long time.

[Action – IROs/ROHQ Division]

ii. Lack of permanent staff is a major problem. As contractual staffs are not authorized to use e-office, the processing of proposals gets delayed. At least 1 TO/RI (Forestry) and 1 RO/RA (Environment) in permanent staff is essential for smooth functioning of IROs. Accordingly, transfer of staffs TO/RI/RO/RA and lower level from IRO/ Ministry to IROs should be done on priority basis. It was decided to inform Admin Division to take necessary steps on priority.

[Action – Admin. Division]

iii. Redeployment from older ROs to new IROs curtailed the promotion options of the staff at old IROs. This needs to be re-looked into.

[Action – ROHQ Division]

iv. Scientist-B is not authorized for site inspection. There is a need to revise the order of Ministry to authorize Scientist - B for site inspection as at some IROs there is Scientist-B only. IA Division to be informed accordingly.

[Action – IA Division]

v. Capacity building/orientation programme needs to be organized to multiply the technical efficiency of officials of FSI, WCCB, NTCA, CZA and Regional Offices for effective merger and integration of the offices. The existing officers of IROs to be authorised/ delegated to work as representative of FSI/NTCA/ WCCB/ CZA. Proper training should be provided by all concerned organisations.

[Action – NTCA/FSI/WCCB/CZA]

vi. For hiring of technical staff for handling DSS equipment, old 10 IROs suggested that hiring of technical staff and purchasing of DSS equipment

should be decentralized and IROs should be authorized to deal this matter at their own level. FSI, Dehradun may give training for one week even online but there is need of local hired staff so that they don't resign so early. While for new 9 IROs it is convenient to handle this matter at FSI, Dehradun as there is no infrastructure facility at the moment. In this regard, IGF (ROHQ) requested all the IROs to send their proposals through FSI, Dehradun for appropriate decision at the earliest. An official letter to IROs has already been issued for the same.

[Action – IROs/FSI]

vii.All IROs told that contractual staffs are not authorized to use e-office. This needs to be allowed so that work could be done smoothly.

[Action – ROHQ/IT Division]

viii.IRO Dehradun submitted that the communications being made to him should be DDG and not as IRO or RO. It was informed that Regional Office and Head of the RO/IRO are emanating from Forest Conservation Rules, 2003 and various administrative orders issued by the Ministry in view of roles and responsibilities assigned to them as per Act/Rules. Similarly the designation of posts of respective officers should be in consonance with name of the post mentioned in ACC orders. However, the matter would be further examined into on the basis of submission made in this regard.

[Action – ROHQ Division]

xi. It was also discussed whether IRO should have individual website. It was informed that it may cause confusion. DGF suggested that IROs can publish a monthly e-magazine showcasing achievement and new innovations done by the Ministry. An IRO can volunteer to start work on the e-magazine and others

can provide support and information material.

[Action – IROs Division]

5. Further, IRO specific issues and probable solutions, as suggested, are enlisted below for further decisions and actions therein:

i. IRO Lucknow:

- a. Recruitment of TO/RI/RO/RA (permanent) on priority basis.
- b. Authorize Scientist B for site inspection.
- c. Clarify the court case dated 28.03.2018 regarding DIGF (Central) post in IRO, Lucknow. IFS Division may look into this matter.
- d. Proposal of office renovation of IRO Lucknow is rejected by IFD, MoEFCC. IRO Lucknow has resubmitted the proposal with justification for approval as the estimates were already vetted by CPWD, Lucknow. ROHQ Division will process the file accordingly.
- e. Fund needed in RRT for rent payments of office Rs. 16 lakh for 4 years.
- f. New touring vehicle is needed as present vehicles are not fit for touring in field.
- g. For FRCM, there is no Nodal Officer for the states or group of states from M/o Railways and M/o Power. This creates a lot of problem. For each project individual officers approaches and things are discussed and repeated. Even same mistake is done again and again. It was assured that matter will be taken with concerned ministries.
- h. IRO, Lucknow shared Hindi magazine prepared by them which was appreciated by all.

ii. IRO Chennai:

- a. IRO Chennai asked for transfer of staff from Chennai as there is very less work left at Chennai. In last 7 years only 180 ha of forest diversion

proposal has been processed in Tamil Nadu.

- b. Approval of Rs. 4.00 lakh under OAE head is needed.
 - c. For proposal for construction of office building and Residential complex of IRO Chennai, Ministry gave approval of Rs. 28,50,750/- towards cost of consultancy work on 50 cents of land (2023 sq. mtr. Approx.) provided by SFD of Tamilnadu. Now, CCU, MoEF&CC submitted a file to Secretary (EF&CC) for foreclosure of the contract. It was suggested to increase the time limit of the architect to complete the work as per new requirement of office space.
 - d. IRO, Chennai is directed to collect theme based material from all and publish a magazine showcasing achievement and new innovations done by the Ministry (like good reclaimed mines, CA plantation etc.).
- iii. **IRO, Bangalore:** For proposal for construction of office complex, Ministry gave approval of Rs. 67,17,000/- vide letter dated 19.04.2018 for consultancy work. Now, CCU, MoEF&CC submitted a file to Secretary (EF&CC) for foreclosure of the contract. It was suggested to increase the time limit of the architect to complete the work as per new requirement of office space. A matter related to filing of revision by the Ministry in the Kerala High Court was discussed. It was decided since the orders of the Hon'ble Court can be complied with by IRO Bangalore under the given Acts and Rules related to diversion of the forest land and no legal recourse involved in matter, therefore need of filing revision is not justifiable.
- iv. **IRO Jammu** told about requirement of new office to accommodate all staff and officers and vehicles, office equipment like computer etc. IRO Jammu was asked to submit proposals accordingly. Besides this the constraints in using GeM market place was also highlighted.
 - v. **IRO Raipur:** IRO Raipur informed that State Government Chhattisgarh as agreed to provide office accommodation in SFTRI. Only

electricity bills needs to be paid. IRO Raipur has sent the MoU to the Ministry for the approval of competent authority. IGF (ROHQ) ensured early processing of the file. IRO Raipur also informed that first REC meeting of Raipur was scheduled on 24.09.21, which could not be held because of the instant meeting. IRO Raipur will be convening the REC meeting very soon.

vi. IRO Ranchi:

- a. IRO, Ranchi informed that it is not appropriate to take possession of the New TACD building at MECON Ltd. in extreme seepage condition. It was decided that IRO Ranchi may be advised to explore the possibility of obtaining alternative office space within the range of financial approval and intimate the Ministry. An official letter to IRO Ranchi has already been issued for the same.
- b. No sanctioned post of staff car driver as per new sanctioned IRO strength. Also no staff of FSI joined in IRO Ranchi. IRO, Ranchi is instructed to hire car driver on contractual basis for which fund will be provided.

vii. IRO Bhopal told that promotion of Stenographer is stopped due to lack of mandatory training and same to be done online so that promotion can be done or training can be waived off for promotion or can be done after 2 year of promotion. ROHQ Division needs to again take up the proposal.

viii. IRO Bhubaneswar:

- a. Shri Debashish Ghosh and Shri Soumitra Mookherjee panels counsel of State Govt. (2) on behalf of Ministry in the NGT matters are not responding and acting not for the best interest of MOEFCC. They are not keeping IRO Bhubaneswar informed about the further development. It was assured that matter will be taken up with P&L Division and suitable replacement will be initiated in consultation.

b. CPWD is unable to execute works and hence MoEFCC may issue orders to get the work done by State PWD.

ix. **IRO Vijayawada** submitted proposal for hiring office space around Rs. 5,16,604 per month plus water and electricity charges as per actuals for the 1st year on rent basis. Ministry didn't approve the proposal. Need to be approved by Ministry as cheaper option is not available.

x. **IRO Hyderabad** submitted proposal for hiring office space around Rs. 2,50,234/- per month and electricity charges as per actuals for the 1st year. Ministry didn't approve the proposal. Need to be approved by Ministry as cheaper option is not available.

6. DGF&SS suggested that for all cases of FC and court cases, all IROs must have prepared one page of summary ready and send the same should be submitted when asked for review meetings. This must be accompanied by all the necessary documents like EDS raised, details of information asked in EDS etc. He instructed all the IROs to provide state-wise FC data and CA status achieved and pending. It will include NFL, CA, targets etc. He emphasized for taking practical solutions and encouraged to conduct regular FRCM and REC meetings.

7. IGF (ROHQ) requested all the IROs to submit the details of the projects reviewed in PRAGATI, PMO, PMG, E-Samiksha, GOI, monitoring group of PMO in timely manner and concluded the meeting with a proposal for conducting meetings with IROs groups twice in a month for discussing various issues.

8. It was decided that various issues discussed in the meeting, need active involvement of other Divisional Heads (Admin, CCU, IA, Budget etc.) of the

Ministry and accordingly it was decided to invite them in all such future meetings.

9. It was also decided that the list of different vacant posts will be sent again to Admin and IFS Division for processing the same for speedy recruitment. Till this issue is finalized, steps will be initiated to provided additional charges, so that work at different IROs may gets executed efficiently.

The meeting ended with thanks to and from the chair.

Annexure-I

List of participants attended the meeting held on 24th September, 2021 under the Chairmanship of DGF&SS.

1. Shri Subhash Chandra, Director General of Forests and Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India (GoI).
2. Shri K.P. Singh, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Bangalore, MoEF&CC, GoI.
3. Shri V.N. Ambade, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Nagpur, MoEF&CC, GoI.
4. Shri Subrat Mohapatra, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Bhopal, MoEF&CC, GoI.
5. Shri Bivash Ranjan, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Lucknow, MoEF&CC, GoI.
6. Shri Hemanth Kumar, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Chennai, MoEF&CC, GoI.
7. Shri Santosh Tewari, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Ranchi, MoEF&CC, GoI.
8. Shri Pankaj Agrawal, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Dehradun, MoEF&CC, GoI.
9. Mrs. Imtiena Ao, Deputy Director General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Shillong, MoEF&CC, GoI.
10. Shri Anjan Kumar Mohanty, Inspector General of Forests, FC Division,

MoEF&CC, GoI.

11. Shri Ramesh Kumar Pandey, Inspector General of Forests, ROHQ Division, MoEF&CC, GoI.
12. Shri N.S. Murli, Inspector General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Vijayawada & Hyderabad, MoEF&CC, GoI.
13. Shri S.P. Negi, Inspector General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Shimla, MoEF&CC, GoI.
14. Shri Chaturbhuj Behera, Inspector General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Raipur, MoEF&CC, GoI.
15. Shri Shrawan Kumar Verma, Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central), Integrated Regional Office, Jaipur, MoEF&CC, GoI.
16. Shri Dharmdeo Rai, Deputy Inspector General of Forests, ROHQ Division, MoEF&CC, GoI.
17. Dr. Khursid Alam Khan, Scientist 'C' & HoO, Integrated Regional Office, Jammu, MoEF&CC, GoI.
18. Shri Abhijit Roy, Under Secretary, ROHQ Division, MoEF&CC, GoI.
19. Shri Manoj Kumar Khandelwal, Technical Officer (Forestry), ROHQ Division, MoEF&CC, GoI.
20. Shri Rakesh Kumar, Technical Officer (Forestry), FC Division, MoEF&CC, GoI.
21. Shri Ritesh Yadav, Research Investigator (Forestry), ROHQ Division, MoEF&CC, GoI.
22. Shri Sudesna Halder, Research Investigator (Forestry), ROHQ Division, MoEF&CC, GoI.