

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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New Delhi-110003

Dated: 27.01.2023

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Sub: Proceedings of the 2nd meeting of the Captive Elephant Health Care and Welfare Committee (CEHWC) held on 17th January, 2023 through virtual mode-reg.

The undersigned is enclosing herewith the approved Proceeding of the 2nd meeting of the Captive Elephant Health Care and Welfare Committee (CEHWC) held on 17th January, 2023 through virtual mode.

2. This issue with the approval of Competent Authority.

Encls: as above



(Dr. K. Muthamizh Selvan)
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Distribution:

- All the members of the Committee.

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 the 2nd Captive Elephant Healthcare and Welfare Committee (CEHWC)
meeting held on 17th January, 2023 through Video Conferencing.**

The 2nd meeting of the Captive Elephant Healthcare and Welfare Committee (CEHWC) was held through virtual mode on 17th January, 2023 under the chairmanship of Shri Ramesh Kumar Pandey, Inspector General of Forests & Director, Project Elephant. The list of participants is at **Annexure I**.

2. The Chairman of the Committee welcomed all the members and highlighted the major discussion points of the meeting. He informed that Project Elephant had launched with one of the major objective to ensure the welfare of captive elephants in India. Though, the Project Elephant has been taking many measures to protect the captive elephants, the CEHWC constituted with experts to specifically look in to the issues of captive elephants welfare. Further, he informed that major discussion of the today meeting is that the elephant post-mortem protocol, DNA profiling and to prepare the giddiness for is for maintenance of health records of individual animal. He requested the Member Convener of the Committee to initiate the agenda wise discussions.

3. Dr. K. Muthamizh Selvan, Scientist E, Project Elephant Division, MoEF&CC and Member Convener of the Committee initiated the agenda wise discussions. The agenda items discussed under the 2nd meeting of the CEHWC include the following:

Agenda 1: Discussion on progress and validation of the decision taken during the last CEHWC meeting.

Dr. Selvan presented the Action Taken Report (ATR) with respect to the decisions taken during the 1st meeting of the “Captive Elephant Healthcare and Welfare Committee (CEHWC)” held on 13th August, 2022. He also briefed the members about the advisories issued by the Project Elephant Division, MoEF&CC after the 1st meeting of the CEHWC. All the members deliberated and agreed to the ATR. The copy of ATR is at **Annexure II**.

Decision: The advisory issued by the Project Elephant Division dated 15th December, 2022, in compliance to the Judgement & Order passed by Hon’ble High Court of Tripura in W.P. (C) (PIL) no. 17 of 2022 dated 07.11.2022 would be shared with the members of the CEHWC for information.

Agenda 2: Mandatory sampling of the carcass for Tuberculosis (TB) and Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV).

Dr. Selvan highlighted the increasing cases *Tuberculosis (TB) and Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV)*. The screening of infectious disease is not done regularly, therefore, there is a need for more emphasis on the screening of Tuberculosis and EEHV and requested the members to suggest the ways address the issue.

Dr. Easwaran E.K., Retd. Veterinary officer, Kerala and member of the committee suggested to collect the tissue samples from lungs of elephants and to preserve in chemicals such as formaline, alcohol and send it for pathology examination as well as for DNA identifications. He also suggested that 1-2 veterinary laboratories should be designated in each state to conduct the Tuberculosis (TB) and Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV) tests. Dr. Easwaran mentioned that in Kerala, some laboratories are accredited to conduct tests for both, Tuberculosis (TB) and Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV).

Dr. Nigam mentioned that there are guidelines of CZA which clearly mention about the procedure for obtaining of tissue samples from captive animals including the elephants. He suggested for review of these guidelines. He also mentioned that the Project Elephant Division has developed a draft of 'Technical guide to prevent the spread of infectious disease' including TB and EEHV. He requested Dr. Selvan to circulate the draft with all the members of the CEHWC for their comments.

Decision: The Project Elephant Division, MoEF&CC would circulate the draft 'Technical guide to prevent the spread of infectious disease' with all the members of the CEHWC and all the members would share their comments within 20 days. The guide may finalised before March, 2023 for the circulation.

Agenda 3: Preparing the guidelines (Template) for Maintenance of health records of individual animal.

Dr. Selvan highlighted the need for development of guidelines (Template) for maintenance of health records of individual animals (Elephant). Dr. Nigam urged the members to take a lead in development of the guidelines. Dr. Easwaran E.K., volunteered to coordinate the process of development of guidelines (Template) for Maintenance of health records of individual animal.

Decision: Dr. Easwaran E.K., would develop the draft guidelines (Template) for maintenance of health records of individual animal with support from Dr. Devendra Podhade, Assistant Professor, NDVS University, Jabalpur and other members of the CEHWC would provide their comments on the draft guidelines before its final submission to the Ministry.

Agenda 4: *Discussion of progress of DNA profiling.*

Dr. Selvan informed that genetic profiling of captive elephants is an important initiative of the Project Elephant Division. A Judgement & Order has passed by Hon'ble High Court of Tripura in W.P. (C) (PIL) no. 17 of 2022 dated 07.11.2022 has directed the Ministry to conduct proper DNA sequencing of captive elephants along with offsprings in order to prevent capture of young Elephants from the wild.

Dr. Samrat Mondol, Scientist E, WII presented the status of the works done under the captive elephant DNA profiling and 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 fully collected from Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Tripura and partially collected from Bihar and Tamil Nadu. Dr. Mondal mentioned that DNA sampling of all the samples received in the WII's laboratory have been completed and the information has been updated on the app called "Gajah Soochna". He stated that the sample collection process has to be expedited in the remaining states to complete the database. He further informed that his team is trying to develop a webpage on the information received and analysed through the "Gajah Soochna" app.

Dr. Nigam mentioned that since we have to develop the database of around 3000 captive elephants across the country, he urged Dr. Mondal to expedite the process of captive elephants DNA sequencing and analysis.

Decision: Dr. Samrat Modal would expedite the sample collection process of captive elephants across the country and submit a detailed progress report with the Ministry in March, 2023. A booklet on the captive elephant DNA Data base will be prepared as a reference document.

Agenda 5: *Discussion on subcommittee constituted for preparation of Post-mortem protocol and carcass disposal.*

Dr. Parag Nigam, Scientist G, WII briefed the members about the work done so far by the sub-committee in preparation of post-mortem protocol and carcass disposal protocol. He mentioned that the documents are in last stage of finalization and the first draft would be ready soon. He further requested the members to share some good photographs of the post-mortem of elephants for references in the documents.

Decision: It was decided that the sub-committee would finalize the documents and submit the 1st draft of the documents by 15th February, 2023 to the Ministry.

Agenda 6: Evaluation of status of elephants in Rescue centre/elephant camps.

Dr. Selvan mentioned that a lot of elephants are housed in various rescue centres and elephant camps across the country. He suggested that the Ministry can constitute a team of CEHWC members to evaluate the rescue centres/ elephant camps during March/April and give their recommendations to the Ministry.

Dr. Eashwaran suggested to first visit the elephant camps managed by the State Forest Department camps before visiting the rescue centres/ other elephant camps.

Dr. Nigam mentioned that the Central Zoo Authority conducts the periodic evaluation/ inspections of the wild animals rescue centres and elephant camps. He emphasized that the evaluation process of CEHWC should not overlap the works of CZA. He further suggested to develop a proforma, focusing only on the evaluation of management of elephants in Rescue centre/elephant camps so that it would not be a repetition of the works done by CZA.

The Chairman clarified that the CZA conducts the evaluation of rescue centres and zoos as per the guidelines issued by CZA from time to time. He suggested that an evaluation criteria could be developed by the CEHWC based on health and husbandry criteria and the committee could visit and evaluate the camps established for patrolling elephants along with the rescue centres and other elephant camps.

Decision: The CEHWC would develop a matrix based on health and husbandry criteria to evaluate the status of elephants housed in the rescue centres/elephant camps managed by State Governments, Temple Trusts, N.G.O.s etc. along with elephants in Patrolling camps of Forest Departments.

Agenda 7: Discussion on amendments proposed in Section 43 of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022. The following proviso shall be inserted:

“Provided that the transfer or transport of a captive elephant for a religious or any other purpose by a person having a valid certificate of ownership shall be subject to such terms and conditions as may be prescribed by the Central Government.”.

Dr. Selvan briefed the members about the amendment made in the Section 43 of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022, related to transfer or transport of captive elephants. He requested the members of the CEHWC to share their comments on the said Section 43 so that the same could be shared with the Wildlife Division, MoEF&CC with a request to consider the same while drafting the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Rules, 2022. All the members deliberated on the amendments proposed in Section 43 of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022 and agreed to share their comments on the Section 43.

Decision: The members of the Committee would share their comments on the newly amended, Section 43 of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022 within two weeks.

After deliberations, the following actionable points emerged out of meeting:

- i. The advisory issued by the Project Elephant Division dated 15th December, 2022, in compliance to the Judgement & Order passed by Hon’ble High Court of Tripura in W.P. (C) (PIL) no. 17 of 2022 dated 07.11.2022 would be shared with the members of the CEHWC for information.
- ii. The Project Elephant Division, MoEF&CC would circulate the draft ‘Technical guide to prevent the spread of infectious disease’ with all the members of the CEHWC and all the members would share their comments within 20 days. The guide may finalised before March, 2023 for the circulation.
- iii. Dr. Easwaran E.K., would develop the draft guidelines (Template) for Maintenance of health records of individual animal with support from Dr. Devendra Podhade, Assistant Professor, NDVS University, Jabalpur and other members of the CEHWC would provide their comments on the draft guidelines before its final submission to the Ministry.
- iv. Dr. Samrat Modal would expedite the sample collection process of captive elephants across the country and submit a detailed progress report with the Ministry in March, 2023.. A booklet on the captive elephant DNA Data base will be prepared as a reference document.

- v. The CEHWC would develop a matrix based on health and husbandry criteria to evaluate the status of elephants housed in the rescue centres/elephant camps managed by State Governments, Temple Trusts, N.G.O.s etc. along with elephants in Patrolling camps of Forest Departments.
- vi. The members of the Committee would share their comments on the newly amended, Section 43 of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2022 within two weeks.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

List of Participants

- i. Shri Ramesh Kumar Pandey, Inspector General of Forests & Director, Project Elephant.
- ii. Dr. K. Muthamizh Selvan, Scientist E, Project Elephant Division, MoEF&CC
- iii. Dr. Easwaran E.K., Retd. Veterinary officer, Kerala
- iv. Dr. Parag Nigam, Scientist G, WII
- v. Dr. Devendra Podhade, Assistant Professor, NDVS University, Jabalpur
- vi. Dr. Samrat Mondol, Scientist E, WII
- vii. Dr. Lakshminarayan, Project Scientist, WII
- viii. Shri Sajimon, Mahout, Tamil Nadu
- ix. Shri Aditya Bisht, Consultatnt-B, Elepant Cell, WII

ATR 2nd meeting of the Captive Elephant Health Care and Welfare Committee (CEHWC)

| S. No. | Decisions made during the 1 st CEHWC | Action taken |
|--------|--|--|
| 1. | The Committee 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNA samples (blood/ dung) have been collected from the captive elephants in the states of Delhi, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. • An advisory for sample collection of elephants before the transit from one state to another has been issued by the Ministry on 28th October, 2022. • The performa for sample collection of captive elephants have been prepared and circulated with all the Elephant range states. |
| 2. | The Committee 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry vide O.M. dated 30th August, 2022 had requested all the Elephant Range States to initiate necessary actions regarding the conduction of Elephant postmortem 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. |
| 3. | Based on the best practices available, a protocol for health & welfare monitoring of captive elephants will be developed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The protocol is yet to be developed. |
| 4. | 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 days Orientation Workshop on Captive Elephant Management for Elephant Handlers (Mahouts) was organized by Ministry at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, Uttar Pradesh from 3rd to 5th December, 2022. |

Along with these, Project Elephant Division has issued the following :

1. In compliance to the Judgement & Order passed by Hon'ble High Court of Tripura in W.P. (C) (PIL) no. 17 of 2022 dated 07.11.2022, the Project Elephant Division, MoEF&CC has issued an advisory dated 15th December, 2022 to all the Elephant Range States to:
 - i. Conduct a census of all the Elephants in captivity of private persons or Government departments and creation of an inventory of the same with their name, details of ownership certificate, microchip number and photograph.
 - ii. Inspection and verification of certificate of ownerships of all Elephants in captivity and in case there is no certificate of ownership, to either issue a Certificate of ownership or confiscate the Elephant after carrying out necessary inspection and verification of the history and source of the Elephant.
 - iii. Proper DNA sequencing for new offspring to be conducted as to identify and prevent capture of young Elephants from the wild.
2. Proforma for providing the Captive Elephant details from States & Union Territories