No.WLP/26/A/92116-2297/2011-12
Office of the
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests,
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To,
Shri R.L. Meena, IFS
CCF, WL Junagadh

Date: 17/03/2012.

Sub: Minutes of the 6th meeting of State Board for Wildlife

Sir,

The 6th meeting of the State Board for Wildlife was held on 16/03/2012 under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat and Chairman of the board. A copy of the minutes of the meeting is enclosed herewith for your perusal.

Yours Sincerely,

(S.K. Goyal)

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (WL)
& Member Secretary of the Board
Gujarat State, Gandhinagar

Copy fwd. cs. to the Secretary to the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Gujarat State and Chairman State Board for Wildlife. Hon'ble Chief Minister may kindly be apprised about the minutes of the meeting.

Copy fwd. cs. to the Personal Secretary to the Hon'ble Minister Forest & Environment and Vice Chairman of the State Board for Wildlife. Hon'ble Minister may kindly be apprised about the minutes of the meeting.

Copy fwd. cs. to the Personal Secretary to the Hon'ble Minister Forest (State). Hon'ble Minister may kindly be apprised about the minutes of the meeting.

Copy fwd. cs. to Principal Secretary, Forest & Environment Dept., Sachivalaya, Gandhinagar for favour of information.

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Minutes of the Meeting

for

Sixth Meeting of the State Board for Wildlife-Gujarat.

Date: March 16, 2012

Sixth meeting of the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) -Gujarat was convened on 16th March, 2012 under the Chairmanship of Shri Narendrabhai Modi, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat and Chairman of the State Board for Wildlife. Following members, invitees and dignitaries attended the meeting:-

1.	Shr Narendrabhai Modi Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Gujarat	Chairman
2.	Shr Mangubhai Patel Hon'ble Minister, Forest and Environment Department, Government of Gujarat.	Vice Chairman
3.	Shri Kiritisinh J. Rana Hon'ble Minister of State, Forest and Environment Department, Government of Gujarat.	Invitee
4.	Shri Kanubhai Bhalala Hon'ble Minister of State, Agriculture and Water Resources, Gandhinagar	Member
5.	Dr. S. K. Nanda, *IAS* Principal Secretary Forests & Environment Department, Government of Gujarat.	Member

6.	Shri Pradeep Khanna, *IFS* Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), and the Head of Forest Force (HoFF), Gujarat State, Gandhinagar.	Member
7.	Shr S. K. Goyal, *IFS* Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) Gujarat State, Gandhinagar.	Member Secretary
8.	Director General of Police, Gandhinagar	Member
10	Dr. Kachchhiya Patel Director, Animal Husbandry, Gandhinagar	Member
11.	Shri Dilipsing Parmar MLA, Modasa	Member
12.	Shri Govindbhai Prajapati MLA, Palanpur	Member
13.	Dr. S. A. Chavan SAVAJ Foundation, Vadodara	Member
14.	Shri Bharat Pathak, IFS Director, GEER Foundation, Gandhinagar	Member
15	Shri R. L. Meena IFS Chief Conservator of Forests Wildlife Circle Junagadh.	Invitee
16	Shri G. Yadaiah IFS Chief Conservator of Forests Junagadh Circle Junagadh.	Invitee
17	Shri Pradeep Vasudev IFS	Representative of

	Conservator of Forests (Central)	Director, Wildlife Preservation, GoI New Delhi.
18.	Shri M. K. Lavkumar Khachar	Member
19.	Mrs. Smita Pradhan	Member
20.	Shri Deshal Pagi	Member
21.	Ms. Sonalben Shah	Member
22.	Dr. D. B. Jadeja ASPEE College of Agriculture Navsari.	Member
23.	Shri A. O. Sharma, IFS Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Gujarat State, Gandhiangar	Invitee
24.	Shri J. S. Patel, GFS Dy. Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Gujarat State, Gandhiangar	Invitee

Principal Secretary, Forests and Environment, Government of Gujarat welcomed the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the State Board for Wildlife. He also welcomed the members and invitees of the State Board for Wildlife. He informed that Shri D. I. Solanki has conveyed his views. With the consent of the Chairman, he requested the Member Secretary of the Board the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (WL) and the Chief Wildlife Warden to initiate the proceedings of the Meeting. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (the Chief Wildlife Warden), Gujarat State and the Member Secretary of the State Board for Wildlife introduced the agenda items of the meeting for the consideration of the Board as under:

Agenda: 1 For the consideration of SBWL regarding the matter of translocation of Asiatic Lion from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh.

Agenda: 2 Proposal under section 29 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

2.1 Proposal for use of 21.736 ha. Land for installation of 400 KV (Bevdi) Mundra-Zerda (Kansari) electric transmission line no. 2 from Wild Ass Sanctuary by Gujarat Energy Transmission Corporation Limited Vadodara.

2.2 Proposal for use of 0.315 ha. Land of Girnar Sanctuary for construction of New Bhavnath Bridge by Municipal Corporation Junagadh.

2.3 Proposal for use of 0.0525 ha. Land of Gir Sanctuary for erecting of 11 KV electric line by Paschim Gujarat Vij Company.

Agenda: 3 Any other item with the permission of the Chair.

Relevant agenda notice, notes, a compendium of relevant literature, copies of affidavits, copies of scientific papers etc. were provided to the Hon'ble Chairman, Members and Invitees. A copy of the note and copy of the content of the compendium are enclosed herewith collectively and marked as Annexure I.

Agenda-1

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (WL) made presentation introducing salient issues and concerns regarding the agenda. A hard copy of the presentation is enclosed herewith and marked as Annexure II.

After the presentation by the CWLW and MS of the Board and with the permission of the Hon'ble Chairman of the Board, comments, views and opinions on the subject matter were invited and they are recorded as under:

1. Opinion of Shri Lavkumar khachar:

1.1 The written submission by Shri Lavkumar Khachar is enclosed herewith and marked as Annexure III.

1.2 The proposal in the current form would entail giving a few lions every year for about 25-30 years for a very poorly planned project and the people of Gujarat will be mere by-standers. Such action would adversely impact lion conservation at the Gir landscape if the project is allowed.

1.3 A very pertinent issue regarding "Ownership of Lions", quoting the legal provisions of the Bio-diversity Conservation Act, 2002, he stated that Asiatic Lions as a part of Bio-diversity is the property of local people and emphasized that the "Ownership of Lions" is of the people of Saurashtra region of the State of Gujarat and without their permission lions cannot be given for this project.

1.4 He opined that safety of Wildlife in Madhya Pradesh is a serious issue and expressed concern that when Tigers are killed in Madhya Pradesh Lions cannot be sent there for getting killed. Citing the example of introduction of Oryx in Arabia, he apprised the house that due to absolute monarchy this was possible and similar conditions are not prevailing in Madhya Pradesh. He substantiated his statement by giving example of poaching of Tigers, vanishing of Great Indian Bustard and poaching of Gharial in Madhya Pradesh. Based on this he opined that "Let us look after wild animals where they are".

1.5 Based on his rich experience of Wildlife conservation he stated that the conservation is not only the function of science, but it is also a function of culture. He further elaborated that only genetic science would not conserve lions as it has successfully happened with the help of local people having strong cultural routes and value based bondage with nature and elements of nature.

1.6 Regarding big wild cat introduction program he cited example of recent failed translocation of Tigers from Ranthambhore to Sariska Tiger Reserve. Further, citing the example of introduction of one Horned Rhinoceros from Kaziranga (Assam) to Dudhva (U.P.) he explained the technical and cultural difficulties of such projects/programs. The state of Assam had opposed it in the past and overruling the opinion of Assam translocation and introduction was done that is not yet successful after even 28 years. Shri Pradeep Khanna PCCF & HoFF Gujarat State apprised the house with more details of problems and shortcoming of Rhino introduction program.

1.7 Finally concluding his observations and opinion he proposed that the Board should request the Government of India for praising Gujarat State

and people of Gujarat for conserving lions instead of penalizing. At the end he clearly expressed his negative opinion for translocation or giving of lions from Gir to Kuno.

2. Opinion of Dr. S. A. Chavan:

2.1 Total extent of Kuno Sanctuary is only about 345 Sq.kms., which is too small for even one pride of lions and therefore the project proposal is improper for lion conservation.

2.2 Asiatic lions are different from tigers and officials from Madhya Pradesh, who do not have experience of lion conservation and lion ethology and they do not understand lion conservation and therefore the project is lacking technical appropriateness. Lions unlike Tigers move in human habitats, come and go frequently. They settle, camp in fields and people adapt to their behavior. This has been happening since several hundred years.

2.3 He stated that local people in Gujarat are accustomed to live with and know how to behave with lions and therefore he attributed success of lion conservation to the sustained support of the local people.

2.4 Based on his rich wildlife conservation experience he opined that the project proposal in current form appears to be for keeping lions in captive Safari condition for sole objective of Tourism and not for the conservation of lions. As per his knowledge MP officials have never visited, come and discussed with locals about lions and their behavior. He was rather critical of the pronouncement of ex-conservator of Kuno who had talked of Tigons and Ligers as cross breeds.

2.5 Based on these opinions he clearly opined that no lions should be given or translocated from Gir to Kuno.

3. Opinion of Dr. D. B. Jadeja:

3.1 Reiterating the facts of lions surviving in Gir for hundreds of years and now having a good population of about 400 he stated that the current lion population have developed immunity against local pathogens and therefore, the threat of epidemic has no adequate scientific basis. This is also seen from no epidemic episode in the entire history of lion conservation in Gir.

3.2 Giving historical details of lion population estimates he apprised the house that the current population is having its roots in a broad based genetic stock. Shri Pradeep Khanna PCCF & HoFF substantiated this fact by stating that a systematic population estimate of lions was 237 in 1936 by the erstwhile state of Junagadh and thus the lion population has not passed through any genetic bottleneck. Recent genetic studies by the scientists of CCMB, Hyderabad also have scientifically proved that the current lion population does not show inbreeding depression effects.

3.3 He stated that removal of animals from established prides will cause irreparable damage to the social structure of lions at Gir. It will also expose them to risk and vulnerability of new pathogens in new areas.

3.4 Quoting the Government of India program of Cheetah introduction in Kuno-Palpur Sanctuary, he stated that such proposed collection of big cats including existing tigers, cheetah and Asiatic lion in a small Sanctuary indicates lack of scientific and technical rigor in the planning.

3.5 Reiterating the fact that similar attempt by the erstwhile Gwalior state for introduction of lions in Sheopur near the present proposed site of Kuno had failed and a second attempt is undesirable.

3.6 Quoting the scientific facts based on field surveys he opined that lion introduction in Kuno is not desirable as there is no required prey base.

3.7 Based on his observations and opinions he clearly expressed that no lions should be given or translocated from Gir to Kuno. He ended by saying that Cheetahs are proposed for the same area which tigers also trust and so there is too little space for lions to breathe.

4. Opinion of Mrs. Smita Pradhan:

4.1 She expressed her total agreement with the opinions and views of members, who spoke earlier and further added that the present proposal in its current form lacks scientific and professional planning. She was of the opinion that such important matter appears to be dealt in a casual manner without carrying out adequate studies and consultation.

4.2 She agreed with the views of the PCCF & HoFF regarding non suitability of Kuno for lion introduction on account of very poor prey base. The PCCF & HoFF had stated that a scientific paper by the litigant Shree Faiyaz A. Khudsar in the BNHS Journal January – April 2008 reveals that

"Considering the low density of prey(at Kuno) causing scattered distribution each kill will have a higher energy cost attached to it. This may result in increased search activity hence introduced lions are likely to roam widely in search of prey.....This indicates that if lions are introduced now, their survival and establishment will depend largely on how they respond to this limited wild prey availability in Kuno WLS. Straying in search of prey and frequent encounter with human population may not be an ideal situation for an introduction program of a large cat."

4.3 Based on her observations and opinions she clearly expressed that no lions should be given or translocated from Gir to Kuno. Since no assurance is there that they would be safe or looked after.

5. Opinion of Shri Deshal Pagi:

5.1 Based on his rich experience of grass root wildlife conservation he lauded uniqueness of the State and people of Gujarat where successful conservation of wildlife happens with the cooperation and support of the people. He rationalized that lions have survived only in Gujarat when it was persecuted in other parts of north India. This demonstrates support and cooperation of alert and adequately aware people of Gujarat.

5.2 He expressed his apprehension that local people of Kuno may not have such feeling for wildlife as seen from reducing Tiger population. Such apprehension has been substantiated by the "Survey of potential sites for reintroduction of Asiatic lion January-1995" by the WII, which states that "*The poaching is major problem and one of the reasons for small ungulate population.*"

5.3 Based on his observations and opinions he clearly expressed that no lions should be given or translocated from Gir to Kuno.

6. Opinion of Ms. Sonal Shah:

6.1 Agreeing to the opinion of other members she stated that the two threat bases viz. threat of epidemic and narrow genetic diversity are not true and not proved or supported by science and therefore the remedy suggested are illogical.

6.2 Issues of logistic and possible trauma to animals during translocation are also important and nobody should be allowed to inflict such cruelty and drastic artificial action on wild animals.

6.3 She insisted that the spread of lion should be in a natural way rather than artificial relocation to a faraway place. The remedy suggested is more harmful than the existing condition.

6.4 She suggested that the concept of lion conservation in Greater Gir landscape including consolidating and strengthening corridors between Gir P.A. and satellite lion habitats in Greater Gir landscape.

6.5 Based on her observations and opinions she clearly expressed that no lions should be given or translocated from Gir to Kuno.

6.6 Lions so far have discovered their own territories after moving the breadth and length of Asia and no settlement plan for housing them can be designed by humans in this manner particularly looking to 30 convicted poachers from MP.

7. Opinion of Shri Pradeep Vasudeva C. F. (Central), Bhopal. Representative of Government of India:

7.1 Shri Vasudeva presented the views of Government of India by reading out various statements and averments from the affidavit filed on behalf of the MoEF, GoI to the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

7.2 Principal Secretary, Forest & Environment Department, stated after complete reading of affidavit by Shri Vasudeva that this affidavit of MoEF, GoI has been adequately responded by the State of Gujarat. He requested Shri Vasudeva to present any additional points, views or facts. Shri Vasudeva had no further points to be made.

8. Opinion of Shri Kanubhai Bhalala, Hon'ble MLA and Minister of State:

8.1 Hon'ble Shri Kanubhai Bhalala stated that Gir is part of his political constituency and his native place. Being a local person he adequately apprised the Hon'ble members regarding strong emotional bond of local people with Asiatic lions.

8.2 He apprised Hon'ble members that local people have traditional knowledge and skills of co-existence with wildlife including Asiatic lions. He explained the value based tolerance of local people for existence right of wild animals.

8.3 He stated that on account of presence of tigers at Kuno lions cannot survive there and poachers from Madhya Pradesh had poached lions in Gir which indicates that lion cannot survive in Madhya Pradesh.

8.4 He finally opined that due to threat of survival of lions in Madhya Pradesh and better conservation of lions in Gir there is no question of allowing translocation of lions from Gir to anywhere. He also stated that there should not be any politics on this issue.

9. Opinion of Shri Digvirendrasinh Solanki:

9.1 The crux of his views is that, if at all lions have to be shifted from Gir, it should be done only in suitable areas where there is sufficient population of herbivores on which the lions could survive. And since the prey base in Kuno is inadequate at the moment the question of shifting lions could not be entertained.

After detailed discussion and deliberation, Hon'ble Chief Minister and Chairman of the Board appreciated views and opinions of members and invitees. He specially thanked the representative of Government of India for participating and expressing the views of Government of India. On the subject under discussion he apprised Hon'ble members and invitees his two personal experiences of interaction with local people of Gir after the poaching incident in which poachers of Madhya Pradesh were involved. The local people of Gir on two different occasions had strongly conveyed to Hon'ble Chief Minister that the lions are like family members to them. Hon'ble Chief Minister explained that such concept of Asiatic lion being a 'family member' is beyond and much higher than the scientific reasoning and such concept of 'family' sustains the Indian culture and civilization. Emphasizing on this core cultural rationale he apprised that the issue of giving or not giving lions to Kuno is not an issue of conflict between states, but it is the collective Indian cultural approach in the interest of long term conservation of lions as part of 'our family'.

The opinion of the august House was an overwhelming and resounding 'No' to translocation of lions from Gujarat.

Agenda: 2 Proposals under section 29 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

2.1 Proposal for use of 21.736 ha. Land for installation of 400 KV (Bevdi) Mundra-Zerda (Kansari) electric transmission line no. 2 from Wild Ass Sanctuary by Gujarat Energy Transmission Corporation Limited Vadodara.

2.2 Proposal for use of 0.315 ha. Land of Girnar Sanctuary for construction of New Bhavnath Bridge by Municipal Corporation Junagadh.

2.3 Proposal for use of 0.0525 ha. Land of Gir Sanctuary for erecting of 11 KV electric line by Paschim Gujarat Vij Company.

The CWLW presented these three proposals for permission under section-29 with details, location and site maps and proposed conditions for permission. After considering the details presented, Hon'ble members recommended all the three proposals.

Agenda: 3 Any other item with the permission of the Chair.

The Board agreed when the PS, FED broached the subject, that in case of proposals from Government Undertakings seeking use of small quantum of land in or around a sanctuary for electricity line, water pipeline, etc., if the State Government deems it fit and urgent, it may transmit the proposal to GoI for approval of the Standing Committee of NBWL and the matter may be put up to the SBWL in its next meeting.

As there were no other issues the Board Meeting was concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.