सत्यमेव जयते

The Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh
Department of Wildlife Protection
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF WILD LIFE WARDEN

Subject:- Minutes of 4th meeting of State Board for Wildlife, Union Territory of Ladakh, was held on 4th October 2021, through video conferencing.

No:-CWLW/LBWL-MoM/2021/1783-1811 Dated:-27.10.2021

Sir/Madam,

With reference to the above subject, the minutes of the meeting are attached herewith for your kind information. This issues with approval of the Chairman, State Board for Wildlife, Union Territory of Ladakh.

(Preet Pal Singh) IFS,
Chief Wildlife Warden,
Union Territory of Ladakh.

Distribution:

1. Advocate Tashi Gyaltson, Hon'ble Chairman/Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC, Leh.
2. Sh. Feroz Ahmed Khan, Hon'ble Chairman/Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC, Kargil.
3. Sh. Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, UT of Ladakh.
4. Sh. Umang Narula IAS, Advisor to Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Ladakh.
5. Sh. Tashi Namgyal, Executive Councillor, Wildlife, Leh.
6. Sh. Mohd Ali Chandan, Executive Councillor, Wildlife, Kargil.
7. Dr.Pawan Kotwal, IAS, Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment, Union Territory of Ladakh.
8. Sh. Satish Khandare, IPS, Additional Director General of Police, UT of Ladakh.
9. Sh. Rakesh Kumar Jagenia IFS, Deputy Inspector General of Forests, (Wildlife), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
10. Ms. Padma Angmo, IIS, Secretary, Social and Tribal Welfare, Union Territory of Ladakh.
11. Sh. Ravinder Kumar, IAS, Secretary, Animal & Sheep Husbandry Department, Union Territory of Ladakh.
12. Dr. Mohammad Raza, Director, Sheep/Animal Husbandry, UT of Ladakh.
13. Smt. Kunzes Angmo KAS, Director, Tourism, UT of Ladakh.
14. Dr. Ranjit Sinh, Former Director of Wildlife Preservation of India.
15. Dr. Sathya Kumar, Wildlife Institute of India.
16. Dr. R.K Singh, Trustee, Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), Delhi.
17. Dr. Padma Gurmet, Director, Scientist, National Institute of SOWA RIGPA, Ladakh.
18. Dr. Yash Veer Bhatnagar, Sr. Scientist, Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Snow Leopard Trust.
19. Dr. Deskyong Namgail, Principal EJM College, Leh.
20. Dr. Tsewang Namgial, Director and Senior Scientist, Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust.
21. Dr. Javed M.Iqbal, Head of the Department of Zoological ,Govt. Degree College, Kargil.
22. Col. Sourabh Pandey, Army Representative.
23. Dr.Rifat Raina, Scientist, Zoological Survey of India.

24. Representative from Botanical Survey of India.
25. OSD to Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Union Territory of Ladakh for information of the Hon'ble Lt. Governor.
26. OSD to Advisor to Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Union Territory of Ladakh for information of the Advisor to Hon'ble Lt. Governor.
27. OSD to Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment, for information of the Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology & Environment.
28. OSD to Commissioner Secretary, Social and Tribal Welfare for information of the Commissioner Secretary, Social and Tribal Welfare.

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The Administration of Union Territory of Ladakh
Department of Wildlife Protection

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF WILD LIFE WARDEN

Minutes of the meeting

The fourth meeting of the State Board for Wildlife of the Union Territory of Ladakh was held on 4th October 2021 under the Chairmanship of Sh. RK Mathur, Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Ladakh.

2. The following Board members were present:
   a) Sh. Tashi Gyalson, Hon'ble Chairman/Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC, Leh.
   b) Sh. Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Ladakh.
   c) Sh. Umang Narula, IAS, Advisor to Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Ladakh.
   d) Sh. Tashi Namgyal Yakzee, Hon'ble Executive Councilor (Wildlife), LAHDC, Leh.
   e) Dr. Pawan Kotwal, IAS, Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment, Union Territory of Ladakh.
   f) Sh. SS Khandare, IPS, ADGP, Ladakh Police, Union Territory of Ladakh.
   g) Sh. Preet Pal Singh, IFS, Chief Wildlife Warden, Union Territory of Ladakh.
   h) Sh. Ravinder Kumar, IAS, Secretary, Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department, Union Territory of Ladakh.
   i) Ms. Padma Angmo, IIS, Secretary, Social Welfare, Union Territory of Ladakh.
   j) Dr. Mohd. Raza, Director, Animal and Sheep Husbandry, Union Territory of Ladakh.
   k) Dr. MK Ranjitsinh, Former Director of Wildlife Preservation of India.
   l) Dr. Sathya Kumar, Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
   m) Dr. Padma Gurmet, Director, National Institute of SOWA RIGPA, Leh.
   n) Dr. Yash Veer Bhatnagar, Sr. Scientist, Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) Snow Leopard Trust.
   o) Dr. Rifat Raina, Scientist D, Zoological Survey of India.
   p) Dr. Tsewang Namgyal, Director and Senior Scientist, Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust.
   q) Dr. Javed M. Iqbal, Head of the Department of Zoology, Govt. Degree College, Kargil.

3. Shri R.K. Mathur, Chairman, State Board for Wildlife of the Union Territory of Ladakh welcomed all the members and participants to the fourth meeting of the State Board for Wildlife of the Union Territory of Ladakh. Thereafter, he asked the members to introduce themselves. Subsequently, with the permission of the Chair, Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) Ladakh commenced the presentation on the agenda items of the meeting.

3.1 AGENDA 1: Confirmation of the Minutes of the third meeting of the State Board for Wildlife of the Union Territory of Ladakh

3.1.1 The CWLW informed the Board that pursuant to the third meeting of the State Board for Wildlife of the Union Territory of Ladakh, held on 24th July 2021, Dr. Padma Gurmet, Dr. MK Ranjitsinh and Dr. R.K. Singh also provided their inputs via email.

3.1.2 Keeping in view the inputs received and the discussions during the meeting, the minutes of the third meeting of the State Board for Wildlife of the Union Territory of Ladakh were drafted and, with the approval of the Chairman, circulated to all the members vide letter no. *CWLW/LBWL-MoM/2021/1391-418 dated 25.08.2021.*

3.1.3 The Board members were requested to confirm the minutes.

3.1.4 Dr. MK Ranjitsinh said that the draft minutes of the meeting should be circulated to all the members before finalizing the minutes of the meeting and every decision should be recorded in the minutes. He reiterated that this issue has been raised by him in the previous meetings as well. He said that he had suggested that Kalaktartar should be a part of the Dark Sky Sanctuary. He further said that he had requested that Army Officers should also be appointed as Honorary Wildlife Wardens

3.1.5 Dr Padma Gurmet agreed with Dr Ranjitsinh's viewpoint and emphasized that minutes should be finalized and circulated only when inputs are received from all the members of the Board.

3.1.6 Supporting Dr. MK Ranjitsinh's viewpoint, Dr. Tsewang Namgyal pointed out that though the establishment of Safari was not approved by the Board in the previous meeting, it was reflected as approved in the minutes. He also expressed his concern about spotting the wild animals through jeeps in the high-altitude mountainous terrain in Ladakh and the risk of loss of business for homestay owners and tour operators in case jeep safari is introduced in the protected areas of Ladakh.

3.1.7 The Chairperson asked the member-secretary to give his view point on the issues raised by the members. The member-secretary asked the members to point out specific issues which were discussed in the third Wildlife Board Meeting but not recorded in the circulated minutes. The member-secretary further clarified that in the previous Board Meeting, with regard to safari, the members had opposed the concept of keeping wildlife animals in captivity. In the safari now being proposed and recorded in the Minutes, the animals would not be kept captive and the tourist would be taken in open jeep on pre-determined routes for sighting of wild animals. Regarding, appointment of Army Officers as Honorary Wildlife Warden, he said that this activity had already been done and mentioned in the Agenda Item #2 of the agenda circulated for the 4th Meeting of the State Board For Wildlife.

3.1.8 Referring to the concern expressed by Dr. Tsewang about the risk of loss of business for homestay owners and tour operators in case jeep safari is introduced in the protected areas of Ladakh, the chairperson pointed out that the safari and

the eco-tourism activities can be conducted in such a way that both homestays activity as well as the safari can coexist, further enhancing the livelihoods of the people dependent on homestays.

3.1.9 Dr Yashveer Bhatnagar said that the ecotourism of Ladakh should be a wholesome experience and the hybrid form of jeep safari, and the foot Safari might bring a sustainable ecotourism model in the protected areas.

3.1.10 After discussions, the Board approved the minutes with the modifications that Kalaktartar would be included as a part of the proposed Dark Sky Sanctuary in Hanle.

3.2 AGENDA 2: Action taken report on the decision taken during the third meeting of the Ladakh Board for Wildlife

3.2.1 The CWLW presented the action taken report on the decisions taken during the 3rd Meeting of the State Board for Wildlife, for the information of the members of the Board.

Agenda Items	Decision	Action Taken
Agenda Item No.3 Rationalization of boundaries of Hemis National Park	WII should examine whether existing draft notification would suffice or not, and after necessary scientific inputs from WII, further course of action may be decided, i.e., whether to rationalize.	WII has been requested vide this office No.CWLW/WII/2021/1664 dated 23.09.2021 to examine whether existing draft notification would suffice or not. WII said that it is to be an administrative decision whether to rationalize or not but as per the inputs of the WII, the initial notification will suffice and may proceed with settlement of rights
Agenda Item No.4 Declaration of State Animal and State Bird	The Board approved the proposals to declare Snow Leopard and Black Necked Crane as State Animal and State Bird, respectively.	Vide notification No. LA(LA(F&W) UTL/2019(02)/1561-76 dated 31.08.2021, Snow Leopard and Black Necked Crane have been declared as State Animal and State Bird, respectively.
Agenda Item No.5 Appointment of Honorary Wildlife Wardens	The Board accorded its approval to the proposal to appoint Sarpanches and officers of the 14 Corps as Honorary Wildlife Warden.	Vide S.O. 40 dated 14.09.21 & S.O 41 dated 14.09.2021, Sarpanches and officers of 14 Corps have been appointed as Honorary Wildlife Warden.
Agenda Item No.6 Establishment of Wildlife Safari, Snow Leopard Centre and Brown Bear Centre in	The Board accorded its in-principle approval to the establishment of the Wildlife Safari and the International Snow Leopard	In line with the decision taken, a committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner to identify suitable land for the Safari.

Ladakh.	Centre with the conditions that animals would not be kept in captivity.	In this safari, animals would not be kept in captivity.
Agenda Item No. 12 Proposals for Wildlife Clearance	The Board cleared the wildlife clearance proposals with the conditions that transmission lines would be laid underground in certain critical wildlife areas and with adequate safeguards as assessed by the Wildlife Protection Department, UT of Ladakh.	The proposals pertaining Transmission Lines were MoEFF&CC along with Mitigation Plans, through Parivesh Portal. These Mitigation Plans provide for laying of underground transmission lines in critical portions of the sanctuary, bird diverters etc.

3.2.2 Dr. Padma Gurmet enquired about the status of declaration of State Tree and State Flower for the UT. CWLW clarified that the matter regarding declaration of State Tree and State Flower would be taken up by the Ladakh Biodiversity Council (LBC), considering that LBC was more appropriate forum to discuss this issue.

3.3 AGENDA 3: Rationalization of boundaries of Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary and Karakorum Wildlife Sanctuary

3.3.1 Dr. Sathya Kumar, Wildlife Institute of India, gave a detailed presentation on the action taken by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) on the issue of rationalization of the Sanctuaries.

3.3.2 WII informed that data required for rationalization of boundaries had been collected from various secondary sources. However, certain departments were yet to provide the requested data.

3.3.3 Dr Yashveer Bhatnagar suggested the concept of mosaic landscape conservation may be followed in Ladkakh wherein critical wildlife areas within a larger landscape could be conserved and managed separately as a protected area.

3.3.4 Dr Ranjitsinh requested the WII team to exclude the areas required by armed forces and local people from the rationalized sanctuary. In this context, he said that 'finger area' in and around Pangong Lake could be left out from the Sanctuary. However, critical wildlife areas should be included in the Sanctuary and managed intensively.

3.3.5 The Chairperson asked Dr Pawan Kotwal, Principal Secretary, Forest, Ecology and Environment, Union Territory of Ladakh, to hold a review meeting to facilitate provision of required information/data to WII. The latter asked Mr. Sathya Kumar of the WII to tabulate clearly what information is required by the WII, department-wise, at the earliest, so that a meeting of all the concerned

Depts./ HODs could be held and the required information could be furnished to the WII.

2.1 AGENDA 4: Issue of Feral Dogs

2.1.1 CWLW briefed the Board that translocation of dogs out of the wildlife habitats and keeping them in enclosures, as suggested during the previous Board meeting, was examined for implementation. He appraised the Board members that as per Sub-rule (6) of Rule 7 of the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rule, 2001, framed under the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act 1960, the captured dogs, after sterilization, must be released at the same place or locality from where they were captured and date, time and place of their release shall be recorded. Further as per Rule 10 of the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rule 2001, only the dogs certified as rabid or furious can be kept in enclosures till it dies a natural death.

2.1.2 In view of the aforesaid legal position, the CWLW informed the Board that capturing dogs and keeping them in dog rescue centres would not be legally possible unless such dogs were certified/assessed to be furious or rabid. Accordingly, it is envisaged to establish 2-3 dog shelters in Leh, with a capacity to shelter about 300-500 dogs each where dogs certified as 'furious' from wildlife point of view would be kept. Side-by-side, steps would be taken to gift away the dogs captured from the wildlife areas for adoption. CWLW informed the Board that the possibility of declaring dogs as vermin under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act was also examined, but this was not possible to do so because feral dogs were not "wild animals".

2.1.3 Dr Ranjitsinh stated that the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act would prevail over other Acts and Rules in the Protected Areas. He said that Section 33 of the Act gives the CWLW immense powers to deal with such situations within the Sanctuary. He said that necessary directions should be conveyed to the Armed Forces to keep their dogs chained.

2.1.4 Sh. Umang Narula, Advisor to Hon'ble Lt. Governor, suggested that an expert institution may be involved to guide the UT administration in controlling the menace of feral dogs.

2.1.5 Dr Tsewang Namgyal was of view that the capturing dogs and keeping them in enclosures may not be a viable solution for controlling the dog menace in the protected areas considering that very few dogs were rabid in the landscape and most of the dogs were in fact healthy. He reiterated that feral dog population thrives on waste food and by proper waste management, the problem of feral dogs in protected areas can be effectively addressed.

2.1.6 Sh. Tashi Gyalson, Hon'ble Chairman/Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC, Leh said that other ways of controlling the population of feral dogs in protected areas should be identified because catching of dogs in vast, wild areas like Changthang may not be practically possible.

2.1.7 Sh. Tashi Namgyal Yakzee, Hon'ble Executive Councilor (Wildlife), LAHDC, Leh pointed that increasing population of armed forces in the Changthang landscape was the prime reason for increase in the population of feral dogs. He suggested that the dog menace can only be controlled if the Wildlife Department works in collaboration with the armed forces. Adoption of feral dogs could be initiated by spiritual leaders, NGOs and the Department of Animal and Sheep Husbandry.

2.1.8 It was decided that the Animal and Sheep Husbandry Department should continue to neuter the feral dogs found in the protected areas. It was further decided that the Wildlife Department would engage an expert institution to advise the department about the action to be taken, considering, inter-alia, all the operational and legal aspects, to address the issue of feral dogs in the protected areas.

2.2 AGENDA 5: Wildlife Clearance Proposals

2.2.1 The following 11 proposals received from ITBP, Ladakh Police, PMGSY, GREF and ONGC were placed for the consideration of the State Board for Wildlife of the Union Territory of Ladakh:

#	Proposal No. & Name	Category	User Agency	Area (ha)	Protected Areas
1	FP/LA/DEF/5992/2021 Demchok BOP land transfer case	Defence (ITBP)	NW FTR ITBP LEH	1.64	Changthang
2	FP/LA/DEF/5993/2021 Umlingzing BOP land transfer case	Defence (ITBP)	NW FTR ITBP LEH	1.64	Changthang
3	FP/LA/DEF/5994/2021 Koyul BOP land transfer case	Defence (ITBP)	NW FTR ITBP LEH	4.17	Changthang
4	FP/LA/Others/6034/2021 Tourist Police facilitation Centre cum Check Post North pulu Nubra	Others (Ladakh Police)	LADAKH POLICE	0.50585	Karakorum

5	FP/LA/ROAD/6003/2021 T01 To Man Pangong Merak	Road (PMGSY)	SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PMGSY CIRCLE LADAKH	28.8	Changthang
6	FP/LA/ROAD/5979/2021 L027 Mahey to Korzok	Road (PMGSY)	SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PMGSY CIRCLE LADAKH	24	Changthang
7	FP/LA/ROAD/5983/2021 T04 to Largyab- Pachathang	Road (PMGSY)	SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PMGSY CIRCLE LADAKH	15.6	Karakorum
8	FP/LA/ROAD/5982/2021 T01 to Teggar	Road (PMGSY)	SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PMGSY CIRCLE LADAKH	2.124	Karakorum
9	FP/LA/DEF/5585/2020 Construction of Hanle-Chumar Road	Defence Road (GREF)	HQ 753 BRTF (GREF)	188.392	Changthang
10	FP/LA/DEF/5567/2020 Saser la-saser brangsa	Defence Road (GREF)	54 RCC (GREF)	55.68	Karakorum
11	FP/LA/Other/5851/2021 Ladakh Geothermal Field Development at Puga	Other (ONGC)	ONGC Energy Centre	3	Changthang

ITBP LEH

2.2.2 ITBP gave a power point presentation on the proposals, mentioned in the Agenda Item.

2.2.3 After discussions, the proposals in respect of ITBP Border Out Posts (BOPs) mentioned in the Agenda Item, were approved by the Board, keeping in view the security needs of the country.

SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER PMGSY CIRCLE LADAKH

2.2.4 PMGSY presented the proposals listed in the Agenda Item, regarding the construction of PMGSY roads.

2.2.5 Dr Padma Gurmet enquired whether the proposals were for construction of new roads or widening of the existing roads. He asked the user agency to clearly reflect whether the clearance was being sought in respect of a new road or an existing road, to facilitate the Board in taking appropriate decision in the matter.

2.2.6 PMGSY clarified that the proposals were for the widening of the existing roads.

2.2.7 After discussions, the PMGSY road construction proposals were approved by the Board.

GREF (Hanle - Chumur Road)

2.2.8 GREF presented the proposal for the construction of Hanle-Chumar Road.

2.2.9 CWLW informed the Board that Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) had been done for this proposal and the report lists the mitigation measures to be taken by the user agency while constructing the proposed road.

2.2.10 Dr Ranjitsinh enquired about the location of the Road near Hanley; whether it would pass through the marshy land or not; whether it was an existing road or a new road. Dr. Pawan Kotwal also enquired about the exact location of the road.

2.2.11 GREF clarified that the proposed road was an existing road, 15 km length of which, passes through the wetland and it is proposed to widen the said road.

2.2.12 Dr Tsewang Namgyal expressed stated that the BIA was not comprehensive – it did not examine the aspects related to reptiles found in the area. He further added that the activity proposed by GREF may adversely impact the habitat of Pallas Cat and Black Necked Crane.

2.2.13 Dr Yashveer Bhatnagar recommended that removal of biomass during the construction of road should be minimized. He further said that the proposed road should not block the hydrological flow in the area.

2.2.14 Dr Ranjitsinh suggested that the WII team could do a quick assessment and give its report on the alignment and mitigation measures to be taken while constructing the road. WII may suggest changes in alignment of road, if necessary, to avoid destruction of critical wildlife habitat.

2.2.15 Sh. Umang Narula, Advisor to Hon'ble Lt. Governor, stated that there was no requirement for WII to again assess the proposal, considering that BIA had been already prepared by an expert agency.

2.2.16 Dr Tsewang Namgyal suggested that in future when BIA report is being prepared, it will be worthwhile to consult local experts as well.

2.2.17 After discussions, the proposal was approved by the Board.

LADAKH POLICE

2.2.18 Ladakh Police presented the proposal regarding construction of Tourist Police facilitation Centre cum Check Post at North Pulu, Nubra.

2.2.19 Sh. Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, questioned the requirement of constructing a check post considering that Inner Line Permit was now not required by the tourists. Additional Director General, Ladakh Police pointed out that inner line permit was still required in respect of foreign tourist. He also mentioned that construction of the proposed check post was necessary considering that there was no other such establishment/ facility on the route.

2.2.20 CWLW stated that construction of police check post would also be helpful to the Wildlife Department in controlling illegal wildlife trade and poaching activities.

2.2.21 After discussions, the Board approved the proposal.

Thereafter, the Chairman left the meeting for urgent work and asked Sh. Umang Narula, Advisor to Hon'ble Lt. Governor to chair the meeting.

GREF (Saserla -Saser Brangsa Road)

2.2.22 GREF presented the proposal regarding construction of a new Saser la-Saser Brangsa road.

2.2.23 Sh. Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Hon'ble MP, suggested that tunnel may be constructed instead of the proposed road, stating that construction of road would affect the glacier found in that area. In response, GREF stated that the construction of tunnel had also been approved by the Ministry of Defence, but an approach road would still be required to reach the tunnel site. GREF further explained that the construction of tunnel would take another 10 years or so whereas the construction of this road was necessary for linking with the highly strategic area of DBO and for strengthening the security in the area. Moreover, the road would have to constructed first to reach up to the Tunnel Point, whenever it is constructed in future.

2.2.24 Referring to the importance of biodiversity found in the area where the proposed road was to be constructed, Dr Padma Gurmet said that construction of road may adversely impact the floral diversity found in the area. In this context, he stated that biodiversity impact should be considered while granting wildlife clearance to the proposed road.

2.2.25 Referring to the need to preserve the cultural and historical significance, as well as petroglyphs found in the proposed road construction area, Sh. Jamyang Tsering Namgyal reiterated that tunnel should be constructed instead of the proposed road, to meet the security needs of the country.

2.2.26 Advisor to Hon'ble Lt Governor, Sh. Umang Narula, stated that laws exist for the preservation of the artefacts / structures of archaeological heritage & cultural values which would become duly applicable if any such petroglyphs or artefacts exist.

2.2.27 Subsequently, after hearing the views presented by the members before the Board, the Chairman has decided that in the first the GREF authorities may provide additional information regarding the Tunnel Proposal in the Saserla-Brangsa Road in view of the comments of some of the members, including the Hon. MP.

ONGC Energy Centre (01 MW Geothermal Field Development Facility at Puga Valley):

2.2.28 ONGC Energy Centre presented the proposal to establish Ladakh Geothermal (1 MW) Field Development Facility at Puga, for which an MoU had already been signed with the LAHDC Leh and the UT administration. The user agency further informed the Board that drilling would be done to ascertain the temperature of the water found below the earth's surface at Puga and the data collected in this regard would be analysed to further determine the potential of the geothermal energy that could be harnessed from the area. It was proposed to first establish the proposed facility for generating 1MW power and, if found feasible, another facility for generating 50 MW energy would be established.

2.2.29 Pointing out that that Puga was a critical habitat for wildlife, Dr Ranjitsinh said that drilling would have huge adverse impact on the wildlife found in the area. He suggested that the project may be kept on hold till the process of rationalization of Sanctuary is completed. He said that the User Agency should inform the Board about the area that would be required for establishing geothermal facility for generating 50 MW power.

2.2.30 The user agency informed that Board that, to prepare a proposal for 50 MW energy generation, the pilot project of 1MW should be implemented and based on the data generated, particularly with respect to the temperature of water available underground, an overall proposal can be designed. ONGC also pointed out that the area requirement for geothermal is very less compared to other clean energy sources like solar.

2.2.31 Referring to the importance of geothermal in traditional healing system, Dr Padma Gurmet enquired whether the User Agency had consulted traditional healers (Amchis) of Ladakh. In reply, ONGC assured that they would conduct a consultative meeting with the stakeholders to safeguard the interests of Amchis before establishing the proposed 1 MW facility.

2.2.32 Dr Pawan Kotwal emphasized that the Puga area is an oasis, inhabited/used by large number of animals and birds. He further stated that the proposed area is being used by the inhabitants in that area for livestock grazing. In this context, he stressed the need to safeguard the traditional use of the area. He also stressed that all transmission lines should be laid underground.

2.2.33 Supporting the ONGC proposal, Dr Yashveer Bhatnagar said that the project under consideration was a research proposal and, based on the outcome of this research, ONGC could submit a proposal for 50 MW geothermal plant at a later stage for separate wildlife approval. In this context, he suggested that the Board may approve the proposed Ladakh Geothermal (1 MW) Field Development Facility at Puga.

2.2.34 Referring to the ONGC's proposed geothermal facility as a revolutionary step, Sh. Tashi Gyalson said that the proposed facility would be in line with the Prime Minister's vision of making Ladakh carbon neutral. In the foregoing context, he urged the Board to approve the proposed project.

2.2.35 Advisor to Hon'ble Lt Governor, Sh. Umang Narula, stated that the Chairman would be briefed about the discussion and the decision on the proposal would be taken by the Chairman.

2.2.36 Subsequently, after considering the views presented by the members before the Board, the Chairman approved the proposal as a research project of the ONGC.

2.3 AGENDA 6: Establishment of Hanley Dark Sky Sanctuary (Star-view Reserve)

2.3.1 CWLW informed the Board that UT Administration had held discussion with Prof. Annapurni Subramaniam, Director, Indian Institute of Astrophysics regarding establishment of the Hanley Dark Sky Sanctuary. It was decided that the Indian Institute of Astrophysics will technically guide the Union Territory and assist the Department of Wildlife Protection in the following activities:

a) Procurement, installation, operation, and maintenance of the Telescopes and Mobile Planetarium in Hanley area for Astro-Tourism

b) Training of stakeholders for maintaining the Telescopes and Mobile Planetarium

c) Production of films for publicity and education about Astro-Tourism

d) Preparation of a module on cultural Astro-Tourism in Hanley

2.3.2 Dr Pawan Kotwal stated that Hanley was the best site for Dark Sky Sanctuary. He further said proposal would enable the Indian Institute of Astrophysics and other research institutions to preserve clear view of the night sky, which would sustain and promote research in the field of astrophysics. The proposed Dark Sky Sanctuary (Star-view Reserve) would minimize light interference / pollution to the astronomical observatory work, and through Astro-tourism, also improve the livelihood of the locals residing in the area. He explained that the proposal only involves covering the luminaries / bulbs outside the houses of the people and of the security installations around the IIA with lamp shades, drawing of curtains of the windows at night so that the light does not go outside and also putting shades on the headlights of the vehicles to make it low beam He said that Marshy land in and around Hanley would not be utilized for the project and the telescopes would be installed by the IIA on the hillocks already under possession of the IIA at Hanle and inside the villages.

2.3.3 Dr Tsewang Namgyal stressed the need to sensitize the tourist visiting Hanley about the critical wildlife species found in the area, particularly the Eurasian Eagle Owl, a nocturnal bird. He said that unregulated tourist activities in the area during night may disturb the aforesaid bird and its habitat.

2.3.4 This agenda item was for the information of the Board.

2.4 Other Matters

2.4.1 Sh. Tashi Namgyal Yakzee, Hon'ble Executive Councilor (Wildlife), LAHDC, Leh, enquired about the status of the pending poaching cases.

2.4.2 Sh. Tashi Gyalson said that the wildlife officials are not trained to investigate criminal cases. Therefore, Police should help the Wildlife Department in investigation of wildlife poaching cases. He said that Regional Wildlife Warden should be stationed in Leh, considering that all the protected areas are found only in Leh district.

2.4.3 CWLW stated that details of wildlife cases would be presented in the next Board meeting.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to all the members and participants.