

FIFTEENTH KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**COMMITTEE
ON
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
(2023-2026)**

SIXTY FIFTH REPORT

(Presented on 08TH OCTOBER 2024)



**SECRETARIAT OF THE KERALA LEGISLATURE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
2024**

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on

**Paragraphs relating to Forest and Wild Life Department
contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General
of India for the year ended 31st March 2017**

(Economic Sector)

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

(2023-2026)

COMPOSITION

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Legislature Secretariat :

Dr. N. Krishna Kumar, Secretary.

Shri. Selvarajan P. S., Joint Secretary.

Shri. Jomy K. Joseph, Deputy Secretary

Smt. Beena O. M., Under Secretary.

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Committee on Public Accounts, having been authorised by the Committee to present this Report, on their behalf present the *Seely Fifth* Report on paragraphs relating to Forest and Wild Life Department contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended 31st March 2017 (Economic Sector).

The Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the years ended 31st March 2017 (Economic Sector) was laid on the Table of the House on 30th November 2018.

The Committee considered and finalised this Report at the meeting held on 4th September 2024.

The Committee place on records our appreciation of the assistance rendered to us by the Accountant General in the examination of the Audit Report.

Thiruvananthapuram,
.....*21st*..... October 2024.

SUNNY JOSEPH,
Chairperson,
Committee on Public Accounts.

REPORT

FOREST DEPARTMENT

2. Implementation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in the State.

2.1 Introduction

The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (the Act), a Central Act, was enacted for the protection of wild animals, birds and plants and connected matters with a view to ensure the ecological and environmental security of the country. It was enforced in Kerala with effect from 01 June 1973.

The Wildlife wing of the Forests and Wildlife department (Department) came into existence from 01 March 1985 on the direction of the Government of India (GoI) to constitute a separate Wildlife wing to strengthen the wildlife protection and conservation programmes in the State in tune with the first National Wildlife Action Plan of 1983. All Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLS) and National Parks (NP) were brought under the control of the Wildlife wing and separate Wildlife Divisions (WLD) were formed to manage them. There are six NPs, 17 WLS and one Community Reserve in Kerala. The total geographical area of Kerala State is 38,863 sq km, of which forest land constituted 11,309 sq km (29.10 per cent). The extent of Protected Areas (PAs)¹ as on 31 March 2017, as claimed by the Department was 3,213 sq km, which constituted 8.27 per cent of the total geographical area of the State. PAs consist of the areas notified under the Act as Sanctuaries, NPs, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves. The PAs notified in the State are as shown in Appendix-III(1).

2.2 Organisational set-up

The Department is headed by an Additional Chief Secretary to the Government. The organisational set up of the Wildlife wing of the Department is given in Appendix-III(2).

1 'Protected Area' means a National Park, a sanctuary, a conservation reserve or a community reserve notified under Sections 18, 35, 36A and 36C of the Act.

2.3 Audit Objectives

The Performance Audit seeks to assess:

- (a) whether there was proper and adequate planning for the conservation and protection of wildlife in the State; and
- (b) whether implementation and enforcement measures for wildlife protection were taken in accordance with the Act.

2.4 Audit criteria.

Audit findings are based on criteria derived from:

- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (as amended from time to time) and Rules framed thereunder.
- Forest Act, 1961 and Rules framed thereunder.
- Management Plans/Conservation Plans/Working Plans of the Division Offices.
- Government Orders, Notifications, Guidelines, etc.

2.5 Audit scope and methodology.

The Performance Audit was conducted from May 2017 to October 2017 covering the period 2012-17. Audit test checked the records of four WLDs² out of 10 and six Territorial Divisions³ out of 25, selected on the basis of Probability Proportional to Size Without Replacement sampling method. In addition to the samples selected, Audit also scrutinised the records of Silent Valley Wildlife Division, Mannarkkad and Social Forestry Division, Thrissur. An entry conference was conducted on 05 July 2017 attended by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden (PCCF & CWW) and the exit conference held on 20 February 2018.

2.6 Audit findings.

2.6.1 Planning for conservation and protection of wildlife in the State.

2. Periyar East, Periyar West, Wayanad & Idukki.

3. Konni, Ranni, Vazhachal, Malayattoor, Munnar and Kothamangalam.

2.6.1.1 Functioning of the State Board for Wildlife.

According to Section 6 (as amended in 2002) of the Act, the State Government shall constitute a State Board for Wildlife (the Board) consisting of 31 members with the Chief Minister as the Chairperson, which shall advise the State Government on various matters related to protection and conservation of wildlife. In terms of Section 7 of the Act, the Board is required to meet at least twice a year.

The Government of Kerala (Government) constituted the Board as required, but the Board did not hold meetings as specified in the Act. Audit observed that during the period 2012-13 to 2016-17, against the requirement of at least 10 meetings only five were held, with no meeting during 2015-16. Non-conduct of meetings by the Board delayed decisions on agenda items based on which the Board was to advise the Government on issues/matters concerning the protection and conservation of wildlife and its habitat.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the delay in convening meetings of the Board was not intentional and that the audit findings are taken note of and corrective action would be taken in future.

[Audit paragraphs 2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.6.1 and 2.6.1.1 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraphs is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

1. While considering the above audit paragraphs, the Committee inquired whether the State Wildlife Board met regularly at present. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that the board meetings were being held regularly in the current year and had already met in the month of January. He added that a file had been submitted to the Hon'ble Chief Minister to decide the date of the next board meeting.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

2. No Comments.

2.6.1.2 Non-constitution of Advisory Committee

Section 33B⁴ of the Act provides for constitution of an Advisory Committee for rendering advice on the measures to be taken for better conservation and management of each sanctuary including participation of the people living within and around the sanctuary. This is not constituted till date (December 2017). Hence, the Government failed to ensure better conservation and management of the sanctuaries through local participation.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the process of formation of an Advisory Committee for each sanctuary was in progress and this would be finalised within a short period.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.1.2 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraphs is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

3. Regarding the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that a proposal to establish an Advisory Committee was submitted to the Government in the current year. The Committee observed that the proposal for the constitution of the Advisory Committee was submitted only in 2023, after a period of fifty years from enactment of the Act.

4. The Committee expressed its displeasure over the inordinate delay on the matter and directed the Department to constitute an Advisory Committee as soon as possible and inform the Committee.

⁴ The State Government shall constitute an Advisory Committee consisting of the Chief Wildlife Warden or his nominee not below the rank of Conservator of Forests as its head and shall include a member of the State Legislature within whose constituency the sanctuary is situated, three representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions, two representatives of non-governmental organisations and three individuals active in the field of wildlife conservation, one representative each from departments dealing with Home and Veterinary matters, Honorary Wildlife Warden, if any, and the officer-in-charge of the sanctuary as Member-Secretary.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

5. The Committee notes that it took nearly fifty years for submission of proposal for constitution of the Advisory Committee after enactment of the Act. Therefore, the Committee directs the Department to take prompt measures to establish an Advisory Committee as early as possible and to furnish a report thereon to the Committee urgently.

2.6.1.3 Notification of Sanctuaries/National Parks

The State is empowered by the Act to declare its intention to constitute a WLS or NP through a notification under Section 18 and Section 35 respectively. This is to be followed by appointment of a Collector who will determine the rights or claim of persons over the land and finalise the acquisition within a period of two years. After completion of this procedure, a final notification as per Section 26A⁵ or 35(4) is to be issued declaring the area as a WLS or NP by specifying the limits and the date of effect, which cannot be altered by the State Government without recommendation of the National Board for Wildlife.

Since 1991, the Government issued intention notifications in respect of three NPs and four Sanctuaries as given in Table-2.1.

Table 2.1: Details of Sanctuaries and National Parks notified since 1991

SLNo.	Name of the Sanctuary/ National Park	Extent (sq.km)	Intention notification issued under section	Date of Notification	Status of land before notification
1	Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary	0.0270	18(1)	31.08.2004	Purambokke
2	Kurinjimala Sanctuary	32.000	18(1)	06.10.2006	Revenue
3	Choolannur Peafowl Sanctuary	3.420	18(1)	15.05.2007	Vested
4	Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary	74.215	18(1)	05.06.2009	Reserve/ vested
5	Pambadum Shola National Park	1.318	35(1)	23.12.2003	Reserve

5 Section 26A was inserted in the Act through amendment Act in 1991

6	Anamudi Shola National Park	7.500	35(1)	14.12.2003	Reserve
7	Mathikettan mala National Park	12.817	35(1)	10.10.2003	Cardamom Hill Reserve

Source: Notifications issued by the Government

It was observed in the above-mentioned cases that though eight to 14 years had lapsed since the intention notifications, the final notification under Sections 26A (1)/35(4) was not issued till date (February 2018). As the specific limit and situation of the sanctuary is defined and notified only with the final notification, delay in issue of the final notification may lead to alienation of land from the initially notified area as observed in the case of Kurinjimala⁶ Sanctuary.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the delay in final notification was due to resistance from the public and the long process involved in convincing them. Further, it was stated that in the case of two NPs (Pambadum Shola and Anamudi Shola), the area fell within reserve forests and therefore, the intention notification itself could be considered as the final notification.

The reply is not acceptable as Audit observed that even where the land was under the full control of the Department (Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary), the final notification was pending. In the case of the two NPs, the Government should have directly notified⁷ the area as NPs instead of issuing intention notification under Section 35 (1) of the Act.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.1.3 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

6 In the case of Kurinjimala sanctuary, the area notified as per initial notification issued in 2006 was 3200 hectares. In 2009, the Collector (appointed under the provisions of the Act) in order to determine the rights issued a notification excluding an area of 672 hectares (possibly due to encroachments) from the proposed sanctuary without assigning any reason.

7 Explanation (under section 35 of the Act) - For the purposes of this section, in case of an area, whether within a sanctuary or not, where the rights have been extinguished and the land has become vested in the State Government under any Act or otherwise, such area may be notified by it, by a notification, as a National Park and the proceedings under sections 19 to 26 (both inclusive) and the provisions of sub-sections (3) and (4) of this section shall not apply.

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

6. While considering the above audit paragraph, the Committee brought to the notice of the Department that even after 15 years of appointment of the 'Collector' to settle the rights within the sanctuary, there was a delay in issuing the final notification regarding the Chulannur Peafowl Sanctuary. Additionally, the Farmers' Organisations had raised concerns that the notification related to ESZ was not in accordance with the law. The Committee inquired about the reason for the delay in issuing the final notification, including that of Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary.

7. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that as amended by the Wildlife Protection Act of 2003, the land notified after 01.04.2003, including earlier reserved forests, did not require a final notification. Therefore, final notification was not required for the three National Parks Pambadum Shola, Anamudi Shola and Mathikettan Mala. He added that 'Collectors' had been appointed to settle the rights at Chulannur Peafowl Sanctuary, Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary, Kurinjimala Sanctuary and Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary. The final notification had not yet been issued due to delay in settling the rights, and it would be issued as soon as the rights are settled. The final notification regarding Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary had not yet been issued, he added.

8. The Committee assessed that it was the fault of the Department that the rights were not settled even after so much of delay. To further queries of the Committee, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the Forest Department had no direct role in settling the rights and the responsibility was vested with the Collectors to receive and settle the claims for rights. The Committee suggested that the 'Collectors' be summoned and inquired into the details. The Committee also enquired whether the Government was taking any action in that regard.

9. The Additional Secretary, Forest and Wildlife Department informed that necessary follow-up action would be taken at the earliest. In response to a query of the Committee, he informed that the 'Collectors' were appointed through Government notification.

10. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the 'Collectors' were appointed for Chulannur Peafowl Sanctuary and Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary in 2007 and 2009 respectively and the change in revenue division also caused delay in that regard, but follow-up actions are going on properly at present.

11. The Committee opined that an inordinate delay had occurred on the part of the Department and voiced its profound displeasure with the response provided by the Forest Department. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests further clarified that the delay had occurred on the part of the Revenue Department. He added that revenue officials like Sub-Collectors of the respective areas were being nominated as 'Collectors' as it was a land-related issue. He assured the Committee that necessary instructions would be given to the Wildlife Warden and 'Collectors' under the respective sanctuaries for expediting the process.

12. When the Committee inquired about the reason for the absence of the Additional Chief Secretary of the Forest and Wildlife Department in the Committee meeting, the Additional Secretary of the Forest and Wildlife Department replied that the ACS could not attend that meeting as he had to attend another meeting. The Committee expressed strong displeasure over the absence of the departmental Secretary in attending the meeting and the failure of the Department officials in furnishing relevant replies during witness examination.

13. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden admitted the delay and informed that they had reviewed it several times. He added that if more steps were taken on the matter earlier, it could have been completed by now. He assured that if some more time was allowed, most of the problems would be solved and urgent measures were currently being taken and a meeting would soon be held with the Collectors as well.

14. To the Committee's query as to how long it would take to complete the process, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that it would take at least six months and a meeting was held with

the concerned Collectors to discuss the matters including setting up of an Advisory Committee and that the Department had done everything possible at their level. He also added that two or three meetings had been scheduled at Government level in that regard to speed up the process and discussions were held twice regarding Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary. The land of some private individuals had been acquired by paying the price of the land in connection with Choolannur Peafowl Sanctuary and the delay in issuing the notification was due to some land related disputes and issues in survey number. He assured the Committee that the report would be submitted within six months after resolving all the irregularities. The Committee accepted the reply furnished by the department

Conclusions/ Recommendations

15. The Committee observes that even after 15 years of appointment of the Collectors to settle the rights within the sanctuary, the final notification has not yet been issued. The Committee opines that the inordinate delay in issuing the final notification was due to some issues in resolving land related irregularities and also expresses its displeasure with the response provided by the Department officials. Hence, the Committee directs the Department that joint meetings of Collectors and Wildlife Wardens of respective Sanctuaries/National Parks should be convened urgently and also urges to provide necessary instructions to them to expedite the process of issuing final notification.

2.6.1.4 Strengthening and enhancing the protected area network.

National Wildlife Action Plan 2002-16 focused on strengthening and enhancing the PA network in the country by creation of new legal PA categories like Conservation Reserves⁸ and Community Reserves⁹. Through these categorisations and by including suitable adjacent habitats and corridors with existing PAs,

8 Areas adjacent to National Parks and sanctuaries and those areas which link one protected area with another, declared as a Conservation Reserve for protecting landscapes, seascapes, flora and fauna and their habitat.

9 Where a community or an individual has volunteered to conserve wildlife and its habitat in private or community land, the State Government may declare such land as a Community Reserve, for protecting fauna, flora and traditional or cultural conservation values and practices.

the National Wildlife Action Plan aimed at bringing 10 per cent of India's land mass under the PA network and urged the States to establish new PAs including the proposed Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves, etc.

- The Department reportedly brought 8.27 per cent of the land mass under PA network.
- However, Audit observed that the figures reported by the Department included core area of 293.76 sq km added to Periyar (148 sq km) and Parambikulam (145.76 sq km) Tiger reserves; and buffer area of 360.90 sq km added to Parambikulam tiger reserve (212.90 sq km) and Silent Valley National Park (148 sq km), though the same were yet to be notified as sanctuaries. Therefore, an area of 654.66 sq km out of 3,213 sq km claimed by the Department was yet to be notified, reducing the area under PA to 6.58 per cent.

Audit also observed that the forest cover of the state was 11,309 sq km, of which only 2,558 sq km were under the PA network. The Department did not initiate any action to achieve the PA network target by notifying the forest area, which was already under its control. Even the proposal in the Working Plan of Vazhachal Territorial Division to declare certain forest areas as sanctuaries did not progress further. Therefore, there was scope for improvement in achieving the target PA network area envisaged in the National Wildlife Action Plan 2002-16.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the audit finding was taken note of and efforts in this direction would be expedited.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.1.4 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

16. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests submitted that as amended by the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Section 38V(2) thereof in 2012, even if an area is a core or critical tiger area, the tiger reserve will enjoy the same protection as a sanctuary and therefore, the annexed area need not be declared as a sanctuary. A proposal had been submitted to the State Wildlife Board to notify the buffer zone area of Silent Valley National Park as Bhavani Wildlife Sanctuary and also to set up a new sanctuary named Sankhili Wildlife Sanctuary, he added.

17. An official from AG added to the discussion that the State Wildlife Board, in its meeting held in November 2010 had recommended that the aforementioned regions be designated as sanctuaries, and in that case, the said places could have been notified prior to the amendment.

18. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the amendment came into effect in 2012, following the recommendations of the State Wildlife Board with the purpose of providing sanctuary protection to those areas. However, such a declaration was unnecessary since the tiger reserves already offered more protection to these areas than the sanctuaries.

19. An official from AG brought to the notice of the Committee that it was stated in Section 38 V(2) that, 'The provisions of sub-section (2) of section 18, sub-sections (2), (3) and (4) of section 27, sections 30, 32 and clauses (b) and (c) of section 33 of this Act shall, as far as may be, apply in relation to a tiger reserve as they apply in relation to a sanctuary' and requested for a clarification regarding the definition of section 38V (2) of Wildlife Protection Act 1972 mentioned in the reply submitted by the department.

20. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that Section 18 which dealt with the final notification of the sanctuary could be applied here i.e., the annexed area would become part of the Tiger Reserve and the protection of the sanctuary under Section 38 V would invoke all the provisions of the Act.

21. An official from AG stated that since sub-section 2 of Section 38 V specifies the situation and limits of such areas, confirmation would be required in that regard.

22. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the situation and limits were said in cases where there had been a delay in the final notification. When the first notification is released, only an approximate estimate of the limit would be specified and the Collectors would be appointed to make the final decision in that regard. He added that the demarcation could be finalized only after settling the claims regarding the rights of the people within the limits. Since these areas were uninhabited, there were no real claimants and there was no need for declaration after the amendment.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

23. No comments.

2.6.1.5 Administrative control of new area added to Tiger Reserve

The Government notified (December 2009) an extent of 390.89 sq km as core and 252.77 sq km as buffer area of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, which were inclusive of 145.76 sq km and 212.90 sq km respectively of the adjoining Territorial Divisions¹⁰.

The first Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve was prepared for the period 2011-21. As stipulated in the TCP, the Field Director (Project Tiger) was to take over the 145.76 sq km area of forest land from the above three Divisions and manage the area as one unit under the administrative control of Deputy Director, Parambikulam Tiger Reserve.

It was observed that:

- The administrative control of the territorial forest area included in the core area was not handed over to the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve. Hence, the management prescriptions¹¹ provided with regard to protection and conservation of wildlife were limited to the existing forest area of the four¹² ranges of the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve only. There were no specific management prescriptions in respect of weed

¹⁰ Nenmara, Chalakkudi and Vazhachal.

¹¹ The Department used the word 'prescription' in the Management, Conservation, Working Plans to denote stipulations for future action.

¹² Sugam, Karimala, Parambikulam and Orukomban.

eradication/Vayal¹³ maintenance, construction of new water holes, deepening of existing water holes, construction/maintenance of anti-poaching camps etc in the newly added area which negated the very purpose of their being brought under the tiger reserve.

- Similarly, administrative control of the buffer area transferred was not handed over to the Field Director (Project Tiger) even though more than eight years had lapsed since the notification.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the core area of Vazhachal (60.53 sq km) and Chalakkudy (42.24 sq km) was already handed over to Parambikulam Tiger Reserve and that of Nenmara Division (42.99 sq km) was in progress. Further, the area was managed as a tiger reserve as per the prescriptions in the TCP and wildlife management is being carried out in these areas.

The reply is to be viewed against the fact that handing over of the entire core area, which is under the sole control of the Department and where no third party is involved is not yet complete despite more than eight years of the notification. Moreover, the TCP (2011-21) of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve does not include management prescriptions for these areas.

2.6.1.6 Delay in notification of areas as Sanctuary

The Government added areas of the adjoining Territorial Forest Divisions to the existing sanctuaries and tiger reserves through notifications as either buffer or core area. These areas were, however, not notified as PAs.

An extent of 148 sq km of Ranni Territorial Division was added as core area to the Periyar Tiger Reserve (PTR) during the year 2007. Similarly, an extent of 145.76 sq km¹⁴ of adjoining territorial division was added to the core area of the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve during the year 2009. Further, an extent of 148 sq km was added (June 2007) to the Silent Valley National Park as buffer. Though the State Board in its meeting held on 30 November 2010 recommended declaring the above areas as WLS, the same did not materialise.

13 Vayals are low attitude marshy grass lands with perennial availability of water and grass.

14 Nenmara Territorial Division 42.99 sq km, Chalakkudi Territorial Division 42.24 sq km and Vazhachal Territorial Division 60.53 sq km.

The Working Plan¹⁵ of each Division, prepared for a period of 10 years, is approved by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF & CC). It was proposed in the Working Plan (2002-12) of the Vazhachal Division to declare the entire forests of the Division, excluding Athirappilly Range, as a Sanctuary so that the whole area becomes a conservation unit. Out of the total Divisional forest area of 413.94 sq km, 318.84 sq km was proposed to be declared as Sanctuary. Though an extent of 215.75 sq km¹⁶ of this was added to Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, the Department did not take action to declare the remaining area of 103.09 sq km as Sanctuary. This weakened enforcement of penal provisions against violation of prohibited/restricted activities like restricting entry to the sanctuary, prohibition of entry with weapon, etc.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the process of issuing final notification of the area handed over to the PA network was in progress.

[Audit paragraphs 2.6.1.5 and 2.6.1.6 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraphs is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

24. While considering the above paras, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that it was only after the aforementioned amendment, the Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) came into effect, which included a buffer plan and a core plan. He added that people should not enter the core area even though that area belongs to the Territorial Forest Division. When the TCP came, the buffer plan was also included in the plan of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve. So the Administrative Jurisdiction of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve vests with itself, and the conservation and other matters are being done accordingly.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

25. No comments

15 Working plan is a written scheme of management aiming at continuity of policy controlling the systematic treatment of a forest prepared for each territorial division.

16 60.53 sq km core and 155.22 sq km as buffer.

2.6.1.7 Deficiencies in planning

In forest areas, other than the PAs and Tiger Reserves, management of wildlife and animal habitats are included in the Working Plan of the respective Forest Division. In respect of PAs and Tiger Reserves separate plans are prepared by respective Divisions for management of wildlife and habitats and approved by PCCF&CWW¹⁷/National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)¹⁸. As per the National Forest Policy, 1988, no forest should be permitted to be worked without an approved working plan by the competent authority and the National Working Plan Code, 2014 requires the working plans to be revised every 10 years.

The Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs)¹⁹ as the Wildlife Wardens are responsible for the protection and conservation of wildlife and habitats in their respective jurisdictional area and are required to manage them through approved working plans of the Division.

Audit observed that in Vazhachal, Ranni, Malayattoor, Konni and Kothamangalam Divisions, there was no working plan during the period 2012-17, 2012-14, 2012-15, 2011-15 and 2011-16 respectively. In the absence of a 10 year working plan, these Divisions followed short term interim management plans.

Short term plans were prepared without detailed planning inputs, or any prescription for management of wildlife and habitats. Implementation of short term plans without inclusion of area specific measures for conservation and protection of wildlife negatively impacts scientific management of forest.

The Government accepted (March 2018) the audit observation and stated that the lack of continuous approved working plan was due to the long process to be followed in the preparation and approval of the working plans. But currently all divisions except Vazhachal had got approved working plans prepared as per the new working plan code, which included adequate management measures for protection and conservation for wildlife.

17 PCCF&CWW approves the management plan of PAs.

18 NTCA approves the Tiger Conservation Plan.

19 The DFOs are responsible for management of their respective territorial divisions, whereas wildlife wardens are responsible for management of wildlife divisions which comprise PAs.

2.6.1.8 Shrinkage of elephant habitat in Munnar Division and its impact

Catchment area of Anayirangal Reservoir²⁰ in Munnar Division was a hub of wild animals especially elephants due to the availability of water and fodder. During the year 2002, the State Government rehabilitated landless tribes in Pandhadikkalam, 301 Colony²¹ and 80 Acre area adjacent to Anayirangal. There were 15 settlements surrounding the reservoir, of which five were new tribal settlements, which came up after land assignment in 2002. With the establishment of new settlements, the available habitat of elephants in this area shrank, which resulted in intense human-elephant conflicts in this area. To counter animal attacks, damage of crops, etc. solar fences were built along the private land boundaries blocking the natural path of elephants, which made them more aggressive.

Many incidents of death, damage to crops/building, injuries etc. due to animal attacks, disturbances to wildlife due to tourism activities were reported in Chinnakanal and Anayirangal area of Devikulam Range. Many of the inhabitants rehabilitated abandoned the area due to frequent elephant attacks.

The situation was further aggravated by the use of boats by Kerala State Electricity Board Limited for tourism activities in the reservoir. The elephants, which get disturbed by the boating activity do not have an escape route as all other sides are surrounded by private properties secured by fences. Thus, due to the actions of the Government neither the purpose of tribal welfare nor wildlife conservation is served.

The approved Working Plan of the Division. (period 2010-20) emphasised keeping the corridors to Mathikettan side and Kannan Devan Hill side, free from activities impeding elephant movements. The Working Plan recommended protecting the entire valley by declaring it as an Ecologically Sensitive and Protected Area and to confine the human settlements by re-locating them to areas less frequented by elephants.

²⁰ Reservoir area of Anayirangal Dam is controlled by Kerala State Electricity Board Ltd

²¹ Around 301 families settled down at Anayirangal area between 2001 and 2005, hence the name 301 Colony.

The Act empowers the State Government to declare an area as PA if it considers that such area is of adequate ecological, faunal, floral, geomorphological, natural or zoological significance, for the purpose of protecting, propagating or developing wildlife or its environment. The area was frequented by elephants and the Department objected to the rehabilitation, but the Government ignored this and rehabilitated landless tribals in this area.

Audit observed that the Department did not submit any proposal to the Board for declaring the area as PA. The Division requested the District Collector, Idukki only in May 2017 to submit a proposal to the Government for relocating the remaining people of the 301 Colony elsewhere.

Non-declaration of the area as PA is causing continued human-wild animal conflicts.

The Government stated (March 2018) that the area as pointed out fell under Anamudi Elephant Reserve managed as per the prescriptions in the approved Elephant Reserve Management Plan. So it may not be required to declare the said area as a PA as mentioned in the audit observation.

The reply is not acceptable as in the working plans proposed by the Department and approved by MoEF & CC, the area should have been declared as PA for elephant corridor and the tribals should not have been rehabilitated in this area.

Recommendation No.1: The Government may initiate steps to expedite final notification for declaration of the Sanctuaries/National Parks.

Recommendation No.2: The Government may take measures to ensure continuity of working plans.

[Audit paragraphs 2.6.1.7 and 2.6.1.8 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraphs is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

26. While considering the above audit paras, the Committee inquired about the measures that had been taken by the Expert Committee constituted under the direction of Honourable High Court to formulate short/long term measures to prevent human-wildlife conflicts and crop damages.

27. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that in the first meeting of the Expert Committee held in Munnar, the problems related to boating in the reservoir were solved and certain problems existing in Munnar had been solved to some extent. The Expert Committee meetings were being held regularly in other areas as well, and measures were being taken. As a long-term strategy, proposals for installing fencing - like measures in many divisions across Kerala with the help of NABARD had been approved and were being implemented and further suggestions were being expected from the Expert Committee, he added.

28. In response to a query from the Committee, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that the Expert Committee was established as per the instructions of the High Court and the members include Adv. D. Ramesh Babu, Amicus Curiae, Shri.O.P. Kaler, former Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Shri. Pramod G. Krishnan, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Vigilance and Forest Intelligence) and other officials. He also added that the Committee was preparing a report on short/long term measures and a project of ₹620 crore had been prepared for submission before the Central Government. After the submission of the said project, it has been decided to formulate preventive measures through three or four projects. He added that NABARD had already sanctioned a project at the State level for setting up about 600 km of hanging solar fencing, ordinary solar fencing, trenches etc. and the tender process was ongoing. At present, only the work of hanging solar fencing and a project costing ₹40 crore which had been sanctioned only for Wayanad region including Aralam area were in progress. It was decided to construct 800 kilometres of fencing using funds from various heads of accounts. There would be no financial constraints, as NABARD would provide the necessary funds for that.

29. The Committee also pointed out certain regional issues reported in Kasaragod District and opined that the Forest Department had not taken any action in those issues. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests replied that the panchayats in Kasaragod District were handling the preventive measures more effectively than the Forest Department, and fencing had been done for 25–30 kms.

30. The Committee evaluated that as there were no other options, the public was taking up the work that should have been done by the Forest Department and was adopting preventive measures at their own cost.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

31. The Committee evaluates that the repeated recent incidents of human-wild animal conflicts that have resulted in loss of life and extensive damage to agricultural crops are of serious concern. The Committee notices that the delay in taking action by the Forest and Wildlife Department has further worsened the issue. So, the Committee directs that sufficient and adequate measures with the assistance of NABARD should be taken to prevent such incidents in future.

2.6.2 Implementation of conservation, protection and enforcement measures

2.6.2.1 Population of umbrella species

Tigers and elephants serve as umbrella species²² for the conservation of all biota represented by the ecosystems. The status of their population indicates the well-being of the ecosystem.

According to the censuses and as reported by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun the population of tigers in Kerala increased from 46 in 2006 to 136 in 2014. Similarly, as per the report of elephant population census August 2017, estimated elephant population in Kerala increased from 2,735 in 2012 to 3,054. This indicates that the protection and conservation measures implemented by the Department is yielding results.

²² Umbrella species are those species selected for making conservation related decisions as protecting those species indirectly protects many other species that make up the ecological community of its habitat.

2.6.2.2 Ineffective surveillance

- The Act prohibits hunting of wild animals. The Plans of the Divisions prescribe construction of camp sheds at vulnerable and strategic locations with constant presence of forest officials/protection watchers to strengthen anti-poaching initiatives.

Audit observed that out of 60 anti-poaching camps prescribed for construction in eight²³ Divisions test checked, only eleven were constructed.

- In terms of the Forest Code, Beat Forest Officer (BFO)²⁴ is to perambulate the area under his beat in such a way that the entire beat area is covered in every seven days. It is the duty of the BFO to prevent forest offences and to collect and communicate to senior officers all information regarding the forest offences committed or attempted, to make private enquiries on suspicious characters frequenting the forest and find them, etc.

Audit observed that 12 offences of elephant killings in Malayattoor Division committed between June 2014 and January 2015 and four elephant killings in Vazhachal Division in June 2015 were detected by the Divisions only after several months of the incidents, that too on the offender confessing to the crime.

This was indicative of inadequate surveillance by the Divisions.

The Government replied (March 2018) that a detailed protection plan was prepared for each division identifying the vulnerable areas and that interior camping and perambulation routes were identified in the plan. The protection was strengthened through revamping the wireless network, GPS tracking, Personal Digital Assistant devices, installing camera traps, etc.

2.6.2.3 Issues relating to wildlife offences

- **Ineffective handling of wildlife offences**

²³ Kanni, Periyar West, Ranni, Malayattoor, Mannar, Vazhachal, Silent Valley and Idukki Divisions.

²⁴ Earlier termed as Forest Guard.

Hunting (poaching) of wild animals, trespassing into the WLS, NP, Reserve Forest, etc. are offences punishable under the Act. According to the Forest Code, when a forest officer below the rank of Range Officer (RO) detects commission of a forest offence, he shall submit to the RO within 24 hours, an occurrence report of the case in the form of Mahassar setting forth all the details of the offence committed. On receipt of the report, RO after proper enquiry should submit a report in Form B²⁵ to the DFO.

Audit observed that in the 10 Divisions test checked, 630 wildlife offences were registered since 2000, of which, 165 offences were booked by RO but not charged in court for want of submission of Form B report as shown in Appendix III(3).

The average rate of conviction in the wildlife offences disposed of by the Courts in respect of the test checked Divisions was 22 per cent. Some of the reasons for low rate of convictions in the Court were due to the inability of the investigating officers to gather and produce proper and sufficient evidences to establish the crime, failure in producing the articles seized at the crime spot, and procedural lapses.

Offences committed in the Sanctuary are to be charged under the provisions of the Act; instead, it was observed that some cases²⁶ were booked by the Wayanad Wildlife Division under the Kerala Forest Act, 1961, reducing the gravity of such offences.

The Government replied (March 2018) that regular refresher courses were being conducted by the State Forest Institutes regarding wildlife crime investigation and the trend was changing and many of the wildlife offenders were convicted.

➤ **Permitting declaration of animal articles without issue of notification**

According to Section 40 (1) of the Act, every person having captive wild animals, specified animal articles, etc. is liable to declare particulars of such

25 The report furnished by a Range Forest Officer to the Divisional Forest Officer after investigating a forest offence.

26 Out of 180 cases, six cases of illegal constructions, one case of illicit felling of sandal woods, two cases of setting forest fire and one case of destruction of junda (cain).

captive wild animals or specified animal articles to the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWW) or the authorised officer within thirty days from commencement of the Act. The CWW on receipt of the declaration would issue a certificate of ownership, under Section 42 of the Act. As per Section 40(2B), every person inheriting any captive animal, animal article, trophy or uncured trophy was required to make a declaration to the CWW or the authorised officer within ninety days of such inheritance.

Under Section 40(4) of the Act, the State Government may, through a notification published in the official gazette, require any person to declare to the CWW or the authorised officer any animal article or trophy (other than musk of a musk deer or horn of a rhinoceros) or salted or dried skins derived from an animal specified in Schedule I or Part II of Schedule II in his control, custody or possession in such form, in such manner, and within such time, as may be prescribed. Three opportunities were given to the public, first in 1972, then from 1978 to 1991 and finally in 2003 to declare possession of animals and animal articles. During the period 2012-17, there were two declarations of possession of animal articles under section 40(4) of the Act by a prominent film actor, consequent to detection (21 December 2011) of four elephant tusks by forest authorities at his house. The Department registered (2012) an offence²⁷ against the actor. The Government granted (16 December 2015) him permission under Section 40(4) of the Act to declare possession of the four articles by issuing an order specifically for the actor. Thereupon, he requested (03 February 2016) for permission to further declare 13 artefacts made of ivory, stated to be family heirlooms. The Government granted (17 February 2016) permission for this also and he declared (24 February 2016) possession of the artefacts to the CWW.

Audit observed that issue of a specific order to benefit an individual, instead of issuing a notification published in the official gazette was a violation of Section 40(4) of the Act.

The Government replied (March 2018) that on 15 December 2015, the CWW submitted to the Government a draft notification for providing one time opportunity to individuals for declaration of elephant tusks and ivory artefacts.

27. OR No.14.2012 of Mekkappala Forest Station of Malayattoor Division.

However, in the same reply, Audit observed that, the Government instead of providing opportunity to individuals, issued an order permitting only the actor to declare animal articles in his possession. Further, Audit observed that the order was not as per the provisions of the Act, which required the Government to issue a notification published in the official gazette and that similar offences²⁸ booked by the Divisions did not receive such favourable treatment but were either under investigation or under trial in Courts.

[Audit paragraphs 2.6.2, 2.6.2.1, 2.6.2.2 and 2.6.2.3 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraphs is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

32. While considering the audit paragraph regarding the ineffective handling of wildlife offences, the Committee inquired about the current status of the rate of conviction in wildlife offences and also about the steps taken to improve the falling conviction rates as pointed out by Audit.

33. The Deputy Secretary, Legislature Secretariat pointed out that out of the 630 cases registered in the 10 divisions test checked by audit, only 165 cases were booked by the Range Officer. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that an accurate data would be submitted after checking the rate of conviction. He added that certain lapses had occurred in the investigation after booking of the first case but at present, proper follow up actions and gathering more evidences are taken up when such cases are booked. In recent cases reported, the investigation was being conducted effectively to prove the conviction.

34. To a query of the Committee whether there were any long pending cases where charges had not been issued, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that cases under the Wildlife Protection Act were usually

28 For instance OR No.24.2008 (illicit storage of wildlife trophy), OR No. 18.2009 (illicit custody of stuffed head of tiger and leopard), OR No.10.2015 (illicit possession of elephant tusk and teeth), etc registered in Devikulam Range.

given more priority and hence the rate of prosecution of such offenses was very high.

35. While considering the audit observation regarding "permitting declaration of animal articles without issue of notification", the Committee enquired whether the ivory was kept with the Devaswom or handed over to the Forest Department in the event of death of an elephant under the ownership of Devaswoms. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that in such cases, usually applications were immediately submitted to the Department for keeping the ivory. But recently, the tusks were collected directly by the Forest Department.

36. To a further query of the Committee, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that earlier there was a Government directive to destroy those items but the Forest Department was keeping them as doing so would not benefit anyone. When the Committee wanted to know whether they could be sold as per the provisions of the Act, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief Wild Life Warden replied in the negative.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

37. **The Committee directs the Department to furnish the current status of rate of conviction in wildlife offences.**

2.6.2.4 Degradation of forest ecology due to encroachments

The Act envisages ecological and environmental security of the country through protection of wild animals, birds and plants. Any encroachment of forest land (wildlife habitat) and destruction of plants by humans for cultivation of crops is a serious threat to the 'natural home of wild animals'.

The Act does not contain provision to book the encroachments in areas other than PAs as an offence. Hence, the encroachments are to be evicted using powers contained in Section 66 of the Kerala Forest Act, 1961 or provisions of other applicable statute. The Government notified the Kerala Land Assignment (Regularisation of Occupations of Forest Lands Prior to 01

January 1977) Special Rules, 1993 through which an extent of 28,588 hectares (ha) of forest land admittedly encroached in the State prior to 01 January 1977 were regularised. Thereafter, no fresh encroachment was to be allowed and any attempt at encroachment from any quarter was to be dealt with firmly and new encroachments after 01 January 1977 were to be evicted.

Audit observed that 11,917.8952 ha of forest land was encroached²⁹ in the State after 01 January 1977, of which, only 4,628.5555 ha was evicted. The balance 7,289.3397 ha included areas coming under Territorial Divisions Munnar, Kothamangalam and Konni³⁰ test checked in audit. An extent of 310.632 ha which was not a part of the 7,289.3397 ha was also encroached in the Kaliyar Range of Kothamangalam Division.

The Department failed to prevent encroachments made after the regularisation of occupation of forest land as on 01 January 1977 in spite of being empowered under Section 66 of the Forest Act, 1961.

According to Rule 26 of the Forest Settlement Rules, 1965 when a forest land is notified as reserve forest under Section 19 of the Forest Act, 1961, the Chief Conservator of Forest should immediately take necessary steps to demarcate the boundaries of the land by construction of permanent cairns. Non-demarcation of forest boundaries with cairns facilitated encroachments.

Even though 31 years elapsed since the last reserve forest was notified, Audit observed that as of March 2017, construction of a total of 41,880 Cairns were pending.

The Government replied (March 2018) that following High Court orders, the Department handed over a list of encroachers to the concerned District Collectors for eviction, and an extent of 866.8997 ha was cleared of encroachment so far. Further, against the construction of 41,880 cairns pending as of March 2017, 12,258 were constructed upto February 2018.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.4 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

29 As per a counter affidavit filed by the State before the High Court in September 2015.

30 Measuring 1,099.6528 Ha, 147.5961 ha and 11.41 ha respectively.

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

38. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that due to non-consolidation of the boundaries, there had been many encroachments and more than fifty thousand jundas had been constructed to demarcate the boundaries, after the last audit period. The consolidation of the boundaries would resolve all those issues, he added.

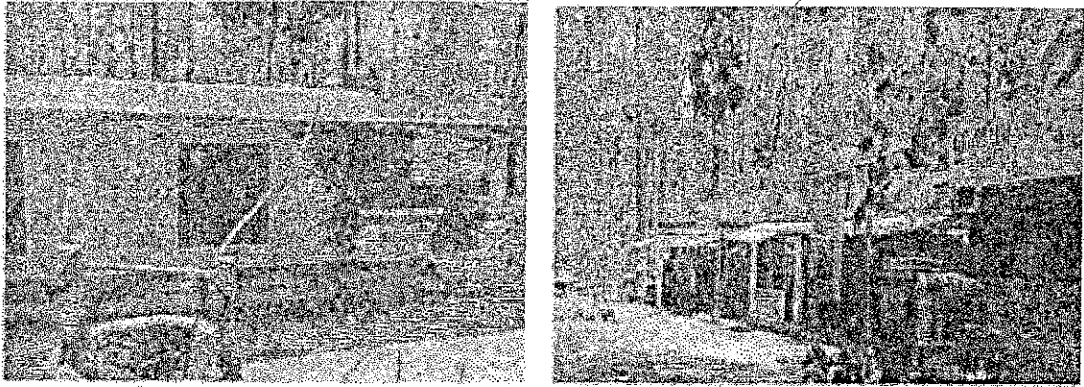
Conclusion/ Recommendation

39. The Committee observes that non-demarcation of forest boundaries with cairns has facilitated encroachments. So, the Committee directs the Department to take necessary steps to demarcate the boundaries of forest land by constructing permanent cairns.

2.6.2.5 Constructions in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in violation of the provisions of the Act

During the period prior to 1950, cultivable lands within the Reserve Forest of Wayanad Plateau were leased out on an annual basis under Section 21 of the Madras Forest Act, 1882, for cultivation of annual crops. In 1973, an extent of 344.40 sq km of the reserve forest including leased out lands was notified as Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) under the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary Rules, 1973. Section 33 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 does not permit construction of permanent buildings within the sanctuary area other than for sanctuary purpose.

Audit observed that though the lease agreements were not renewed since 2004, the possession of the leased-out land was not taken by the Department. The present occupiers of the erstwhile leased out land were not the original lessees. The Assistant Wildlife Warden in his field inspection report (December 2012) stated that 13 residential buildings and 19 commercial buildings, three to forty years old were illegally built on the land included in lease nos. 3 and 4 near Muthanga check post. No action was taken by the Department to remove these unauthorised structures despite being empowered to do so under Section 34A of the Act.



Pic 1&2 – Buildings illegally constructed in the erstwhile leased land near Muthanga checkpoint in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary. (Both pictures taken on 09 March 2018)

The Government replied (March 2018) that eviction process was difficult, and it would create law and order issues. Further, most of the people living in the leased-out land were landless farmers and were forest dependent and that they could not be treated as illegal encroachers and summarily dealt with.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.5 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

40. Regarding the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests, informed that certain encroachments had been noticed in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and steps were being taken to vacate them.

41. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that in 1940, as part of the 'Grow More Food' programme, some parts of the sanctuary were leased out for agricultural purposes. But certain illegal buildings were constructed by the lease holders and steps were being taken to remove those illegal constructions and to continue the lease agreement for agricultural purposes only. He added that if the eviction processes were carried out forcefully, it would create a social problem. So meetings were being held to sensitize them.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

42. No comments.

2.6.2.6 Un-regulated tourism activities in Periyar Tiger Reserve

The Department leased out 946.91 ha³¹ of forest land in Goodrical Range of Ranni Division for cardamom plantation to Kerala Forest Development Corporation Limited (KFDC), which handed over (1979) 34 ha of it to the Kerala State Electricity Board Limited (KSEB) to construct a dam at Gavi. During 1998, the KFDC started eco-tourism activity near the Gavi Dam and used the surrounding lease area for eco-tourism. During the year 2007, Government added an extent of 148 sq km (14800 ha) of reserve forest of Goodrical Range encompassing the Gavi eco-tourism area to the core area of PTR.

Tourist vehicles entering the core area unaccompanied by forest staff/authorised guides often went close to wild animals leading to confrontation. The tourists were also involved in unauthorised trekking, setting of fire and littering. Hence traffic through the core area of PTR was considered in the TCP as a prioritised threat to the Tiger Reserve.

NTCA brought out (October 2012) Normative Standards for regulating tourism activities and Project Tiger under Section 38-O(1)(c) of the Act. The Standards stipulate that the CWW should ensure preparation of a tourism plan by each tiger reserve as part of the Tiger Conservation to include identification of corridor connectivity and important wildlife habitats and mechanisms to secure them along with fixing of a ceiling on the number of visitors. This was not complied with. Other stipulations such as constitution of a Local Advisory Committee (LAC), establishment of an advance booking system to control tourists and number of vehicles, etc. were also not complied with. Though tourism activities in Tiger Reserves are to be under the overall guidance of the respective Tiger Conservation Foundations and the LACs, Gavi tourism area was managed by KFDC alone. These non-compliances were also against the direction (16 October 2012) of the Honourable Supreme Court to follow the

³¹ 146 ha in 1977 and 800.91 ha in 1981.

guidelines issued by NTCA in respect of tourism activities in and around Tiger Reserves.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the tourism activities were regulated inside the Park as per the instructions and guidelines issued by NTCA in this regard. The tourism management in PTR was carried out as per the prescriptions approved in the TCP and that restrictions were placed on the number of vehicles permitted to enter the PTR.

However, it is observed that the regulations imposed are not as per the normative standards for tourism activities inside tiger reserves issued (October 2012) by NTCA.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.6 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraphs is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

43. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the audit observation was related to the vehicular movement inside Periyar Tiger Reserve. The road from Vandiperiyar to Angamoozhi having transport bus service passes through the Periyar Tiger Reserve and currently the regulations under the Tiger Reservation Plan were being strictly enforced there.

44. To a query of an official from AG whether a Local Advisory Committee had been constituted as per the guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that on the basis of the proposal to form an advisory committee for all sanctuaries, steps would be taken to constitute the Committee there as well.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

45. **No comments.**

2.6.2.7 Non-clearance of undergrowth below power lines

Four high tension power (HT) lines³² passes through the core of PTR. Maintenance of the HT lines and timely clearance of the undergrowth beneath them is the duty of KSEB. The TCP requires the Division to conduct periodical joint inspection of power lines with KSEB during the period April to September every year, which was not complied with. The Department did not take any follow up action with KSEB on this matter. Five out of the 15 fire incidents reported since January 2013 to June 2017 in the Periyar East Division were due to sparks from the HT lines. Audit further observed that, in November 2016 one leopard and a Nilgiri Langur were electrocuted from an 11 KV line.

Though the risk of fire from HT lines were identified in the Plan, the Department failed to follow up the matter with KSEB, which led to repeated fire incidents damaging the forest ecology.

The Government in its reply (March 2018) accepted the audit findings and stated that steps would be taken in future to enforce KSEB officials to take necessary preventive measures.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.7 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraphs is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

46. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests, Forest and Wildlife Department informed that earlier, there were incidents of non-removal of plants etc. under the high tension lines of KSEB. However, there had been no such incidents since 2017.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

47. No comments.

32 Lower Camp-Sabarigiri, Sabarigiri-Nattakom and Moozhiyar-Sabarigiri (2 parallel lines),

2.6.2.8 Human habitation inside Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

The Act as well as the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, require that forest rights of the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers recognised in forest areas within the core and critical wildlife habitats of PAs may be modified and resettled for providing inviolate areas for wildlife conservation. The people were to be relocated paying compensation in accordance with National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy, 2007. The total cost projected for the relocation was ₹80 crore in 2009.

The WWS covers an area of 344.40 sq km. According to a report prepared (December 2009) by Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi (KFRI) there were 110 settlements in WWS area, consisting of 2,613 families. Out of this, 2,485 eligible families³³ were willing to relocate from the sanctuary.

Audit observed that of the 2,485 eligible families who opted for relocation, the Department was able to relocate only 192 eligible families from seven settlements so far. The delay in relocation would lead to increase in the number of eligible families over a period of time, which in turn would lead to cost overrun requiring additional funds and further delay in relocation.

Further, human habitation inside the sanctuary could lead to frequent human-wild animal conflicts resulting in loss/injury to humans as well as wild animals.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the Department was pursuing the initiatives to complete the relocation package in a time bound manner.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.8 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

³³ Major son/unmarried daughter/sister, widow, woman divorcee, mentally and physically challenged persons and minor orphan counted as separate families.

48. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that to avoid human habitation inside the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, programmes like IDWH (Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats) Relocation and RKDP (Rebuild Kerala Development Programme) Navakiranam had been implemented and 147 families had been relocated to 8 settlements accordingly.

49. The Committee brought to the notice of the Department officials that the norms that were not satisfactory and that the same amount was being paid to those who had 3 acres and 5 acres of land for relocation.

50. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that lesser amount of compensation had been paid in the IDWH Relocation Programme. However, the norms had been amended and after discussion with the Central Government, the balance amount was released to the four settlements. The relocation could be completed if proportionate State share was received, he added.

51. The Deputy Secretary, Legislature Secretariat added to the discussion that out of the total Central allocation of ₹22.14 crore, only ₹5.53 crore had been released. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that only after releasing the proportionate amount of State share, the Central government would release its next instalment. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests supplemented that non-receipt of State share was a common issue.

52. In response to a query of the Committee regarding the State share, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests replied that the State share was 40 per cent and the Central share was 60 per cent. Even when the Central government releases 60 per cent of its share, the State share was not being released. The Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary had not even received the funds of the last financial year. Since they did not receive the State share, the amount was released through the local FDA (Forest Development Agency) and once the State share is received, the amount could be released to the remaining settlements and relocation could be completed as early as possible.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

53. The Committee observes that the delay in relocation would lead to increased number of eligible families over a period of time, which in turn would lead to cost overrun requiring additional funds. Further delay in relocation and the persistence of human habitation inside Wayand Wildlife Sanctuary could lead to frequent human-wildlife conflicts. The Committee understands that the slow pace of relocation may be due to the non-release of State share in proportion to the Central share. Therefore, the Committee directs the Department to take appropriate measures to ensure the prompt release of the State share in proportion to the Central share and to complete the relocation package within a specified time frame.

2.6.2.9 Violation of conditions of Master Plan for Sabarimala affecting the ecology of the Periyar Tiger Reserve

The Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple is located within the PTR area as an enclave attracting millions of devotees every year. The increasing number of pilgrims and growing demand of Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) for additional land for infrastructure development at Sabarimala led to habitat degradation. Out of 18 major threats identified by the PTR in Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP), Sabarimala Pilgrimage ranked the first.

The Government brought out (May 2007) a Master Plan for Sabarimala (MPS), which was to be implemented by the TDB. The TCP of the PTR, stipulated that all developments and management at Sabarimala should be in tune with the MPS and implementation of the Master Plan was to be monitored by the Deputy Director (Periyar West). The TCP emphasised solid waste management and sanitation interventions in the MPS as these were closely linked with the health of the wildlife habitat of the surrounding forests. As per Para 2.1.1 of the Infrastructure Module - solid waste management, water supply and sanitation of the MPS, the collection, transportation and disposal of waste at Pampa and Sannidhanam was the responsibility of the TDB.

A scrutiny of the relevant records revealed the following deviations/violation of the MPS.

- The TDB failed to set up composting facility at Pampa in line with the Solid Waste Management Guidelines of MPS. But the Department did not take any action against the non-compliance by TDB.
- There are two Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) at Sabarimala, one at Pampa and the other at Sannidhanam. No drainage facility to convey waste water of the hotels to the Pampa STP was provided. Similarly, the sewage pipes from the buildings near Kumbalamthodu (stream) to the STP at Sannidhanam were left unconnected. Resultantly, the overflowing waste water got mixed up with the Kumbalamthodu, which in turn reached and polluted river Pampa frequented by wild animals.
- In place of underground electrical supply lines envisaged in the MPS, overhead cables without insulation were drawn.



Pic.3: Waste water overflowing
Kumbalamthodu



Pic.4: Overhead lines in trek path to
Sannidhanam at Sabarimala

(Both pictures taken on 27 July 2017)

The Government in its reply (March 2018) accepted the audit observations and stated that utmost importance of establishing composting facility at Pampa would be brought to the attention of the high power committee and that the need for urgent measures for improvement of drainage system connected to STPs would be brought to the notice of the TDB officials at the earliest. It was also stated that matter regarding non-insulated overhead cables existing in traditional trek route was brought to the notice of KSEB.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.9 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

54. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the sewerage at Pamba and Sannidhanam had been connected to the sewerage treatment plant to ensure that the sewage did not flow into Kumbalam Thodu. He also added that non-insulated overhead cables had been converted to insulated cables.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

55. **No comments.**

2.6.2.10 Inordinate delay in restoration of elephant corridors

Fragmentation of wildlife habitats is a major threat to long-term conservation of species. Large animals like elephants require extensive area for survival and are more affected by loss of habitat contiguity. Construction of roads/buildings, settlements, cultivation, etc. obstruct the natural corridors causing some of them to disappear. Establishing biological corridors is one of the measures to ensure genetic exchanges within and between populations.

Elephant habitats at a minimum should be of several hundred sq km to ensure short term and several thousand sq km to ensure long-term viability. Protection and strengthening of existing corridors can be a solution to human-wild animal conflicts.

Referring to the four elephant corridors³⁴ mentioned in the Book 'Right of Passage – Elephant Corridors of India' (2004) the MoEF & CC requested (August 2006) the Government to take action to notify and protect the identified elephant corridors in the State. The Department submitted a proposal for restoration of four corridors,³⁵ which included three corridors mentioned in the above book.

34 (1) Periya-Kottiyoor (2) Tirunelli-Kudrakote (3) Periya-Pakranthalam and (4) Nilambur Kovilakam-New Amarambalam.

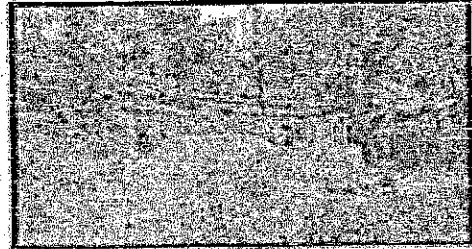
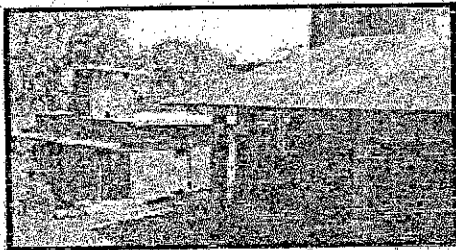
35 (1) Periya-Kottiyoor (2) Tirunelli-Kudrakote (3) Periya-Pakranthalam and (4) Pallivayal-Tattur.



Of these, restoration of one corridor viz., Tirunelli – Kudrakote was achieved by two NGOs namely, Wildlife Trust of India and Asian Nature Conservation Foundation by purchase of private land in the corridor area and handing it over to the Government for conservation. Action taken by the Department to restore/establish the other three corridors is discussed below.

In respect of Periya-Kottiyoor corridor, the GOI accorded (November 2008) administrative approval for acquisition of 131.50 ha³⁶ of private land in Kottiyoor and Periya for restoration of traditional elephant corridors at a total cost of ₹7.89 crore and released ₹4.50 crore³⁷ in three instalments. The area was to be acquired by negotiated purchase through the Revenue Department within two years.

Nine years have since elapsed and it was observed that against 95 ha of land to be acquired in Wayanad, acquisition of 8.5676 ha at CRP Kunnu in Periya Village only was initiated. CRP Kunnu area was given priority since it was more vulnerable to animal attacks. A field visit to CRP Kunnu revealed construction of new residential buildings in the proposed corridor area.



Pic.5&6: New buildings constructed in the area proposed for restoration of Elephant Corridor at CRP Kunnu & Chapparam (Both pictures taken on 13 September 2017)

Regarding restoration of the other two corridors, viz. Periya-Pakranthalam and Nilambur Kovilakam-New Amarambalam, Audit observed that the Department did not take any action. The delay in restoration of those corridors can obstruct the free movement of elephants leading to increased human-wild animal conflicts in the area.

The Department conceded that establishing of wildlife corridors were delayed and stated (February 2018) that acquisition of land was an issue as multiple

³⁶ 95 ha (later revised to 60.4468 ha) in Revenue District Wayanad and 36.50 ha in Revenue District, Kannur.

³⁷ First, second and third instalments of ₹1.50 crore each were released in the year 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 respectively. Of this, ₹2.50 crore and ₹2 crore respectively were allocated to Kannur and Wayanad Districts.

agencies were involved and some of the landowners were not willing to vacate the land.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the reason for delay in starting restoration of the two corridors was because the priority was for those corridors where the elephants frequented.

The reply is not acceptable as even for the prioritised corridor (Periya-Kottiyoor), Government failed to establish inter-departmental liasoning due to which land acquisition issues cropped up and remained unsettled even after nine years from the sanction of the project.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.10 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

56. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests, Forest and Wildlife Department informed that the matter was related to the relocation discussed earlier and would be resolved once the relocation took place.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

57. No comments.

2.6.2.11 Non-compliance to working/management plan prescriptions

➤ Deficiencies in implementation of fire management plans

Fire lines are areas, which are cleared of vegetation in the hope of stopping or at least slowing a fire which may devastate large areas with grave ecological repercussions.

The Divisions make Fire Management Plans (FMP) in accordance with their requirements to check and mitigate the possibilities of forest fire. Audit observed that the fire protection measures in the following Divisions were not

in accordance with a FMP, with shortfall in the creation of fire lines as given in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 – Shortfall in creation of fire lines

Sl.No.	Division	Fire lines proposed in the FMP from 2012-13 to 2016-17 (in km)	Fire lines created from 2012-13 to 2016-17 (in km)	Shortfall in creation of fire lines (in km)
1	Silent Valley	1,120.00	876.730	243.270
2	Wayanad	2,234.00	1,214.000	1,020.000
3	Vazhachal ³⁸	1,292.22	839.685	452.535

Source: Data furnished by divisions

No fire lines were created in the area newly added (2007) to the PTR East Division from nearby Goodrical Range. The Warden, Wayanad Division stated (October 2017) that funds were not sufficient to create and maintain fire lines.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the fire lines are taken based on the fund availability and subject to the priority based on fire vulnerability.

The reply is not acceptable as FMP had made the provisions prioritising the fire vulnerability in forest areas and hence, adequate funds needed to be provided in accordance with FMP.

➤ **Non-eradication of invasive weeds**

Senna, Lantana, Eupatorium, Mikania, Parthenium, etc. are the common types of invasive alien³⁹ plants identified in the State and some of these species became invasive, out-competing and preventing growth of the native species. They also increase the chances of forest fire. The Working Plans/Management Plans/Conservation Plans provide prescriptions for eradication of invasive weeds. Audit observed that, the eradication works as prescribed in the Plans were not carried out by some Divisions as shown in Appendix III(4).

38 FMPs for the years 2014-15 & 2015-16 were not made available to Audit.

39 International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) defines alien invasive species as alien species which become established in natural or semi-natural ecosystems or habitat, an agent of change, and threatens native biological diversity.

Audit also observed that WWD failed to take adequate management measures to eradicate *Senna Spectabilis (Senna)*, planted in Wayanad district long ago under the social forestry programme of the Department and which is now spread extensively over the Sanctuary area. It has become a threat to wildlife and indigenous plants owing to its quick growth and has lowered the quality of ecosystem and reduced the food of herbivores. The Division stated that no effective method existed to eradicate the exotic weeds fully and that KFRI was directed to experiment with new methods to eradicate *Senna*.

The Department failed to recognise the seriousness of the issue and take measures to contain the invasion in time. Further, neither was the affected area surveyed nor did the problem find a mention in the management plan of the wildlife sanctuary till 2014.

The Government replied (March 2018) that special funds were allotted for controlling the exotic weeds in WWS.

The Government initiative is, however, inadequate in addressing the issue as spread of the weed is not restricted to WWS alone.

➤ **Watershed Management**

Watershed is an area bound peripherally by water, parting and draining ultimately to a particular watercourse or body of water. Protection and conservation of watershed is necessary to minimise soil erosion, floods, silting etc. and to ensure availability of water for wildlife in natural streams, waterholes and check dams. The plans prescribed construction of small check dams across streams, at sites frequented by wild animals to secure water throughout the year.

Audit scrutiny of the watershed management activities carried out by various Divisions revealed deficiencies in the execution of plans as shown in Appendix III(5).

- A joint physical verification (August 2017) of three check dams along with the Range Officer in the Neriya Mangalam Range (Munnar Division) revealed that the water carrying capacity of two check dams at Anachanda and Eanthanampara were severely reduced by accumulation of silt.

Acute scarcity of water could lead to migration of animals to other areas, which may result in crop raids, damage to human life, etc.

The Government replied (March 2018) that construction of check dams, desilting the ponds and check dams, maintenance of check dams, gully plugging are carried out as soil and moisture conservation techniques.

The reply does not address to the audit observations adequately.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.11 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

58. While considering the deficiencies in implementation of fire management plans, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that fire incidents in wildlife area were very low compared to other areas and there had been no fire incident in the Periyar Tiger Reserve for the last two years. The forest fire usually starts from grass and hence the dried grass is removed as early as possible.

59. Regarding the non-eradication of invasive weeds, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that it was a specific issue related to Wayanad Wildlife Division and steps have already been taken to eradicate the alien species called Senna, which had spread around 100 metres, in a phased manner.

60. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that work was underway to eliminate Senna as ₹6 crore was allotted from NABARD and funds from KIIFB were also available. So it was expected that Senna could be removed very quickly.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

61. No comments.

2.6.2.12 Non-compliance with the requirements of Kerala Captive Elephant (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012

➤ Non-providing of stables for elephants

There are 599 captive elephants in the State. The Government, in exercise of powers under Section 64(2) of the Act, notified⁴⁰ the Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012 to address the problem of ill-treatment of captive elephants and to ensure their proper upkeep and management. Rule 3 provided for proper housing of the elephants.

Site visit to the elephant camp (Aanakkotta) of Guruvayoor Devaswom revealed the following:

- The 'Aanakkotta', having 51 captive elephants had only 15 stables, each capable of accommodating one elephant. It was observed that the balance 36 elephants were kept in the open yard. Though the Additional Chief Secretary (Forests & Wildlife) directed (21 July 2016) the Guruvayoor Devaswom to construct shelters for all elephants within a month, only 10 sheds were constructed even after a year.

Thus, the directives under Rule 3 regarding proper housing of the captive elephants are not adhered to by the Guruvayoor Devaswom.

The Government replied (March 2018) that frequent inspections were being carried out to ensure compliance of the Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.12 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

62. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that according to the Kerala Captive Elephants

40 Superseding the Kerala Captive Elephants (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2003.

(Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012, proper shelter is to be provided for elephants. Accordingly, progress had been made in that regard by constructing around 30 shelters.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

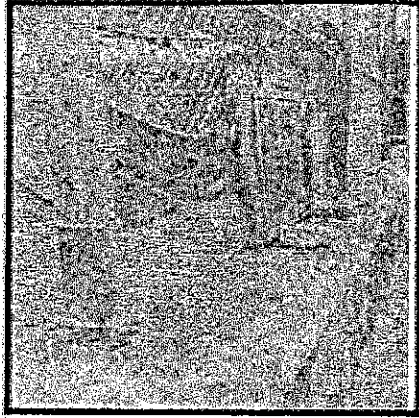
63. No comments.

2.6.2.13 Deficiencies in conservation of captive animals in Zoo

The GoI framed Recognition of Zoo Rules, 2009 under section 63(1) of the Act according to which every zoo should endeavour to establish and sustain population of physically, genetically and behaviourally healthy animals for furthering the cause of wildlife conservation and communicating credible conservation message to the visitors through display of healthy animals in naturalistic settings.

- There are two medium, one small and two mini zoos in Kerala. As per Para 3 of Schedule to Rule 10 of the Recognition of Zoo Rules, 2009, every zoo is to prepare a master plan and get it approved by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA). According to the information furnished by the CWW, only the two⁴¹ medium zoos prepared master plans for development and planning.
- A visit to the State Museum and Zoo at Thrissur (a medium zoo) by Audit revealed that the CZA renewed (April 2017) recognition of the zoo upto January 2018 subject to compliance of 27 conditions some of which were to be complied with immediately while others were to be met within a period of six months. The CZA also requested (April 2017) the PCCF & CWW to implement the conditions. It was seen that against the 27 conditions stipulated by the CZA, 11 conditions (Appendix II (6)) were not complied with/implemented in the Zoo (October 2017).

⁴¹ State Museum and Zoo, Thrissur and Zoological Garden, Thiruvananthapuram.



Pic.7: Temporary measure to cover damaged enclosure (Picture taken on 28 September 2017)



Pic.8: Snake stuck in rusted wire mesh (Picture shared by the Curator, Thrissur Zoo on 28 September 2017)

Similar lapses/deficiencies pointed out by the CZA while granting recognition in earlier years also were ignored. Many enclosures of animals were in dilapidated condition for want of periodical maintenance work.

Non-compliance with the directions prescribed by the CZA and inadequate maintenance of cages/enclosures negates the very purpose of having captive wild animals.

The Government replied (March 2018) that the audit findings were taken note of for future compliance.

Recommendation No.3: The Department may take necessary steps for establishing sufficient anti-poaching camps, ensuring effective perambulation etc.

Recommendation No.4: The Department may evolve an effective mechanism to deal with the backlog in investigation of wildlife offences and in improving the conviction rate.

Recommendation No.5: The Department should evolve an action plan for eviction of all encroachments by invoking the legal powers available.

Recommendation No.6: The Government may ensure compliance with the Normative Standards for tourism activities in Tiger Reserves issued by NTCA.

Recommendation No.7: The Department may take measures to expedite the relocation of settlements inside the sanctuary.

Recommendation No.8: The Department, by proper monitoring and coordination with the TDB may ensure that the infrastructure development activities carried out in the land transferred to the TDB do not lead to habitat/ecology degradation.

Recommendation No.9: The Department may accelerate its efforts towards restoring elephant corridors.

2.7 Conclusion

- Advice of the State Board for Wildlife to declare the core and buffer areas added to Periyar, Parambikkulam Tiger Reserves and Silent Valley National Park as wildlife sanctuaries was not implemented. Even after eight to fourteen years of initial notification, the legal process to notify the four Wildlife Sanctuaries and three National Parks was not completed.
- There was absence of planning in respect of new core areas added to Tiger Reserves and lack of continuity of working plans and measures for conservation of wildlife and its habitat in territorial divisions.
- Unregulated tourism activities in a Tiger Reserve adversely affected the conservation of wildlife and habitat.
- Against the four identified elephant corridors in the State, the Department is yet to restore/ legalise three corridors.
- The surveillance measures in the Divisions were poor. Inadequate handling of wildlife offences resulted in low rate of conviction and large number of cases pending investigation.

[Audit paragraph 2.6.2.13 and 2.7 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

64. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the functioning of Puthoor Zoological Park had commenced and all such problems would be resolved when standard animals and birds were shifted to the new facility.

65. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden added that steps had been taken to relocate the animals in the Zoological Park at Puthoor and it would be fully operational by the month of March.

66. When the Committee inquired whether the birds and animals kept in the Zoological Park would be released after a period of time, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden replied in the negative. Then the Committee raised its concern that, in that situation, they were locked up until the end of their lives and opined that steps should be taken to release them after a certain period of time.

67. To the Committee's concern, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that, at present, they were kept in vast areas as in forest and not in small cages. The guidelines of Central Zoo Authority is very strict and they conduct frequent inspections, and as per the guidelines of CZA, open enclosures and a forest-like habitat are required for the upkeep of animals kept in zoos.

Conclusions/ Recommendations

68. **No comments.**

4.1 Irregularities in procurement of boats for tourism activities by Forests and Wildlife Department.

Lapses in adhering to the tender and agreement conditions, selection of incompetent suppliers, non-observance to provisions of Stores Purchase Manual and poor contract management resulted in non-delivery of two boats intended for tourism activities despite paying ₹68.34 lakh

The Forests and Wildlife Department (the Department) placed supply orders for procurement of two boats, with seating capacity of 25 and 15 from M/s Nautical Lines, Thiruvananthapuram and the Kerala Small Industries Development Corporation Limited (SIDCO)⁴² respectively. Audit noticed several irregularities/deviations from tender/agreement conditions and provisions of Stores Purchase Manual 2013 in the purchase as discussed below.

1. Purchase of 25 seater Fibre Reinforced Plastic Boat for Neyyar Wildlife sanctuary

Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram (WLW) invited (December 2011) tenders under two-cover system for fabrication and supply of a 25 seater Fibre-Reinforced Plastic (FRP) boat for water safari programme in Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary.

According to the tender notification, the vessel was to be designed and built under class of Indian Register of Shipping (IRS)⁴³. The tenderer was to have five years of experience in manufacturing/fabrication and supply of FRP boat and was required to have manufactured and supplied more than three FRP boats to various Government Departments (State and Central)/Public Sector Undertakings. The tender was cancelled as there was only one response to it.

The WLW retendered (January 2012) the work. Out of the three bids received, the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) disqualified one bidder on the ground that the dimensions were not compatible with the drawings provided. The work was awarded (June 2012) to M/s Nautical Lines, (the Supplier), being the lowest bidder, at their quoted rate of ₹62.50 lakh and the agreement was executed (June 2012). The boat, which was to be delivered within eight months from the date of agreement, was not delivered so far (November 2017).

⁴² A Government of Kerala owned Company.

⁴³ Indian Register of Shipping is an internationally recognised independent ship classification society in India and a member of the International Association of Classification Societies.

Audit observed that the Department made the following significant deviations from the tender and agreement conditions:

- The Supplier firm was registered as a manufacturer (a micro unit) only in 2011 and so, did not qualify the tender conditions regarding five years experience in manufacturing/fabrication and supply of FRP boats. The tender documents furnished by the supplier also did not show any previous experience. The TEC technically qualified the Supplier overlooking these facts.
- As per Clause 3 of the agreement, the article supplied should be as per the supply order attached to the agreement. But the Department did not issue any supply order specifying the item to be supplied, its price, etc.
- The Supplier requested (October 2014) the Department for an amendment in the agreement condition regarding 'IRS approval' to 'IRS or any International Association of Classification Societies member approval' eighteen months after the due date of supply, stating that the delay in supply was due to delay in getting IRS approval. The Department acceded to the request and extended the time of supply up to 10 September 2015 by executing (10 June 2015) a codicil (i.e. supplemental) agreement. The Supplier was aware of the requirement of IRS approval while agreeing to the original date of supply. Hence, the extension of time of supply by 31 months was unwarranted.
- The agreement conditions provided for a down payment of 30 per cent, 30 per cent on completion of hull, 20 per cent on engine installation and balance 20 per cent on delivery and acceptance of the boat. The down payment of ₹18.75 lakh was released in June 2013. Inspection was conducted (November 2013) and it was certified that only 30 per cent of the hull was constructed. Despite this the Department released subsequent instalment of ₹18.75 lakh in November 2013, which was an undue favour to the Supplier.
- The Department was yet (November 2017) to recover the amount of 37.50 lakh paid to the Supplier even after a lapse of more than 26

months from the expiry of the extended (September 2015) date of supply.

The WLW stated (November 2017) that a complaint against M/s Nautical Lines for cheating the Government was filed with the City Police Commissioner.

2. Purchase of 15 seater boat for Shendurney Eco Tourism Project

According to the Government of Kerala (Government), Stores Purchase Manual 2013 (SPM), all purchases exceeding ₹10 lakh must be made through open tender. The period of delivery of the ordered stores is to be properly specified in the contract with definite dates. Payments for supplies made should be released only after the supplies are made. Advance payments to firms are admissible only in the cases of maintenance contracts, fabrication contracts or turn-key contracts, when demanded by the firms, after obtaining adequate safeguards in the form of bank guarantee (BG), etc. from the supplier. Such advance should not exceed 40 per cent of the contract value if the supplier is a State or Public Sector Undertaking.

The Government accorded (31 March 2015) Administrative Sanction (AS) for the purchase of a 15 seater Double Hull⁴⁴ boat with double engine at a cost not exceeding ₹38 lakh for Shendurney Eco Tourism Project. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden (PCCF&CWW) sanctioned (31 March 2015) an estimate of ₹38.25 lakh for the purchase. The Wildlife Warden, Shendurney Wildlife Division (Division) without inviting open tenders, issued (31 March 2015) two supply orders to SIDCO, one for the supply of a 15 seater boat and the second for supply of two 40 HP Engines for the 15 seater boat. The Department executed separate agreements for the supplies and paid an advance of ₹30.84 lakh to SIDCO. No date of delivery was mentioned either in the supply orders or agreements. But the Department unilaterally fixed (December 2015) the dates of delivery retrospectively as 23 May 2015 which was not confirmed by SIDCO. Audit noticed significant

44. Double hull is a ship hull design and construction method where the bottom and sides of the ship have two complete layers of watertight hull surface: one outer layer forming the normal hull of the ship, and a second inner hull which is some distance inboard, typically by a few feet, which forms a redundant barrier to water in case the outer hull is damaged and leaks.

deviations from provisions of SPM and agreement conditions as below:

- There was undue haste in placing supply orders as could be seen from the fact that obtaining of AS, approval of estimate by PCCF&CWW, issue of supply orders, execution of agreement and release of advance payments were done on 31 March 2015 itself. Further, the supply orders, which were referred to in the agreements for detailed information on the supplies, did not contain essential details like the description/ specification of the items, price, date of delivery and the terms of payment, necessary to safeguard the financial interest of the Government.
- According to para 7.20 of the SPM, purchase by obtaining quotation by issuing single tender is to be resorted to only in unavoidable situations such as when articles required are manufactured by only one manufacturer; when it can achieve substantial economy; in the case of emergency and for standardisation of machineries to be compatible with existing sets. This purchase of boats for eco-tourism project did not qualify any of the above conditions. Hence, placing of supply order worth ₹37.79 lakh with SIDCO without inviting open tenders lacked transparency and was not in the best financial interest of the Government.
- Para 12.17 of the SPM stipulated that while making advance payment, adequate safeguards in the form of BG, etc. should be obtained from the supplier. Further, such advance payments should be generally interest bearing. The agreements for supply of the boat provided for payments in three instalments of 40, 40 and 20 per cent of the cost on completion of various stages. Contrary to this, the Department released 71 per cent (₹16.87 lakh) of the total cost of the boat in advance along with the supply order itself. Similarly, in the case of the engines, the agreement stipulated 40 per cent advance payment but the Department paid the total cost (₹13.97 lakh) in advance. Both the payments were made without obtaining security in the form of BG. The action lacked financial propriety since the Department interests were not safeguarded.

- Further, SIDCO sub-contracted the work to a private contractor, M/s Nautical Lines, Thiruvananthapuram even though Clause 9 of the Agreement prohibited underletting or subletting the execution of the contract or any part thereof without the consent of the Government.
- Although due date of delivery was 23 May 2015, the boat remains undelivered even after a lapse of 30 months (November 2017) despite incurring ₹30.84 lakh.

The Department stated that a challan was issued to SIDCO for return of the paid amount with 18 per cent interest as penal interest.

Non-adherence to the tender and agreement conditions, lapses in selection of competent suppliers, non-observance to provisions of SPM and poor contract management resulted in non-delivery of two boats intended for tourism activities despite paying ₹68.34 lakh⁴⁵.

The matter was referred to the Government in February 2018. The Government is yet to reply to the audit observations.

[Audit paragraph 4.1 contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Economic Sector for the year ended 31st March 2017]

[Note submitted by the Government on the above audit paragraph is included as Appendix II]

Excerpts from the discussion of Committee with officials concerned

69. While considering the above audit para, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that the audit observation was about the lapses occurred in connection with the purchase of two boats each for Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary and Shendurney Eco Tourism Project. A criminal case was pending against the tenderer for the non-supply of boats at Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary and in the second case departmental action and revenue recovery proceedings had been initiated against the officials concerned.

70. The Committee inquired whether there was any Vigilance case regarding this and what steps had been taken for initiating revenue recovery.

⁴⁵ ₹37.50 lakh for Neyyar + ₹30.84 lakh for Shendurney.

The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that a vigilance case had been registered under IPC Sections 406 and 420 and the investigation was underway. The Deputy Collector had issued an RR in 2018 and follow up on this is being done.

71. To the Committee's query whether action was not completed against the RR issued in 2018, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that it would be intimated after checking the current status.

72. When the Committee inquired about the reason for placing an order by violating tender conditions, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that as per the agreement, the contractor had to submit the drawing for IRS (Indian Register of Shipping) approval within 45 days from the date of the agreement. An official from AG pointed out that the tender was awarded to a firm that did not comply with the tender conditions.

73. The Committee opined that the Technical Committee^W was also responsible for issuing the clearance certificate in the absence of IRS approval and inquired whether any action had been taken against the officials concerned. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden informed that a case had been registered against Smt.R. Lakshmi, Sri. Saji Basheer, Shri. Arun. S.K., Shri. Shaji. B.L, Shri. Sarath Kumar and Shri. Krishna Kumar regarding the irregularities in connection with the purchase of boat for Shenduruny Ecotourism.

74. The Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests further clarified that disciplinary action had been taken against the officials regarding the irregularities in purchase of a boat for the Shenduruny Wildlife Sanctuary and no action had been taken against the officials regarding the irregularities related to Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary. He assured the Committee that action would be taken against the delinquent officers after verifying the details.

75. To a query of the Committee, the Deputy Chief Conservator of Forests informed that a police investigation was underway.

C

Conclusions/ Recommendations

76. The Committee directs the Department to furnish a comprehensive report on the current status of revenue recovery proceedings initiated in connection with the purchase of boats for Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary and Shendurney Eco Tourism Project. The Committee also urges the Department to submit the details regarding the action taken against those officials who were responsible for the irregularities in connection with the procurement.

Thiruvananthapuram,
27 October, 2024.

SUNNY JOSEPH,
Chairperson,
Committee on Public Accounts.

APPENDIX I

SUMMARY OF MAIN CONCLUSION/ RECOMMENDATION

Sl. No.	Para No.	Department Concerned	Conclusion/ Recommendation
1	5	Forest & Wildlife	The Committee notes that it took nearly fifty years for submission of proposal for constitution of the Advisory Committee after enactment of the Act. Therefore, the Committee directs the Department to take prompt measures to establish an Advisory Committee as early as possible and to furnish a report thereon to the Committee urgently.
2	15	Forest & Wildlife	The Committee observes that even after 15 years of appointment of the Collectors to settle the rights within the sanctuary, the final notification has not yet been issued. The Committee opines that the inordinate delay in issuing the final notification was due to some issues in resolving land related irregularities and also expresses its displeasure with the response provided by the Department officials. Hence, the Committee directs the Department that joint meetings of Collectors and Wildlife Wardens of respective Sanctuaries/National Parks should be convened urgently and also urges to provide necessary instructions to them to expedite the process of issuing final notification.
3	31	Forest & Wildlife	The Committee evaluates that the repeated recent incidents of human-wild animal conflicts that have resulted in loss of life and extensive damage to agricultural crops are of serious concern. The Committee notices that the delay in taking action by the Forest and Wildlife Department has further worsened the issue. So, the Committee directs that sufficient and adequate measures with the assistance of NABARD should be taken to prevent such incidents in future.

4	37	Forest & Wildlife	The Committee directs the Department to furnish the current status of rate of conviction in wildlife offences.
5	39	Forest & Wildlife	The Committee observes that non-demarcation of forest boundaries with cairns has facilitated encroachments. So, the Committee directs the Department to take necessary steps to demarcate the boundaries of forest land by constructing permanent cairns.
6	53	Forest & Wildlife	The Committee observes that the delay in relocation would lead to increased number of eligible families over a period of time, which in turn would lead to cost overrun requiring additional funds. Further delay in relocation and the persistence of human habitation inside Wayand Wildlife Sanctuary could lead to frequent human-wildlife conflicts. The Committee understands that the slow pace of relocation may be due to the non-release of State share in proportion to the Central share. Therefore, the Committee directs the Department to take appropriate measures to ensure the prompt release of the State share in proportion to the Central share and to complete the relocation package within a specified time frame.
7	76	Forest & Wildlife	The Committee directs the Department to furnish a comprehensive report on the current status of revenue recovery proceedings initiated in connection with the purchase of boats for Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary and Shendurney Eco Tourism Project. The Committee also urges the Department to submit the details regarding the action taken against those officials who were responsible for the irregularities in connection with the procurement.

APPENDIX II
NOTES FURNISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT

1/5888774/2023

**Kerala Legislature - Public Accounts Committee (2021-23)-
Remedial Measures Taken Statement on the Performance Audit
Report(Economic sector) 2017 of C&AG related to Forest &
Wildlife Department**

CHAPTER-II

2.Implementation of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 in the State.

2.6 Audit findings.

2.6.1 Planning for conservation and protection of wildlife in the State.

2.6.1.1 Functioning of the State Board for Wildlife

The State Wildlife Board has been reconstituted vide GO(P)No. 5/2022/FWLD dated 02.02.2022. The first meeting of the reconstituted Board was held on 19.01.2023 through online mode. All pertinent matters were brought to the notice of the Board. Whenever matters of importance arise it shall be brought to the attention of the SBWL and meetings shall be conducted.

2.6.1.2 Non-constitution of Advisory Committee

The proposal for constitution of Advisory Committees for wildlife sanctuaries is under process in Government in File No. D2/172/2023/F&WLD.

2.6.1.3 Notification of Sanctuaries/National Parks.

Chulannur Peafowl Sanctuary was notified on 15th May 2007 vide G.O (P) No. 24/07/F&WLD. As per G.O (P) No. 37/07/F&WLD dated 12.06.2007, the Sub Collector, Palakkad was appointed as 'Collector' to settle the rights within the Sanctuary which is still pending. The Forest Department is assisting the Sub Collector and initiating all efforts for speedy completion of the procedure.

In the case of Pambadum Shola National Park, Anamudi Shola National Park and Mathikettan Shola National Park which were notified

under Section 35(1) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (herein after called 'Act') the proceedings under Section 19 to 26 (both inclusive) and provision of sub-section (3) and (4) of the Section of the above Act shall not apply because all the above National Parks are having the status of Reserve Forests when it was notified as National Park on 26.12.2003, 14.12.2003 and 20.10.2003 respectively. In the explanation after sub section (8) in section 35 of the Act (w.e.f.01.04.2003), it is clearly stated that "*For the purposes of this Section, in case of an area, whether within a Sanctuary or not, where the rights have been extinguished and the land has become vested in the State Government under any Act or otherwise, such area may be notified by it, by a notification, as a National Park and the proceedings under Sections 19 to 26 (both inclusive) and the provisions of sub-sections (3) and (4) of this Section shall not apply*". Hence final notifications are not required for the above mentioned three National Parks.

The final notification procedure of Kurinjimala Sanctuary which is notified under section 18 of the Act is in progress. Devikulam Sub Collector has been appointed as the Special Officer to complete the settlement process and Forest Department is assisting the Sub Collector and initiating all efforts for speedy completion of the procedure. The proposal for appointing Devikulam Sub Collector as 'Collector' is under process in Government in File No. D2/212/2017/F&WLD.

Vide GO(P) No. 32/2009/F&WLD dated 04.07.2009, the Government has appointed the Revenue Divisional Officer, Kozhikode as 'Collector' under the Act to inquire into and determine the existence, nature and extent of right any person in or over the land comprised within the limits of Malabar Wildlife Sanctuary. In 2017, the area came under the newly formed Revenue Division at Vadakara. The Revenue Divisional Officer, Vadakara is to be appointed as 'Collector' under the Act.

The proposal for appointment of 'Collector' for Mangalavanam Bird Sanctuary under Section 18B of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 is awaited from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden.

2.6.1.4 Strengthening and enhancing the Protected Area Network

In the case of Periyar Tiger Reserve, the Government has declared (SRO No.1089/2007) an area of 881 km² as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat under Section 38V of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This is inclusive of 148 km² area handed over from Ranni Forest Division. Under Section 38V(2) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, all provisions in relation to a Sanctuary will apply to the Core or Critical Tiger Habitat. Hence the area of 148 km² need not be declared as a Sanctuary.

In the case of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, the Government has declared (SRO No.1066/2009) an area of 390.89 km² as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat under Section 38V of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This is inclusive of 145.76 km² area handed over from Nenmara, Chalakkudy and Vazhachal Forest Divisions. Under Section 38V (2) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, all provisions in relation to a Sanctuary will apply to the Core or Critical Tiger Habitat. Hence the area of 145.76 km² need not be declared as a Sanctuary.

The area of 148 km² was added as Buffer Zone for Silent Valley National Park as per G.O (Ms) No. 36/07/F&WLD, dated 11.06.2007. A proposal for notifying the area as Bhavani Wildlife Sanctuary, which was received from the Chief Wildlife Warden, was discussed in the meeting of State Board for Wildlife held on 23/01/2020 and certain clarifications are called for from Chief Wildlife Warden, as per Government letter No. D2/176/2020-FWLD dated 24.02.2023

A proposal to form a new Wildlife Sanctuary named as 'Sankhili Wildlife Sanctuary' was placed before the State Board for Wildlife on 19.01.2023 and was deferred for subsequent decision.

2.6.1.5 Administrative Control of new area added to Tiger Reserve

The areas added from the neighboring Territorial Forest Divisions to the core and buffer areas of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve are being managed under the prescriptions of the current Tiger Conservation Plan (2022-31).

2.6.1.6 Delay in Notification of areas as Sanctuary

In the case of Periyar Tiger Reserve, the Government has declared (SRO No.1089/2007) an area of 881 km² as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat under Section 38V of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This is inclusive of 148 km² area handed over from Ranni Forest Division. Under Section 38V(2) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, all provisions in relation to a Sanctuary will apply to the Core or Critical Tiger Habitat. Hence the area of 148 km² need not be declared as a Sanctuary.

In the case of Parambikulam Tiger Reserve, the Government has declared (SRO No.1066/2009) an area of 390.89 km² as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat under Section 38V of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. This is inclusive of 145.76 km² area handed over from Nenmara, Chalakkudy and Vazhachal Forest Divisions. Under Section 38V (2) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, all provisions in relation to a Sanctuary will apply to the Core or Critical Tiger Habitat. Hence the area of 145.76 km² need not be declared as a Sanctuary.

2.6.1.7 Deficiency in planning

Vazhachal Division has already approved Working plan for the period from 2018-19 to 2027-28.

2.6.1.8 Shrinkage of Elephant habitat in Munnar Division and its impacts

As per the direction of Hon'ble High Court on 03.05.2023 in WP(C) 13204/2021, an Expert Committee was constituted to aid and advise all short term and long term measures to prevent human - wild animal conflict and the same is under the consideration of the Committee.

2.6.2 Implementation of conservation, protection and enforcement measures.

2.6.2.1 Population of umbrella species.

No remarks

2.6.2.2 Ineffective surveillance.

All anti-poaching camps as envisaged in the Working Plans, Tiger Conservation Plans and Management Plans of Protected areas have been made functional and efforts are being taken to ensure effective surveillance at all strategic locations. A detailed protection plan has been prepared for each protected area and activities are being carried out in accordance with the protection plan. The vulnerable areas have been identified and routine field perambulation is initiated in such locations. GPS tracking, MSTRIPES monitoring mechanism etc. are being introduced to strengthen the protection. The protection of the interior and vulnerable areas has been strengthened by regular perambulation by protective staff of each sanctuary. The protection of the interior forest areas has been ensured through night patrolling, interstate boundary patrolling and interior area camping by the staff. Anti-poaching camp sheds are constructed according to the vulnerability of the forest area on priority. Vulnerable areas are prioritized subject to availability of funds. Patrolling has been strengthened, field perambulation and night camps are conducted regularly. Camera traps and digital wireless communication system were installed as part of intensifying forest protection activities.

As per the Working Plan prescription, more camp sheds were constructed in the vulnerable areas of Vazhachal Forest Division. After the incidents of 2015, perambulation has been strengthened in the interior forest areas. In Ranni Division, anti-poaching camp sheds are constructed at strategic points.

2.6.2.3 Issues relating to wildlife offences

• Ineffective handling of wildlife offences

Regular trainings and refresher courses are being conducted to address the issue. Though COVID-19 pandemic restrictions affected the conduct of regular refresher courses, online platforms are being utilized to fill up the gaps. The facilities under IMG are also utilized to conduct refresher courses for protective staff as well as ministerial staff of the department.

• Permitting declaration of animal articles without issue of notification

An offence (OR 14/2012) was booked against the actor and the same is under trial (CC No.358/2019) in Judicial First Class Magistrate Court, Perumbavoor.

2.6.2.4 Degradation of forest ecology due to encroachments

As per the Administration Report of 2015-2016, the total extent of encroachment is 7801.1161 ha. In this, the extent under Munnar, Kothamangalam and Konni Divisions are 1099.65 ha, 147.60 ha and 10.59 ha respectively. Copy of the relevant page of the Administrative Report is enclosed as **Annexure 1**. Till 2018-2019, similar figures were provided in the Administration Reports. However in the Administration Report of 2019-2020, the figures were changed for Kothamangalam Division as 434.04 ha and the total encroached extent was reported as 5021.68 ha (**Annexure 2**). The extent of encroachment as per the 2020-21 Administration Report of Kerala Forest Department (latest published) is 5024.535 ha. As per the above details, Forest department is taking stringent action as per law for eviction and prosecution of encroachment cases.

It was reported that as on 31.03.2018, 9541.83 km was covered under cairn construction, hence a balance distance of 2012.68 km was pending. To cover this distance, approximately 45,060 cairns are needed to be constructed. Out of this, during 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, 14618, 11779, 16993 and 5934 cairns were constructed respectively. The boundaries of forests except in few places (due to litigation) at present are demarcated by permanent cairns and Kayyalas. Along with this, steps are being taken to collect GPS readings for the digitization of forest boundaries.

Eviction of forest encroachments post 01.01.1977 has been declared as the policy of the State Government. Based on the above, it is reported that the Forest Department is making earnest efforts for protecting the forest lands against encroachments. Law and order problems associated with eviction of old encroachments and litigations during cairn construction are the major impediments faced by the department in mitigating these issues.

2.6.2.5 Constructions in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in violation of the provisions of the Act.

Few lease holders have built buildings on the reserve forest land leased out by the Forest Department under the Grow more food programme during 1940s in Lease Nos. 3 & 4 under Muthanga and Sulthan Bathery Ranges coming under Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Noolpuzha village of Sulthan Bathery Taluk. Under the lease condition, nothing but agricultural crops can be cultivated. The lessee has no right of sale and no right of succession to another. So, all the constructions carried out on the above land leased are illegal and against the terms and conditions of the lease.

The encroachments in the lease land should be legally evicted. Wildlife Warden, Wayanad reported that, for many years of the people have been living with their families doing business and farming with electricity connection, ration card, aadhar card, names in voter list, passport etc. There is a large scale of opposition locally and politically, which would create law and order issues. Hence the services of police and revenue authorities are required as law and order problems are likely to arise during the eviction. Instruction has been issued to Wildlife Warden, Wayanad to discuss the matter with District administration, police and people representatives. Instructions were also issued to prevent further constructions of the buildings in the above said land.

2.6.2.6 Un-regulated tourism activities in Periyar Tiger Reserve

As per the approved Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP), the traffic through the core area of Periyar Tiger Reserve has been identified as a prioritized threat to the Tiger Reserve. Accordingly, vehicular traffic regulation has been prescribed vide chapter 1, 3.3. Further, various measures are adopted for vehicular traffic control through establishment of check post at Vallakkadavu (Page No. 657, 658 of TCP). Moreover, ecotourism activities in the Tiger Reserve are being carried out as per the provisions of the approved TCP. Ecotourism activities in Gavi area is being done with the active participation of Eco Development Committees (EDCs) of Vallakkadavu Range of Periyar Tiger Reserve.

2.6.2.7 Non-clearance of undergrowth below power lines.

Steps have been taken to cause KSEB officials to remove the undergrowth below the power lines at regular intervals, in order to avoid danger to wildlife and to prevent fire hazards. Since 2017, no instances

of fires happened in PTR because of non-clearance of undergrowth below power lines.

2.6.2.8 Human habitation inside Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

Two relocation programs are being implemented in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.

1. IDWH Relocation program since 2011
2. RKDP Navakiranam program since 2022.

In the IDWH program, 646 eligible beneficiaries from 14 settlements were identified to be relocated under Phase I. As of now, out of 646 eligible beneficiaries, 384 have been paid the compensation including relocation of 279 beneficiaries. Land identification and land registration process is going for 61 beneficiaries.

Out of the 14 settlements, the following 8 settlements are completely rehabilitated outside the sanctuary.

SI No.	Name of settlement	No of beneficiaries
1	Goloor	29
2	Ammavayal	20
3	Arakunji	4
4	Vellakkode	10
5	Kottankara	65
6	Eswarakolli	4
7	Narimanthikolli	14
8	Puthur	1
	Total	147

Settlements relocated partially:

SI No.	Name of settlement	No. of beneficiaries	No of families for whom amount paid
1	Kurichiat	106	106
2	Chettivalathur		

		184	131
	Total	290	237

Remaining settlements to be relocated

Sl No.	Settlement	No. of eligible beneficiaries
1.	Pambankolly	63
2.	Manimunda	116
3.	Pankalam	14
4.	Chettiyalathur	53
	Total	246

The proposal for allotment of funds for the remaining settlements (246 families) under voluntary relocation was approved for an amount of Rs. 36.90 crore (60:40 CSS) under IDWH by the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC). The MoEF&CC has released an amount of Rs.5.53 crore as 25% of Central Share (22.14 crores).

Under RKDP Scheme named as 'Navakiranam', relocation of five settlements namely Kappad, Kundoor, Puthur, Kumuzhi and Achuthankolly are being undertaken. A total of 31 families are relocated from Kappad and Kundoor and 98 beneficiaries are identified in Puthur, Kumuzhi and Achuthankolly. The Department is making earnest efforts to facilitate the voluntary relocation of families under the schemes.

2.6.2.9 Violation of conditions of Master Plan for Sabarimala affecting the ecology of the Periyar Tiger Reserve.

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) now operates a composting facility at Pamba in lines with the solid waste management guidelines of Sabarimala Master Plan. The waste water lines of hotels at Pamba are connected to the sewage treatment plant at Pamba. Similarly,

the waste water lines of all buildings at Sannidanam are connected to sewage treatment plant at Sannidanam. Now there are no instances of waste water overflowing to Kumbalamthodu.

The non insulated overhead cables along the trek routes are converted to insulated cables. Changing over of overhead cables to underground cables has been brought to the attention of the High Power Committee (HPC) constituted for the implementation of Sabarimala Master Plan.

2.6.2.10 Inordinate delay in restoration of elephant corridors

The Wildlife Trust of India and the Asian Nature Conservation Association Foundation have jointly acquired the Elephant Corridor in Thirunelly-Kudrakode Private areas and the land has been transferred to Government.

In CRP Kunnu, apart from the land belonging to two individuals, all other lands have been acquired under the Voluntary Relocation Scheme (RKDP) and preliminary steps are being taken to construct boundary pillars as well as notify the same as Section 4 under Kerala Forest Act, 1961. The owners of the lands coming under Periapakranthalam Elephant Corridor have not agreed to transfer their private lands to the Government. As a result, the above Elephant Corridor Scheme could not be implemented. But direction has been given to the construction agency to construct culvert so as to facilitate passage of elephants while road development is carried out.

As per Order No. NRC-3600/1995 dated 24.01.1996 of the Secretary, Revenue Board, 63.7211 ha of private lands in Nelloyodi under Kottiyoor Village, Iritty Taluk, Kannur Division was decided to be acquired for Kottiyoor Elephant Corridor and out of the same 61.9520 ha have been acquired by the Forest Department. Steps are being taken to notify the same as Section 4 under the Kerala Forest Act, 1961.

2.6.2.11 Non- Compliance to working / management plan prescriptions

- **Deficiencies in implementation of fire management plans**

The short fall in creation of fire line in Silent Valley National Park is due to the fact that very few fire lines were created in the core area of the Silent Valley National Park which is less vulnerable to fires. The forest area was categorized into different zones based on past fire incidences and susceptibility of the area to fire. The different zones are classified as high, medium and low fire prone areas. Due to the limited fund received during the period, priority fire lines only were created. Shortfall of fire line is compensated by deploying existing EDC members to prevent fire incidences and to detect and douse the fire at the earliest. Fire *machans* (temporary watch towers) were also created at the apt locations to detect the fire quickly. Awareness programmes were also conducted to the local people about the ill effect of forest fire. Their help played a huge role in detecting and dousing the forest fire immediately. Due to all these measures, though there was shortfall in the fire line created, number of fire incidences reduced.

Fire Management Plans are prepared every year and prescriptions thereof are being executed on priority based on the availability of funds. The activities as mentioned above includes the 148 sq.km added from the nearby Goodrical Range to Periyar Tiger Reserve East Division. For the past so many years since 2017 no fire incidence happened in the aforementioned areas.

The status of fire incidence in the state for the past seven years is given below.

Fire Season	No. fire incidents	Extent burnt (ha)
2015-16	564	2024
2016-17	737	2994
2017-18	330	1279
2018-19	583	1789
2019-20	382	716.64
2020-21	166	448.41
2021-22	123	308.63

- **Non-eradication of invasive weeds**

Wayanad Wildlife Division :- *Senna spectabilis* is an invasive alien species with profuse coppicing and root sucker producing ability. In the proposed Management Plan 2022-2032, special emphasis has been given on Senna eradication. In the past, there was no standard method available to eliminate *Senna spectabilis*. Elaborate study was needed to establish a protocol to eliminate *Senna spectabilis*. Hence, Kerala Forest Department along with Kerala Forest Research Institute, conducted extensive experiments to identify effective methods to eliminate *Senna spectabilis*. Based on the results of those experiments, protocol for elimination of *Senna spectabilis* was framed in November 2022 by the PCCF & Head of Forest Force. As per the protocol, Senna stems having more than 10 cm collar girth has to be debarked during the non-rainy season of the year. Senna seedlings of less than 10cm collar girth has to be manually uprooted during rainy season. *Senna spectabilis* mapping was also done in 2019 and 2022.

Detailed project proposal to eliminate *Senna spectabilis* were approved under NABARD and RKDP and the Senna elimination work was started in January 2023. Totally 46 blocks were identified. Out of that, Senna elimination works were taken up in 9 blocks covering approximate 17 sq.km. During the year 2022-2023, debarking of Senna (above 10cm collar girth) has been completed in those blocks.

Watershed Management

In Periyar Tiger Reserve, a study was conducted to identify the waterholes to be maintained. The mapping of the waterholes was also done. A map has been prepared and incorporated in the current Tiger Conservation Plan in Core Plan (2021-22 to 2030-31) Chapter C4, Para 4.2.5 vayals, and the list of waterholes to be maintained included in appendix 7.2.

2.6.2.12 Non-compliance with the requirements of Kerala Captive Elephant (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012.

i) Non-providing of stables for elephants

Direction had been issued to the Administrator, Guruvayoor Devaswom Board to build shelters for the elephants as stated in Rule (3) of Kerala Captive Elephant (Management and Maintenance) Rules, 2012.

The Devaswom Board had initiated action and is underway for constructing shelters for the elephants in Aanakotta. Till now 30 shelters have been constructed. The Assistant Conservator of Forests, Social Forestry, Thrissur has been entrusted to report the progress.

2.6.2.13 Deficiencies in conservation of captive animals in Zoo.

Establishing the new Zoological Park at Puthur, Thrissur is in progress and the animals / birds will be shifted to the new facility soon.

CHAPTER- IV

4.1 Irregularities in procurement of boats for tourism activities by Forests and Wildlife Department.

1. Purchase of 25 seater Fibre Reinforced Plastic Boat for Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary

Government of Kerala had accorded administrative sanction for the purchase of a 25 - seated Fibre Reinforced Plastic Boat (FRP) for an estimated cost of Rs.62.50 lakh vide GO(Rt) No.222/2012/F&WLD dated 05/05/2012 to meet the increased demand for Ecotourism activities in Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary under Thiruvananthapuram Wildlife Division. The work was tendered on 13.12.2011 and only one firm responded. Subsequently, re-tender was held on 03.02.2012, in which three firms participated. M/s. Nautical Lines which got clearance from the technical committee and had quoted the lowest amount (Rs.62.50 Lakh) was selected as LI.

On tender acceptance, an agreement was executed (Agreement No.4/2012) between the Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram and Manager, 'Nautical Lines' on 15.06.2012, with condition that "the boat should be delivered within six months from the date of agreement i.e., on or before 15.12.2012". Based on inspection report of boat construction from DESCON (Cochin University), the first installment i.e., Rs.18, 75,000/- was paid to M/s. Nautical Lines vide cheque No.432886 dated 20.06.2013.

The Manager, 'Nautical Lines' had vide Lt.No.NL1/34/2011-2012/Neyyar/29 informed the Wildlife Warden,

Thiruvananthapuram on 16.07.2013 that the construction work of hull started on 16.07.2013 and requested for the release of the 2nd installment and the payment was effected on 20.11.2013. Based on inspection report of boat construction from DESCON (Cochin University), the second installment i.e., Rs.18,75,000/- was paid to M/s. Nautical Lines vide cheque No.675451 dtd. 20.11.2013.

Since the company had not delivered the boat even after the payment of Rs.37,50,000/-, the Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram vide letter No.A1-1972/2010 dated 01.08.2014 informed M/s. Nautical Lines that the department intends to terminate the contract at the risk and loss of the firm and to proceed to recover the loss sustained by the department.

Nautical Lines responded (NL1/34/14-15/Neyyar/9 dated 05.11.2014) that the tender condition of IRS approval for the vessel is causing undue delay in supply of boat. As per the agreement the contractor was to submit the drawing of IRS approval within 45 days from the date of agreement and the final payment to the contractor would be released only after final certification from IRS about quality and workmanship of the boat, but the firm M/s. Nautical Lines had submitted IRS approved drawing after a gap of one year i.e., on 07.06.2013 only.

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram vide order dated 19.09.2014 directed the Conservator of Forests(ABP) to take appropriate legal action against the defaulted company as per agreement conditions for making the loss sustained to Government. The Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram issued letter to Public Prosecutor, Thiruvananthapuram on 26.11.2015 to take appropriate criminal and civil proceedings against the firm. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram, vide No.WL6-37515/2014 dated 16.03.2016 issued letter to District Government Pleader, Thiruvananthapuram to take necessary action to initiate suitable legal action against M/s. Nautical Lines.

Owing to the lapse of the firm, the loss in terms of revenue to the department was assessed by the Wildlife Warden,

Thiruvananthapuram as Rs.7,25,34,188/- (Rupees Seven crore twenty-five lakh, thirty-four thousand one hundred and eighty eight only) (Principal Rs.37,50,000/- + interest @ 18% + loss of estimated revenue Rs.6,55,12,750/-). The Deputy Collector (RR), Thiruvananthapuram has been addressed from the office of the Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram on 25.09.2018 vide requisition letter No.2018/14119/01 in connection with Revenue Recovery steps initiated against the Managing Director, 'Nautical Lines'. As per the report of the revenue authorities the defaulter contractor is now abroad and his abroad address is to be traced out. The recovery process initiated from Revenue Recovery Office, Thiruvananthapuram was handed over to the RR Section, Nedumangadu Taluk. Further follow up action is being taken from the office concerned.

Based on the written complaint of the Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram on 07.11.2017 addressed to the City Police Commissioner, Thiruvananthapuram, an FIR (No.2224) was registered against M/s. Nautical Lines initially in Nemom Police Station as Cr. No. 2535/2017 and subsequently on 09.12.2017 at Vattiyoorkavu Police Station under section 406 and 420 of Indian Penal Code. The investigation in Crime No.2224/17 of Vattiyoorkavu Police Station U/s. 406,420 IPC is going on and records related to the above case were recovered from the Wildlife Warden's office by the investigation team and the investigation is in progress.

II. Purchase of 15- seater boat for Shendurney Eco Tourism Project

As per the Government order vide the GO (Rt) No. 147/2015/F&WLD dated 31.03.2015, the Government of Kerala accorded administrative sanction for the purchase of 15- seated, double hull with double engine boat for a cost not exceeding Rs. 38.00 lakhs for Shendurney eco-tourism project. Accordingly purchase order was placed vide letter no SD IV 1237/2013 dated 31.03.2015 to M/s SIDCO for the supply of the same and agreements were executed between the Wildlife Warden, Shendurney and SIDCO vide Agreement Nos. 12/2014-15 & 13/2014-15. As per clause 7 in the agreement, 40% of the total

amount was to be paid in advance, 40% after installation and the remaining 20% after delivery.

However, about 80% of the total amount was paid to M/s SIDCO on 31.03.2015 itself { i.e., the total value of one 15-seater boat was Rs 23,81,600/- (Invoice No -SSETTVM/3314 dated 31.03.2015 was passed for the total amount and payment limited to Rs 16,86,957/-) and total value of two 40 HP 4 Stroke Petrol OBM was Rs 13,96,900/- (Invoice No -SSETTVM/3315 dated 31.03.2015 was passed for the total amount and payment made in full)}

Even after getting more than 80% of the total amount (ie, Rs 16,86,957+ Rs 13,96,900 = Rs. 30,83,857/-), M/s SIDCO had not delivered the vessel till date. In the meantime, Smt. R. Lekshmi, Assistant Conservator of Forests, who was the Wildlife Warden at the time of making payment was transferred vide GO(Rt) No. 253/2015/F&WLD dated 08.06.2015 and she handed over charge to Sri.A.Shanavas, Assistant Conservator of Forests on 18.06.2015. Before her handing over charge, on 17.06.2015, M/s Nautical Lines delivered a 12-seater boat which was to be delivered by M/s SIDCO based on an earlier supply order dated 05.02.2015. But she had given acceptance certificate for 15 seater Boat with two 40 HP double engines instead of the 12-seater boat to M/s Nautical Lines. However in her note to successor she had given the status of boat purchase with M/s SIDCO as on 18.06.2015 correctly. On 23.02.2018, she explained through an explanation letter addressed to the PCCF(WL) & CWW that this was an inadvertent clerical error and that M/s SIDCO had no case that they had delivered the 15 seater boat which was evident from the letter No SIDCO/MKTG/General/17-18 dated 02.11.2017.

Based on discussion with the Conservator of Forests (ABP) during the monthly meeting on 03.08.2016, the Wildlife Warden took up the matter with M/s SIDCO as a preliminary step to recoup the amount. A detailed letter about the facts and circumstances on the subject had been sent to them and they replied that an enquiry about the issue was initiated by them to identify authentic facts and figures and also assured to submit details within fifteen days. The Store Purchase Department in Government had made an inspection

and recommended vide SPD-IW 112/50/2015/SPD dated 18.04.2017 that "if the firm fails to supply the boat within the stipulated time, purchasing officer has to take action to recoup the amount with admissible rate of interest". It was also informed that based on GO (P) No.282/2013/Fin dated 12.06.2013 and GO (P) No.565/2013/Fin dated 18.11.2013, the amount with 18% of interest per annum should be recouped from M/s SIDCO. Hence a chalan for Rs 42,40,307/- including amount paid with 18% interest was issued to them by the Wildlife Warden, vide letter dated 02.05.2017. This has been brought to the notice of the MD, SIDCO, but no response was received from their part. Subsequently the forest department had issued another counter signed Chalan for Rs. 45,64,113/- amount + 18% interest) to M/s. SIDCO vide D.O letter No. SD IV 1237/2013 dated 30.11.2017. But there has been no reply from M/S SIDCO till date. Apart from these, there is also a penal clause in 6(b) of the agreement which says that without prejudice to other remedies as per the contract, the Government may deduct Rs 250/-per day from the contract price as liquidated damages up to a maximum deduction of 10% of the contract price, if M/s SIDCO fails to deliver the vessel within the time period in the contract.

Since M/s SIDCO had neither supplied the boat nor remitted the amount, request was sent to all DDOs under Kerala Forest Department for withholding any payment to be effected to M/s SIDCO. Aggrieved by this, M/s SIDCO initiated legal action against the manufacturing firm, M/s Nautical Lines that included Revenue Recovery and lodging a criminal complaint to the City Police Commissioner and issued termination order for stopping the manufacturing unit at the SIDCO Industrial Estate. Meanwhile, Sri.P.S Krishnakumar who is representing M/s Nautical Lines filed WP(C) 11206/18 before the Hon'ble High Court of Kerala in which Wildlife Warden, Shendurney was the 2nd respondent. All the exhibits produced by the petitioner in the said WP(C) were not in connection with Shendurney Wildlife Division. A counter affidavit on the petition had been filed.

As per direction of the PCCF (WL) & CWW, the Wildlife Warden Shendurney sought legal opinion from the Advocate General, Ernakulam (AG) regarding the steps to be taken for recouping the

government money and the AG has informed the following in the reply;

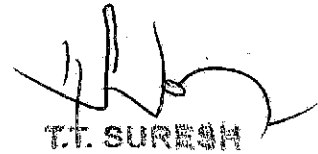
1. The Forest Department has to invoke clause 11 of the contract, by cancelling the contract and request the Government to recover the amount from M/s SIDCO, from the amount payable or due to M/s SIDCO from Government.
2. If the amount from which the due amount is to be deducted is not sufficient, then to initiate revenue recovery proceedings against M/s SIDCO for balance amount.
3. To take appropriate action against the officer concerned of the Forest Department responsible for payment of excess amount as advance money in violation of the contract.

The Conservator of Forests(ABP) had reported the total loss calculated till 31.08.2019 to the PCCF(WL) & Chief Wildlife Warden, as Rs 66,51,370/-(Amount paid to SIDCO-Rs 30,83,857/-+ Rs 4,03,250/- @Rs 250 for delay in delivery + Rs 4,15,740/- loss on account of expected revenue had the boat been delivered on time)

The then Wildlife Warden had executed the agreement with M/s SIDCO without following the Store Purchase Rules, excluded tender and paid more than 80% of the total amount to M/s SIDCO. A grave mistake was committed by way of issuing an acceptance certificate for a boat which was yet to be delivered as well. The 15 seater boat is not yet supplied and M/s SIDCO has not remitted the amount with interest till date. This has resulted in huge loss to the Government. On the basis of recommendation in the inspection report of Finance Inspection Wing (Report No.2386/FIW-J1/2018 dated 12.07.2019), the Government had initiated disciplinary action against Smt. R. Lekshmi, the then Wildlife Warden and purchasing officer for major penalty and issued Memo of Charges/Statement of Allegations as per rule 15 in Kerala Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules,1960. Subsequently, the Government ordered formal enquiry and Sri. Sanjayan Kumar IFS, Chief Conservator of Forests was appointed as the enquiry officer vide GO(Rt) No.531/2022

F&WLD dated 26.11.2022. The enquiry is in progress.

On 06.08.2022, vide Letter No C7-(VC-6/2022/SIU) 26528/2022/DVACB the Director, V&ACB has informed the forest department that based on QV-33/2017/SIU-1 quick verification regarding irregularities in purchase of boat for Shenduruny Ecotourism, a vigilance case numbered 06/2022/SIU-1 was registered against Smt R.Lekshmi, Sri Saji Basheer, Sri.Arun.S.K, Sri. Shaji.B.L, Sri. Sarath Kumar and Sri.Krishnakumar. Further details of investigation on this issue are awaited from the agency concerned.



T.T. SURESH

PEN: 101123

**Joint Secretary to Govt.
Forest & Wild Life Dept.
Govt. Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram
Phone: 0471 2518679**

Annexure - 1

Details of encroachment of forest land as on 31.03.2016 is given below

District	Circle	Division	Extent of encroachment (Ha.)
1	2	3	4
Pathanamthitta	Southern circle, Kollam	Konni	10.59
		Ranni	1.13
Thermala		7.24	
Total		18.96	
Kollam			
Ernakulam	High range Circle, Kottayam	Kothamangalam	147.60
Kottayam		Kottayam	121.49
Idukki		Munnar	1099.65
		Marayoor	0.03
		Mankulam	358.43
		Total	1727.20
Thrissur		Thrissur	147.04
Ernakulam		Malayattoor	129.29
	Total	276.33	
Malappuram	Eastern circle, Palakkad	Nilambur North	682.53
Palakkad		Nilambur South	2.11
		Palakkad	190.58
		Mannarkkad	2700.34
		Nenmara	244.19
Total		3819.75	
Kozhikode	Northern circle, Kannur	Kozhikode	10.40
Wayanad		Wayanad South	1369.29
		Wayanad North	369.74
Kannur		Kannur	11.02
		Total	1760.45
Kottayam	Field Director, Kottayam	Periyar East	0.0061
Idukki		Idukki	5.40
		Total	5.4061
Thrissur	Wildlife circle, Palakkad	Peechi	193.02
		Total	193.02
		Grand Total	7801.1161

Annexure - 2

Sl No.	Boundary Demarcation	Length(km)
14	Chafakkady	3616.578
15	Thrissur	1671.147
16	Nenmara	3943.630
17	Palakkad	326.540
18	Mannarkkad	515.471
19	Nilambur (North)	480.5532
20	Kozhikkode	1337.380
21	Wayanad (South)	70.045
22	Wayanad (North)	105.920
23	Kannur	6.718
24	Kasaragod	1522.910
25	Periyar (W) Peerumedu	24.288
26	Periyar (E) Thekkady	11.444
27	Wildlife Peechi	1361.123
28	Parambikulam	2455.228
29	Wildlife Wayanad	321.560
	Total	55389.331

4.7.4 Encroachment

The extent of encroachment to be evicted from forest land was estimated during the year and was confirmed as 5021.682 Ha.

Table 30 - Encroachment of Forest Land as on 31.03.2020

Circle	District	Division	Extent of encroachment to be evicted (Ha.)
Southern Circle, Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Konni	10.59
		Ranni	1.74
	Kollam	Theamala	7.22
	Total		19.55

Circle	District	Division	Extent of encroachment to be evicted (Ha.)
High Range Circle, Kottayam	Ernakulam	Kothamangalam	434.03
	Kottayam	Kottayam	105.88
	Idukki	Munnar	1099.65
		Marayoor	.03
		Mankulam	358.43
	Total		
Central Circle, Thrissur	Thrissur	Thrissur	189.88
		Chalakkudy	.26
	Ernakulam	Malayattoor	126.65
	Total		
Eastern Circle, Palakkad	Malappuram	Nilambur North	637.87
		Nilambur South	2.12
	Palakkad	Palakkad	37.68
		Mannarkkad	664.32
		Nemmara	237.65
	Total		
Northern Circle, Kannur	Kozhikode	Kozhikode	63.68
		Kozhikode (Timber sale)	.52
	Wayanad	Wayanad South	717.63
		Wayanad North	230.51
	Kannur	Kannur	50.66
		Kasargod	22.67
	Total		
Wildlife Circle, Palakkad	Kannur	Aaralam WL	2.00
	Total		
Grand Total			5021.68

4.8 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

This Wing was established as part of the Kerala Forestry Project with the objectives of building the capacity of staff to use and manage information, facilitating flow of information within KFD units, mainstreaming use of IT particularly

Kerala Forests & Wildlife Department

Latest Report

ADMINISTRATION REPORT 2020-21

4.6.2 Encroachment

The extent of encroachment to be evicted from forest land was estimated during the year and was confirmed as 5024.535Ha.

Table 31 - Encroachment of Forest Land as on 30.03.2021

Circle	District	Division	Extent of Encroachment to be evicted (Ha)
Southern Circle, Kollam	Pathanamthitta	Konni	10.5898
		Ranni	1.7404
	Kollam	Thenmala	1.68
		Thiruvananthapuram	Thiruvananthapuram
	Total		
High Range Circle, Kottayam	Ernakulam	Kothamangalam	434.0366
		Kottayam	105.8837
	Kottayam	Munnar	1099.0538
		Idukki	Marayoor
		Mankulam	358.4255
Total			1998.0296
Central Circle, Thrissur	Thrissur	Thrissur	191.6903
		Chalakkudy	0.2644
	Ernakulam	Malayattoor	127.6550
Total			319.6097
Eastern Circle, Palakkad	Malappuram	Nilambur North	657.8708
		Nilambur South	2.12
	Palakkad	Palakkad	37.685
		Mannarkkad	664.2797
		Nenmara	237.6512
Total			1599.6067
Northern Circle, Kannur	Kozhikode	Kozhikode	63.679
		Wayanad South	717.63
	Wayanad	Wayanad North	230.5123
		Kannur	Kannur
		Kasargod	22.67
	Kozhikode (Timber sale)	0.5165	
Total			1085.6648

ADMINISTRATION REPORT 2020-21

Field Director	Division	Staff
Kottayam	Pariyar East Division	4,388
	Thekkady	
Total		4,388
Wildlife Circle, Palakkad	Kannur	2.00
	Aralam WLD	
	Wayanad	0.634
Total		2.634
Total		5024.535

4.7 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) WING

This Wing was established as part of the Kerala Forestry Project with the objectives of building the capacity of staff to use and manage information, facilitating flow of information within KFD units, mainstreaming use of IT particularly Database Management System and Geographic Information System, expanding internet connectivity and increasing the availability of key reference data sets such as an updated forest inventory to users within the KFD. This wing facilitates implementation of e-Governance initiatives, Digital Service Delivery and also strengthening of Wireless Communication facility of the Department.

4.7.1 Major Achievements

- Computerization of Offices in KFD up to the Forest Station Level
- Implementation of Online FMIS modules to facilitate flow of information within KFD units.
- Generated Basic GIS Layers for the entire Forest Areas of Kerala and prepared various thematic maps like Administrative boundaries upto section level, Reserve Forest boundary layer, Protected Area boundary layer, Plantation Area layer, Watershed layer, Tribal Settlements within forest area etc.
- Prepared Forest Atlas for 26 Forest Divisions in Kerala
- Implemented Kerala Forest GEO-PORTAL with the assistance of Kerala State Spatial Data Infrastructure (KSDI) which is an online solution where the field officer gets output layers of their choice. Field officer can also overlay the layers over Google map and Bhuvan images.
- Established a dedicated Video Conferencing facility for the Department connecting Forest Headquarters and Circle Offices.
- Hosting of Departmental Website
- As part of strengthening wireless communication network had installed 19 Repeater Wireless Stations, 97 Fixed Wireless Base Stations and 61 Mobile Wireless units.

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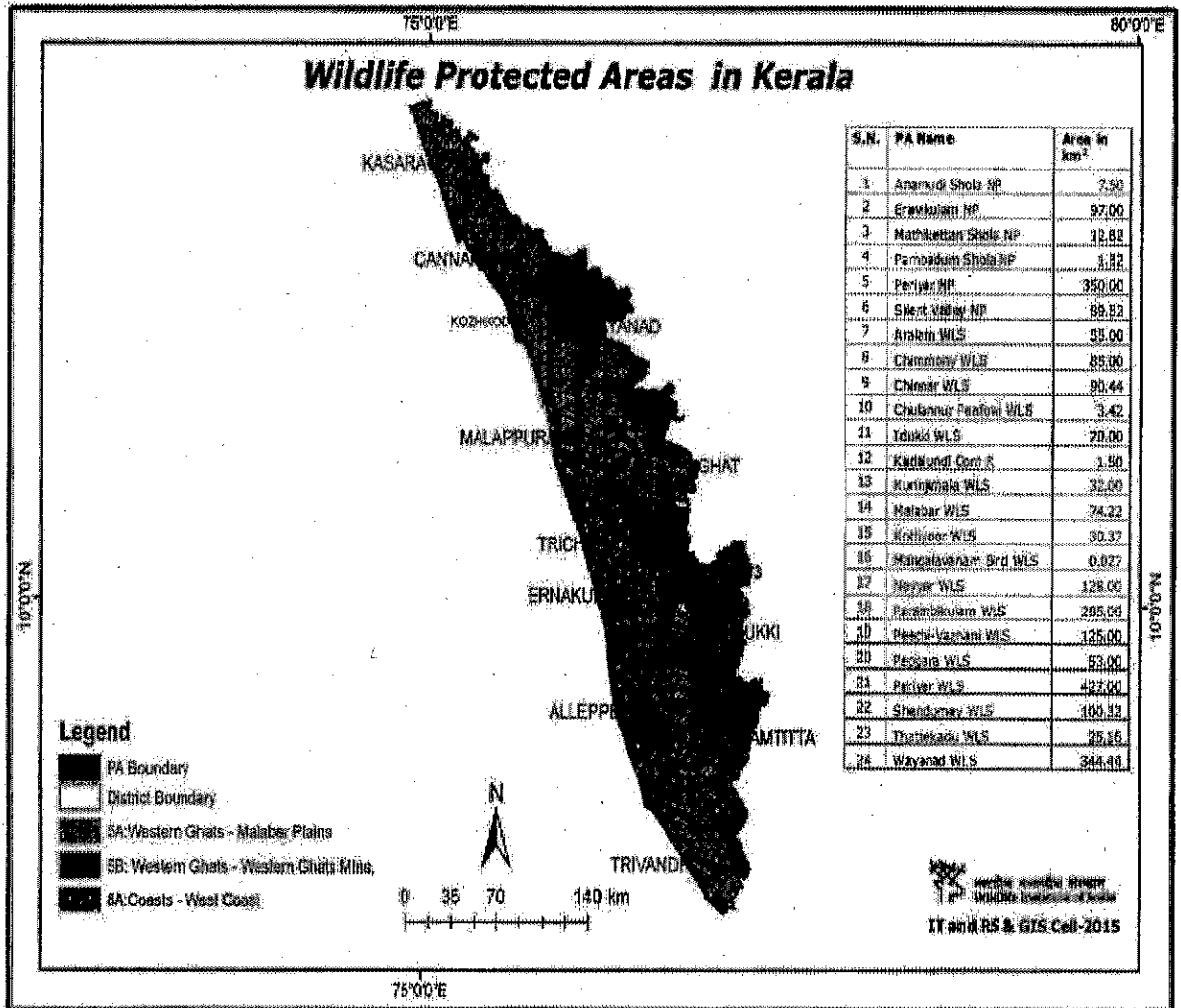
APPENDIX III
APPENDICES FROM AG's AUDIT REPORT

APPENDIX III (C)

Audit Report (Economic Sector) for the year ended 31 March 2017

Appendix - 2.1

Map of wildlife protected areas in Kerala
(Reference: Paragraph 2.1-Page: 9)

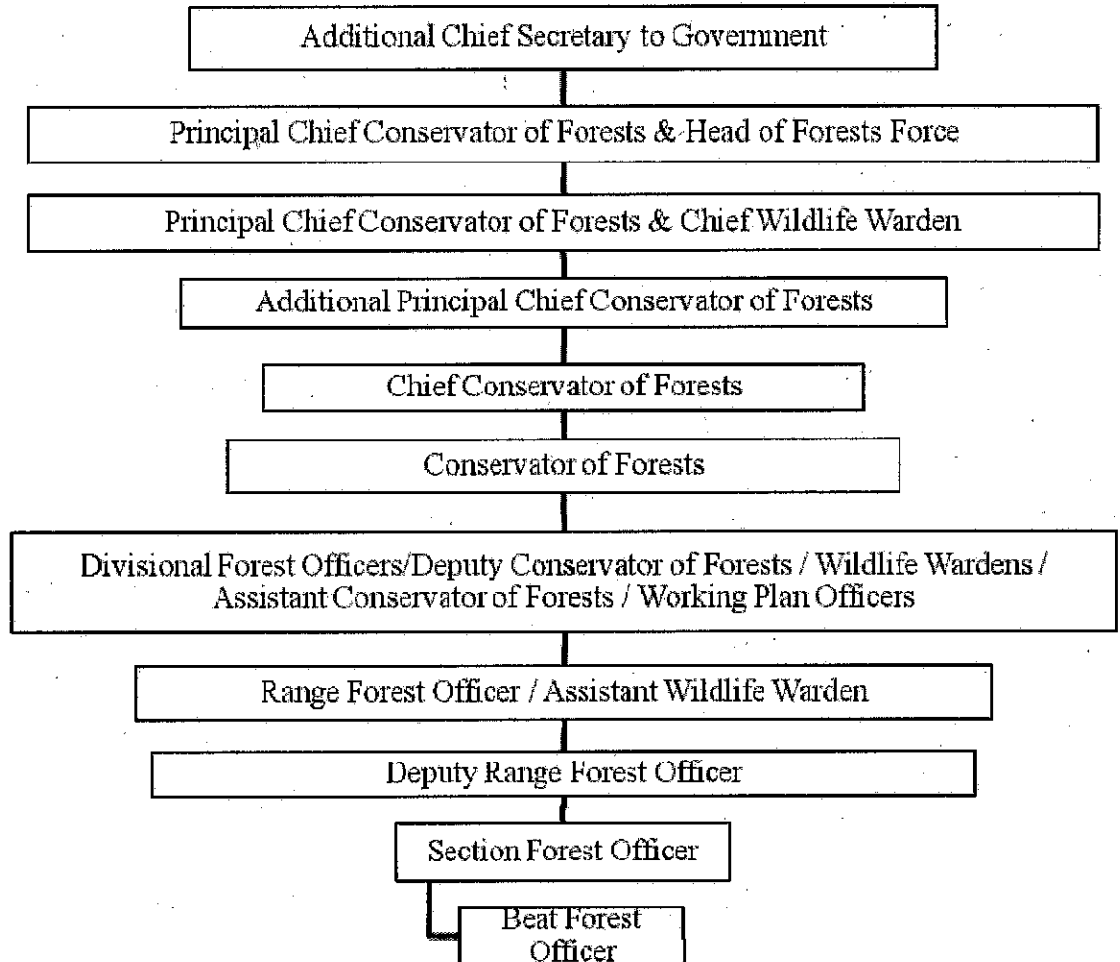


Source: Website of Wildlife Institute of India

Appendix - 2.2

Organisational chart of Forests and Wildlife Department

(Reference: Paragraph 2.2 - Page: 9)



Audit Report (Economic Sector) for the year ended 31 March 2017**Appendix - 2.3****Details of wildlife offences registered at the Divisions**

(Reference: Paragraph 2.6.2.3 - Page: 18)

Name of Division	No. of Cases registered	No. of Cases disposed			Pending at Court	Pending at Division	Percentage of pendency at the Division to cases registered
		Convicted	Acquitted	Dropped/ Compounded			
Ranni	61	0	3	14	42	2	3.30
Periyar East	31	0	0	13	14	4	13
Vazhachal	59	2	4	10	31	12	20
Kothamangalam	59	1	4	4	28	22	37
Malayattoor	Data not furnished						
Munnar	160	1	10	9	59	81	51
WLW Idukki	70	1	4	52	12	1	0.10
WLW Wayanad	180	14	46	39	40	41	23
Silent Valley National Park	10	1	0	3	4	2	20
Total	630	20	71	144	230	165	26

Source: Compiled from the information furnished by the Divisions

Appendix - 2.4**Non-compliance to working/management plan prescriptions**

(Reference: Paragraph 2.6.2.11 - Page: 27)

Sl No.	Division	Weeds present	Prescription suggested as per respective Plan	Observations
1	Ranni	Lantana, Eupatorium and Mikania	Uprooting and removal.	No activity carried out in the Division during period from 2012-13 to 2016-17.
2	Konni	Mikania, Lantana and Eupatorium	No prescriptions provided in Management Plan for 2012-13 to 2014-15. In the Working Plan of the Division for the period 2015-16 to 2024-25, uprooting during monsoon three years was suggested.	No activity was carried out in the Division during the last five years from 2012-13 to 2016-17.
3	Periyar East	Lantana, Eupatorium, Mikania, Pteridiumaquilinum, Mimosa invisa	A study proposed in the first year of conservation plan to identify weed infested areas. Weed management was to be carried out in the identified areas as per the study report, on assessment of weed cover and its impact.	No study, as proposed in TCP, was conducted.
4	Periyar West	Lantana, Eupatorium, Mikania, Pteridiumaquilinum, Mimosa invisa	The prescription for eradication of Lantana was to cut below the collar where the shoot and root joins. TCP also proposed a study in the first year of conservation plan to identify weed- infested areas.	The eradication was carried out merely by uprooting. Thus, the prescription as per the TCP was violated. No study was also seen conducted.
5	Malayattoor	Mikania, Lantana, Eupatorium	Uprooting before flowering, slash burning, conduct the work studies, uprooted pits to be seeded with seeds of palatable grasses, chopping the main stem of Lantana below the shoot proliferating zone.	No activity carried out in the Division during the last five years from 2012-13 to 2016-17.

Source: Records of Territorial and Wildlife Divisions

Appendix - 2.5**Deficiencies in watershed management activities**

(Reference: Paragraph 2.6.2.11-Page: 27)

Sl No.	Division	Prescription as per plan period	Observations
1	Periyar West	TCP suggested conducting a study during the first year of the TCP to identify the waterholes to be maintained or established to ensure judicious distribution of water sources and suggest interventions.	No study conducted.
2	Ranni	Working Plan recommended preparation of a Strategic Plan (after detailed perambulation of the area by the concerned DFO) for watershed with the main objective of conservation of bio-diversity.	Strategic Plan not prepared.
3	Malayattoor	Working Plan suggested deepening of water holes which dry up in February, March and April to ensure water availability throughout the year. construction of small check dams in upper reaches at two km intervals to retain water and to ensure availability of water in lean period.	The Plan prescriptions not complied with.
4	Munnar	Working Plan for the period 2010-11 to 2019-20 provided for construction of six check dams.	Construction/ works not carried out.

Source: Records of Territorial and Wildlife Divisions

Appendix – 2.6**Conditions stipulated by CZA****(Reference: Paragraph 2.6.2.13 - Page: 29)**

Sl. No.	Conditions Stipulated	Time period to comply
1	Domestic ducks, geese, white mice, guinea pigs, Mithun to be removed from exhibit area	With immediate effect
2	Star tortoise to be provided with soft substrate instead of gravel	One month
3	Lion tailed macaque should be transferred to Zoological Garden, Thiruvananthapuram	With immediate effect
4	Sand to be provided for Gharial for basking along with ramp for climbing	With immediate effect
5	Bonnet Macaques to be housed in enclosures that meet minimum standards prescribed by CZA and the excess population to be released to the wild habitat	Six months
6	Exhibits of Tigers, Lions, and Leopards do not meet minimum standards prescribed by CZA. Hence they should be shifted to a recognised zoo having appropriate housing facility	With immediate effect
7	Stand-off barrier to be provided for Porcupine & Barn owl	With immediate effect
8	Enrichment to be provided to snakes.	One month
9	Screening of staff against zoonotic diseases to be done	With immediate effect
10	Number of Jackals should be reduced by shifting to recognised zoo or released in the wild	Six months
11	Surplus Sambar & Hog Deer either to be shifted to recognised zoo having sufficient carrying capacity or released in the wild	Six months

Source: Joint Verification Report