



**INTERIM REPORT ON ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN
GIR SANCTUARY AND ITS' ECO-SENSITIVE
ZONE FALLING UNDER GIR SOMNATH DISTRICT**

Interim report submitted as a part to comply
Hon'ble NGT Order Dtd. – 20.09.2022 in O.A. – 600/2022;
Natvarsinh R Kshatriya v/s. State of Gujarat & others.

Nodal Agency

GUJARAT POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

January 2023



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1. BACKGROUND:

Gir sanctuary is home to endemic Asiatic lion and a range of relishing flora & fauna. The presence of such biota and the environment has boosted tourism in this particular region and attracted allied commercial activities. The region is also rich in mineralogy and is having basaltic and limestone rocks. Shri Natavarsinh R. Kshatriya has filed a complaint to NGT. The grievances in the application are that Gir forest in Junagadh of Gujarat is being used for commercial activities. In the beginning, the government used it for earning revenue from Lion show and wildlife Safari. Now private Hotels and Farm Houses are given permission for commercial operation in the surroundings of Gir Forest causing damage to environment. Illegal mining, heavy vehicular movement etc. have resulted in migration of Lions and mortality of lions. The complaint has been recorded as Original Application 600/2022 before Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi. Hon'ble NGT has constituted a committee by Order Dated: 20.09.2022 to verify the factual position. In order to comply with the aforementioned order a committee constituted under chairmanship of District Collector, Gir Somnath. In order to hear grievances of the applicant, Shri Natavarsinh R. Kshatriya was invited to attend the meetings of the committee so that all his grievances can be addressed in the report.

2. SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT STUDY:

The complainer has mentioned in his application that private hotels and farm houses are given permission for commercial operation in the surrounding of Gir Forest causing damage to environment. Illegal mining, heavy vehicular movement, etc. have resulted in migration of Lions and mortality of lions. Furthermore, the Gir sanctuary area is spread over Gir Somnath, Junagadh and Amreli district. As per the order Collector, Gir Somnath is one of the respondent

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and member of the committee; the assessment and report is limited to his jurisdiction *i.e.* area falling under Gir Somnath District. The committee has defined scope of member authorities based on Hon'ble NGT Order Dated: 20.09.2022 which read as

".....to enable them to take appropriate remedial action, in accordance with Statutory provisions mandating them to take remedial action for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution/degradation and for protection and improvement of environment, by giving notice to/hearing the concerned Project Proponents and following due process of law and they shall submit their action taken reports separately within one month from the date of receipt of a copy of the report of the Joint Committee....." :

- 1. Concerned Forest Officers** shall submit details of No Objection Certificates granted for Hotel & Resort activities along with cases violations noticed against NOC issued & action taken thereof, details of non-compliances land encroachment in sanctuary area, details of action taken against illegal lion shows, lion deaths due to illegal vehicle movement in sanctuary area, and details of illegal mining in Sanctuary and ECZ & action taken thereof against violations.
- 2. Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Varaval (Dist.- Gir Somnath)** shall submit action taken report on illegal land encroachment, status of non-agriculture land (N.A.) and use of agriculture/forest land for non-agriculture purpose in eco-sensitive zone around Gir sanctuary. He/She shall also submit the status of N.A. issued for Hotel & Resort activities and other industrial purpose, and co-ordinate with Police Officials for information pertaining to action taken on illegal mineral transporting vehicles in and ECZ around the sanctuary.
- 3. District Geologist, Gir Somnath** shall submit details of action taken for authorized & unauthorized mines and action taken against violations during past three years in and around Gir Sanctuary area.

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4. **Regional Officer, GPCB – Junagadh** shall submit status of permissions given for Hotel & Resort activities in and around Gir Sanctuary area & also take necessary actions for non-compliance.

The committee shall submit details pertaining to area of Gir Sanctuary & Eco-Sensitive Zone around it which falls under jurisdiction of District Collector, Gir Somnath.

3. CURRENT STATUS & TASK COMPLETED:

The committee has received data from concerned authorities regarding status of authorized and unauthorized commercial activities identified as on date of interim report preparation and action taken against non-compliances observed. Currently, the committee is assessing the data gathered from different agencies and accordingly the concerned authority will take necessary actions in order to take remedial action for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution/degradation and for protection and improvement of environment, by giving notice to/hearing the concerned Project Proponents and following due process of law.

Gist of details collected & action taken so far by concerned authorities in mean time:

1. **Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Veraval** has submitted list of N.A. issued for Hotel & Resort activities and violations noticed in the area along with line of action with respect to violations. As per the record submitted they have inspected total 95 farm houses in villages near Gir Forest area in Talala taluka of which 35 are on Non-agriculture land, 19 are homestay units and rest are on agriculture land. They have taken actions against 9 units and they are in process to take actions against rest 32 non-compliances. In context to illegal mining & mineral transport, 3 crimes has been registered

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under illegal mining, however, none of the registered case is related to Sasan Gir Sanctuary Forest area.

2. **District Geologist, Gir Somnath** has submitted summary of illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals in villages around Eco Sensitive Zone around Gir Abhayaranya in Gir Somnath district during last three years. During April 2020 to December 2022, the department has registered 132 cases against illegal activities related to mining and transit and recovered fine summing Rs. 1,33,51,893/- during mean time.
3. **Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife Circle, Junagadh)** has submitted summary No Objection Certificates granted for Hotel/Resort & Homestay activities and cases filed against illegal mining & its transportation during 2019-20 to 2022-23 (till 15.12.2022) in Sanctuary and ECZ & action taken thereof against violations. As per their submission, the forest department has issued 130 NOCs for Non-agriculture land and 29 NOCs for homestay activities during past three years. The Forest department has filed 17 cases against illegal mining & its transportation and recovered fine summed up to Rs. 7,27,000/-; of filed cases 9 are under investigation. As per record provided there were 134 lion death during 2019-20 to 2022-23 (till 15.12.2022) of which none were due to vehicular accident.
4. **Regional Officer, GPCB – Junagadh** has submitted details of action taken against defaulter Hotels & Resorts as per their online XGN data base. As per his submission there are 23 hotels/resorts in Gir Somnath district (as per XGN Databse) of which 11 units are having valid permissions of the Board. The Board has issued Show Cause Notice on 18.11.2022 to rest 12 non-complying units.

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4. PENDING TASKS:

Concerned agencies has completed preliminary assessment and gathered baseline data for reducing non-compliances. As per the Order, defaulting units shall be allowed to represent themselves and a chance of hearing.

Concerned forest officials will identify Hotel & Resort activities/ homestays being carried out without obtaining NOC from the department and/or violating the terms of NOC granted, land encroachment in sanctuary area, illegal lion shows, illegal mining & related activities in Sanctuary and ECZ; and initiate necessary actions in accordance with the Law against non-compliances reported.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Veraval has proposed to take actions against non-compliances observed by initiating necessary actions in accordance with the Law.

District Geologist will keep continue their random inspections in and around Gir sanctuary & eco-sensitive zone around it and will take necessary actions in accordance with the Law against non-compliances observed, if any.

As far as GPCB is concerned, the Board has issued Show Cause Notice to 12 defaulting hotels & resorts as a part of chance of hearing, they have been allowed to represent themselves. Further, GPCB team will make physical inspection of defaulting units and on the basis of which GPCB - Head Office will initiate necessary actions. GPCB team will also conduct random inspections in and around Gir sanctuary & eco-sensitive zone around it and will take necessary actions in accordance with the Law. Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Veraval has proposed to take actions against non-compliances observed by initiating necessary actions in accordance with the Law.

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5. CONCLUSION:

Due to the work related to the Legislative Assembly Election of Gujarat, various task are not completed in time by all concerned agencies & same will be completed by taking appropriate remedial action, in accordance with Statutory provisions mandating them to take remedial action for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution/degradation and for protection and improvement of environment, by giving notice to/hearing the concerned Project Proponents and following due process of law. As per grievances of the applicant Shri Natavarsinh R. Kshatriya, the Gir sanctuary area is spread over Gir Somnath, Junagadh and Amreli district. As per the order Collector, Gir Somnath is one of the respondent and member of the committee; the assessment and report is limited to his jurisdiction *i.e.* area falling under Gir Somnath District. Final report on the entire activity including action taken against the identified non complying commercial operation of private hotels and farm houses, Illegal mining, migration of Lions and mortality of lions due to heavy vehicular movement, in the surrounding of Gir Forest of Gir Somnath District would be submitted.