

ANNEXURE – 10
(See Proceedings of the Committee : Para 14)

Expert Committee Meeting

Gist of discussion on 09.01.2011, 10.01.2011, 29.01.2011 and 30.01.2011

Accounting / Funds / Allocation

- It was suggested to double the present budget allotment and to give stress on timely expenditure.
- Infrastructure development like adequate buildings for offices, stations, check posts and outposts, quarters and dormitories for stay of staff forest roads to camping sites and maintenance of buildings and roads needs special attention.
- Maintenance of vehicles and expenditure for meeting the day to day travel needs are required to be appreciated.
- The department is facing a peculiar problem in the sense that the activities of the department outside forest areas have increased tremendously. This has led to increased usage of fuel for running the vehicles. The cost of fuel and spare part has escalated several times in the recent years. Cost of repair has also gone up. Added to it the vehicles of forest department most of the time runs in rugged terrain which necessitates frequent repairs and replacement of parts early. Hence there is a case for early replacement of vehicles.
- The normal PWD norms is disadvantage to the forestry situation.
- Contingency fund to meet the expenditure on man animal conflict, payment of expenses connected with the disposal of carcass, disaster management like fire, flood etc should be set apart.
- Crop damage by wild animals should be treated as a natural calamity as if it has happened due to flood or draught.
- A part of the required fund can be made from Chief Minister's relief fund.
- Alternatively a fund by name Forest Minister's relief fund should be set up for the purpose.
- Similarly budget allotment has to be provided for the replacement of old and outdated hardware and software.
- The practice of limiting state share of budget to the amount of disbursement by Central Government should be reviewed.

Forest Offences / Legal Issues

- Realising loss from officers need a review. In spite of best efforts if thondy could not be recovered or culprits could not be identified, loss need not be realized from the staff. The concerned Circle Chief Conservator of Forests can be entrusted to take appropriate decision on such issues based on the recommendations of the Divisional Forests Officer.
- A panel of green advocates can be prepared in each district for conducting the case of forest department. Their fees can also be decided. The Circle Chief Conservator of Forests should be empowered to engage advocates from the panel.
- Special investigation unit can be set up in each circle. Intelligence Cell should be strengthened and extended to all districts under the Divisional Forests Officer (Flying Squad).
- Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology, Kerala Agricultural University, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Science University can be contacted for forensic assistance.
- Magisterial enquiry can be insisted on instances of firing by forest staff before cases are charged against the staff.
- Enough care should be taken to effect compounding by officers, keeping government interest in mind.
- Prevention, Control and eviction of encroachment should be given prime importance.
- All unauthorized encroachments should be evicted to contain the present level of encroachment. Put temporary jundas of different kind in an as is where is condition.
- As a prelude to initiate eviction of encroachment from unauthorized areas as far as possible, JFM should be introduced in such areas so that people get some benefit.
- A policy to take out people from deep forest and animal corridors should be made a regular feature.
- The question of ownership of trees in LA pattayam areas, CHR areas, food production areas and NRF lands should be decided, so that the amount of time spent by the staff for tackling issues in such areas is brought down.
- Clear decision has to be made about trees grown by the occupants.
- People should be free to cut trees when they have grown it.

- An incentive scheme for growing trees (20 identified species) has to be formulated.
- Incentive on a graded basis can be given for trees with lower girth classes.
- Permitting removal of trees which have girth more than 100 cms.
- The issue of dual control in CHR land should be settled once of all. This is an area where the department is required to spend much time and energy.
- Proposed Reserves, POB land in Wayanad, Pallivasal and Chinnakkanal cum reserves are to be declared as Reserve Forests immediately.

Delegation of Powers

- Ministerial head in Division offices can be given cheque drawing powers for drawal of pay and allowances of the office staff and other payments as approved by the head of the office.
- Similar powers can be given to technical assistants in Chief Conservator of Forests office also.
- Deputy Rangers in the stations / Foresters in charge of sections can be permitted to spend money as part of disaster management like wildlife management, fire, flood etc to the extent of Rs.5,000/- and Rs.10,000/- respectively. In this case they should however get the prior permission for the operation from the next superior. Power up to Rs.25,000/- can be delegated to the Range Forest Officer also.
- The Chief Conservators of Forests council has to be approved as a formal body for finalizing decisions for implementation and for recommending policy to the Government.
- In major Divisions and Ranges post of Divisional Accountant can be provided in lieu of the post of Head Accountant.
- Range Officers and Dy. Rangers will be given more responsibility for passing and execution of normal departmental works up to Rs.50,000/- and Rs. 20,000/- respectively.
- The whole intension is to make Ranges more effective and responsive. Powers to Range Officers for according prosecution sanction also can be considered.
- The Regional Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Circle Chief Conservators of Forests can be given more powers.
- The Dy. Ranger in the station can be provided with imprest for maintenance of vehicle in his control.

Equipment

- Two wheelers can be provided to each social forestry section and to forest station officers.
- Additionally section foresters in territorial and wildlife divisions where such two wheelers can actually ply can also be provided with
- Working plan divisions, social forestry divisions and research divisions can hire vehicles for their use.
- Condemnation of vehicles needs a review considering the difficult terrain in which forest department vehicles are plying. The existing PWD norms of needs revision as far as Forest Department is concerned.
- Anti venom can be purchased and kept in the nearby hospital for use in emergencies. Each district should have cages for trapping stray animals, implements for tackling snake, menace, fire fighting equipments and tranquilizer guns.
- Considering the lack of availability of man power in general, the question of introducing crain by private agencies for removing the timber bid by them in depots can be considered.
- Each division should have a total survey station equipment.
- Selected officers can be trained for use of the equipment. They can be given specialized training also.
- Arrangement can be made with Navy / Air Force for making available the service of helicopters for reconnaissance survey once in three months or so.
- ISRO can be requested to develop spectral signature by identifying previous satellite data in correlation with areas from where gunja cultivation was removed.
- Lap top computers can be given to Range Officers who are capable of handling the equipment.
- As far as possible use of mobile should be encouraged and mobile stations should be set up in remote areas with the assistance of BSNL.
- Personal digital assistance should be introduced on trial basis and its effect should be monitored meticulously.
- Every range can be provided with guns.
- All stations in charge of Deputy Rangers can be provided with pistol.
- Every station should be equipped to keep guns and pistols safely which should be preconditioned for supply of arms.

- The FMIS should be strengthened.
- Posting of staff exclusively to FMIS should be considered. They should get their due promotions in the wing and continue to serve for sufficiently long period in the wing.

Forest Management

- Management should be based on water shed basis.
- The working plans or management plans of neighbouring divisions should have common strategy and approach as far as areas being a boundary are concerned.
- Biodiversity conservation and genetic resources improvement should be the basis for forest management and forest development.
- There is need to study more about eco tourism and eco tourism areas.
- The present 53 locations where eco tourism is launched should not be increased without any further study. A committee should go into the different aspects of eco tourism and formulate suitable guidelines for smooth conduct of eco tourism activities keeping in mind the importance of forest protection.
- The whole programme of forest management needs to be re-looked into.
- There is need to reassess forest land use for biodiversity conservation purposes and bring more areas under conservation network for ecological security and environmental stability.

Forest Station

- Forest stations should be extended to all divisions.
- Specified areas as section or block can be delineated within the station.
- The present system of GD, Forest Guard / Forester on station duty can continue.
- Forester / Forest Guard has to be assigned to a particular place, say section / block for a period of minimum of three months at a time. The staff can be rotated thereafter.
- The Dy. Ranger in charge of the station should have power to do this.
- The mandatory inspection by Range Officer and Divisional Forests Officer to the stations should be made a reality.
- Stations should have new camping facility for the station staff. They should have facility for supply of newspaper, television etc.
- Possibility of forest residential colonies in certain locations could be thought of where employees of the forest department can be motivated to put up residence. Such colonies will help in improving forest protection.

- The colony can be developed with hospital, school etc.
- The station building should have facility for keeping arms and ammunitions safely.
- The station should have facility for maintenance of equipments.
- There should be a mandatory drill once in a week.
- Free rations should be provided to staff in the station which are interior and not well connected.

General

- Plastic should be banned from forest areas.
- More reward and recognition can be given for staff.
- No. of medals should be increased from the present 20 to at least 50
- The training institute should provide forum for interaction of senior officials and field staff for avoiding intricacies of field issues.

Infrastructure

- Every station should have a good building adjoining to the station.
- There should be place for resting of staff. This should be sufficient enough to accommodate minimum 20 persons.
- Existing road network should be improved.
- Approach to interior areas should be made easy by way of forest roads.
- The depots can be considered for mechanization.

Legal Issues

- Every circle should have a Legal Cell for advising on matters of law.
- Amendment of forest code should be expedited. Rules which are not in tune with the present set up should be amended. Eg : Recovery from pay is a minor penalty. But as per rules only the Appointing authority can impose this penalty.
- Since forest department is now required to operate outside the boundaries of traditional forests also, power to arrest persons who obstruct duty should be given to forest officers.
- Redrafting of all formats with a view to reduce the number of reporting formats and make them in total conformity with FMIS formats.
- Private forestry should be encouraged for which existing rules and laws need amendments.

Organizational Matters

- Presently the head of the department is known as Head of Forest Force. In tune with that the protection staff can be termed Kerala Forest Protection Force.
- A detailed work load analysis in the present context at each level is recommended.
- Every five years Organization and Management study should be conducted.
- The Forest Schedule of Rate should be revised every five years.
- Each wildlife division should have a Forest Veterinary Officer and a wildlife Biologist.
- The Range and division needs to be strengthened with permanent staff like draughtsman, surveyors, veterinary doctor, wildlife biologist, researchers, social animator etc. Range should be the focal point of forest administration.
- Every individual should have a permanent dossier which should be sent to the respective office once he is transferred. This dossier will be helpful for regular monitoring of the activities.
- Before a person is promoted as Head Accountant, it should be ensured that he has adequate territorial or wildlife range experience.
- Since the drivers are also required to move along with officers the post of guard cum driver is recommended.
- The fresh trainee Range Officer should be put in charge of the stations for a year after training before they are put in charge of Rangers.
- The staff strength of Range Offices should be increased including the training reserves.
- Presently it takes 3 years before a selected officer is available for job after training.
- The staff pattern in territorial, wildlife, social forestry and flying squad division ranges should be rationalized, keeping in mind the increased quantum of work.
- The flying squad units should be set up in each district.
- Posting of forest guards under training in areas like Marayoor should be made compulsory.
- Officer posted in remote areas should be given three days off after 15 days working.
- The staff strength of forest guards should be increased to 5500 and that of foresters to 2000 and Deputy Ranger to 200.

- A district spokesman can be designated in each district.
- The question of a common functionary for office and field job can be considered like the combatant and non-combatant staff in the army.
- A forest guard should be available for every 2 Sq. Kms of forests.

Plantations

- Plantations should be maintained for five years.
- Effort can be made to try contract system for planting and maintenance of plantations.
- Effort to maintain plantation blocks as if in an estate should be considered.
- Considering the shortage of labour in forest areas especially in remote areas importance should be given to mechanize operations to the extent possible.
- The use of exotic should be limited to plantations where it is already introduced.
- No new areas should be planted with exotics. Even in areas where exotic plantations existing due regard should be made for limiting such areas and to gradually bring down the extent.
- Since convenor system has proved to be a binami system and has attracted major adverse criticism, the questions of scrapping convenor system should be thought of.
- Soil and moisture conservation work should be taken up in plantations. But this should be taken up after thorough inspection of the actual requirement and not as a routine plantation raising and maintenance requirement.
- Planting of agave, caryota urens etc should be encouraged on the fringes so that a visible belt will be created on the forest boundary.

Service Conditions

- The present amount of insurance should be enhanced. Such insurance cover should be extended to ministerial staff also who are working in remote areas where they have to trek or move through thick forests for attending to their office duties.
- The request for providing timber to forest department employees once during their service time at a concessional rate can be thought of.
- Staff posted in interior areas should be given ration or ration money. Such staff may be allowed a short break after 15 days to attend to their family matters when their families are away.
- Centralized housing scheme for employees of forest department should be encouraged.

Vigilance

- Each district should have a flying squad divisional forest office.
- The Intelligence Cell should be established in each division under Divisional Forests Officer (Flying Squad) which can be coordinated and controlled by the Intelligence Cell in the Headquarters.
- Action to coordinate with police for formulating a Cyber Cell should be considered.

Protection

- All the division boundary should coterminous with district boundaries.
- In few districts like Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam, territorial adjustments can be made to accomplish this.
- As a matter of principle no eco tourism should be promoted within deep forest areas.
- All the existing eco tourism site should be subject to an impact assessment study and only after receipt of a report, new areas should be considered for the purpose.
- Final decision on 01/01/7, food production areas, non revertible forest areas, LA Pattayam areas and CHR as far as tree growth considered may be taken.
- A committee should be appointed to make a thorough study of the present short comings in the Acts and Rules implemented by the Forest Department.
- A circle level forest force should be set up with 10-12 forest guards/foresters under a Deputy Range Officer for action during emergencies.
- Aerial monitoring using the service of helicopters on hire from Navy / Air Force can be considered.
- The boundary should be consolidated using jundas.
- All broken or damaged jundas should be reconstructed after verifying the boundary.
- Planting of agave, *Caryota urens* etc should be done near the junda along the forest boundary.

- The camps should be provided with ration.
- ISRO should be approached for satellite monitoring of forest areas.
- Forest maps should be digitalized. To attract and retain talented forest officers in specialized areas like GIS, survey, wildlife research, regular forestry research.
- Officers with proven caliber should be sent for higher training in India and abroad and posted in the respective wings with special allowance and regular parallel promotion viz-a-viz their counter parts.
- Translocation of people from within the forest and wildlife areas with attractive packages should be considered.

Research

- Department research wing should be strengthened.
- Officers with proven caliber should be given advanced training within and outside the country and posted in research wing with special incentives.
- Department should take up collaborative research with Kerala Agricultural University, Kerala Veterinary Science University, Kerala Forest Research Institute, TBGRI, IFGTB.
- Research scholars from universities can be encouraged to take up applied research for forestry.
- KFRI should be strengthened.
- Sample plots should be set up in various forest type areas with the objectives of long term monitoring.
- Clear research priorities of the department should be projected.

Social Forestry

- Social Forestry wing should provide professional support to local bodies.
- One Forest Guard each in the Grama Panchayat and 1 forester each in the Block Panchayat should be attached for advising the Panchayats advice on implementation of social forestry activities.
- Department should take up campaign of publicity.
- Tree planting in private areas should be encouraged by making necessary changes in the present set of rules.
- DFEIC should be set up in each district.
- Social Forestry division Assistant Conservator of Forests can be given territorial charge for the purpose of monitoring case outside traditional forest areas, cases related with captive elephant, wildlife cases, mangroves and wet lands.

- Every social forestry Range Officer should be provided with a jeep.
- Foresters and Forest Guards should be provided with two wheelers.
- NREGF fund can be utilized for social forestry works.

Training

- Induction and in-service training should be provided to all officers.
- Three months induction training should be given to ministerial staff.
- Periodic in service training should be given to both field staff and ministerial staff.
- Training of foresters / forest guards should invariably constitute a South India tour. Similarly all ministerial staff as part of the training should be made familiar with the real forest situation through tours within the state.
- Selected senior superintendents and administrative assistants should be considered for training in short term courses in Dehradun , Bhopal etc.
- All Range Officers and Assistant Conservators of Forests should get chances to visit and attend courses in Dehradun for a minimum period of two weeks.
- Officers should be given chance to go abroad and attended training sessions.
- Special training modules on soil conservation, GIS, IT etc should be formulated.
- The Kerala Forest Academy should be set up.
- Academy should have permanent and visiting faculties.
- The Head of the Academy should have powers to engage specialized persons on contract basis.