

NEGLECT OF THE WILD LIFE CONSERVATION SECTOR IN INDIA'S DEVELOPMENT PLANNING UNDER THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS

India is one of the 17 mega-biodiverse countries in the world and has 45,000 identified plant species, including 15,000 flowering plants [5154- endemic] and 81,000 species of fauna. Though India has only 2.5% of the land and less than 2% of the world's forest area but it support more than 7% of its variety of flora and fauna. Moreover, India has ancient tradition and ethos of nature conservation and its present constitution also provides for protection of forests and wild life as a part of the fundamental duties of the states and citizens [42nd amendment-directive principles]. However, the India's wilderness is under severe pressure due to demographic pressure from a rapidly growing population and lives stock as well as poaching and illegal trade especially of Tiger, leopard and Rhino body parts and wild herbivores and birds for meat and trophy. Independent India's forest policy of 1952 provided for creation of wild life reserves and was followed by the enactment of "The Wild Life [protection] Act" in 1972. A National Wild Life Action Plan was formulated in 1983, which provided guidelines for strategic planning and implementation of essential programmes for wild life conservation in the country. However, its recommendations were not taken with due seriousness by the policy planners for incorporation, to the desired level, in the country's five year plans.

PLAN ALLOCATION FOR THE WILD LIFE CONSERVATION.

At present there are 90 National Parks [NP] and 502 Sanctuaries [SAN] in India covering mostly prime forest areas of 15.69 million hectares [4.8% of land and 20.8% of the forest area] distributed over all types of biodiversity rich eco-systems found in the country. With in this there are 28 special areas marked out as Tiger Reserves covering 3.76 million he i.e. little more than 1% of the land and 5% of the forest area of the country.

The position of plan allocations in the wild life conservation and management [part of the forestry sector covering 23% of the land area of the country] is worse than that of the **forestry sector, which also received less than 1% share of the national allocation under the 9th and 10th five year plans. The recommendations of the working groups [foresters, experts, NGOs] constituted by the MOEF for recommending need based development schemes and fund requirement for the wild life sector and the final allocations made by the Planning Commission are tabulated and discussed as under: --**

IX PLAN	Recommended by group [Rs in Crores]	Actuals
<u>A] ON GOING SCHEMES</u>		
1] Development of NP & SAN.	550	70
2] Eco –development NP & SAN.	750	175
3]Project Tiger	90	75
4] Project Elephant	60	35
5] Beneficiary – Tribal	50	19
6]WII,CZA, WL Division	80	81
Total[A]	1,530	380

B| REVIVAL OF OLD SCHEMES

1] Control of Poaching and trade	190	Nil
2] Conservation of Rhino	60	Nil
3] Education & Interpretation	80	Nil
Total [B]	330	---

C| NEW SCHEMES

1] Wild life Research	60	Nil
2] Mitigation of damage [non PA areas]	50	Nil
3] Staff Welfare	100	Nil
4] Conservation outside Pas	100	Nil
5] Rehabilitation of Lion [New area]	30	Nil
6] Compensation for rehabilitation	100	Nil
Total [C]	440	Nil
<u>Total [A+B+C]</u>	<u>2270</u>	<u>380</u>

A perusal of the above table clearly indicates that the Planning Commission as well as the MOEF totally ignored the need-based requirements suggested by the experts in the working group and made arbitrary and very inadequate allocations without assigning any reason. plan **Obviously it is the result of the application of the thumb rule that allocation for the As such the wild entire forestry sector has to be limited to below 1% of the national plan. life sub-sector got only 16.7% of the funds proposed by the working group.** The low priority given to this vital sector is the outcome of the urban mind set and lack of vision, regarding the need for nature conservation, of the top policy makers and planners in India.

The situation did not improve in the 10 the plan as may be seen in table below: --

Xth PLAN ALLOCATIONS [in Crores]

A] ON GOING SCHEMES	EXPERT GROUP	ACTUALS
1]Dev of NP & SANCS	500	350
2] Project Tiger	210	150
3]Project Elephant	100	60
4] Wild life Division	50	10
5] CZA	83	75
6] WII	66	50
7] Eco-development	200	45
Total [A]	1209	740
B] NEW SCHEMES		
1] Protection of WL out side PSs	58	60
2] WL law enforcement	25	Nil
3] Incentive to staff	425	Nil
4] Mitigation for damages	150	Nil

5] Relocation & settlements	500	Nil
6] Con.of critical eco-systems.& species	50	Nil
7] Rehabilitation of endangered species	100	Nil

Total of [B] **1366** **60**

C] REVIVAL OF OLD SCHEMES

1] Control of poaching and trade	285	Nil
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Grand Total [A + B + C] **2,860** **800**
[0.187% of the national plan] *[0.052% of the NP]*

The above tables clearly indicates that the proposed allocations for all on going schemes were brought down considerably from the amounts suggested, along with detail item wise calculations, by the expert group. Moreover, all the innovative new schemes suggested by the group with detail justification were rejected out of hand except the proposal for protection outside the protected areas. **It is surprising that in spite of the rise in poaching of Tigers and it's pray base the suggestions for reviving the old 7th plan scheme, of " Control of poaching and illegal trade " was rejected. Same was the fate of the suggested new schemes of " Wild life law enforcement – s.no 2 " and "Incentive to staff –s.no.3 " suggested by the group, being so vital for protection of India's rich wild life**

The 10 th plan allocation of RS 800 crores amounts to an investment of only Rs 102 per he per annum and 0.052% of the national plan for the coverage of 15.69 million he [4.8%] of countries land area. Naturally the wild life protection scenario is in bad shape thanks to the lack of interest and myopic vision the of the policy makers and planners. They have again applied the thumb rule of forestry sector [including wild life] allocations below the 1% level. The main reason is that these schemes have long gestation period and are implemented in remote areas where the poorest of the poor and tribal live and as such are not politically attractive due to lack of demonstrative value. Now that Sireska has brought the issue of wild life protection in limelight, unfortunately all the blame is being passed on to the Foresters and field staff working under very difficult conditions. They have all the time been denied the much needed administrative, financial and policy support so clearly brought out by the MOEF'S working group.

An early and bold initiative is needed at the highest political and policy level to revisit the recommendations of the expert group and adoption of most of the recommended schemes. Immediate decision is needed to provide need based fund allocation and ensure filling up of all the cutting edge vacant posts along with provision for training and infrastructure as well as adoption of an eco-development approach for ensuring local stakeholder involvement and support. **It is suggested that funds from DRDA and tribal development schemes may be given to the existing eco-development and joint forest management committees of the villages situated in and around 10 km of the protected areas. This will enable the PA directors and staff to act as development facilitators for planning and implementation of eco-friendly and job oriented schemes rather than being only a regulatory authority.**

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