

MoEFCC regional offices to be brought under one roof

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Nagpur: In a bid to provide synergy and strength, and make regional offices more effective, the environment ministry plans to merge MoEFCC offices and centres by bringing them all under one roof.

The issue was discussed at a meeting headed by director general of forests Sanjay Kumar on May 2. All regional environment ministry heads, National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Central Zoo Authority (CZA), Forest Survey of India (FSI) and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) office heads working under MoEFCC attended.

There are 29 MoEFCC regional offices and centres in the country. This strength will be brought down to 19, and will include 10 old regional offices (ROs) and 9 additional ROs at suitable locations.

Forest officials said more than one office of above organizations are situated in one place at present. Yet, they appear to work with little coordination. Therefore, environment minister Prakash Javadekar thought of reorganization to provide synergy and strength so they could act as an effective arm of MoEFCC.

“Working under one roof will ensure better coordination and also help mobilize manpower for completing some time-bound targets of ministry given by Supreme Court,” they said.

Total 19 offices have been proposed as per suitability. In the proposed set up, 10 existing regional offices at Shillong, Ranchi, Bhubaneswar, Bengaluru, Chennai, Lucknow, Bhopal, Nagpur, Chandigarh and Dehradun will be headed by deputy DGF level officer (equivalent to APCCF rank).

Seven out of nine new offices at Jaipur, Gandhinagar, Vijayawada, Raipur, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Guwahati will be headed by inspector general of forest (IGF) level officers (equivalent to CCF) drawn from NTCA and FSI. The remaining two offices at Jammu and Shimla will be headed by deputy IGF level officer (equivalent to CF) drawn from above four organizations.

Presently, there are 703 sanctioned posts at 29 regional offices and centres, which will continue, and will be redistributed or redeployed among the 19 offices.

CZA member-secretary SP Yadav endorsed the proposal saying, “The merger will help in better monitoring, hand-holding and quicker availability of information.”

One example is zoos, which are spread all over the country but there are no regional offices in Jaipur, Guwahati, Hyderabad, and Nagpur, though announced in 2011. In the present set up, CZA has to hire experts for evaluation of zoos, which is not only time consuming but costly too.

“This is delaying many processes for effective management and modernization of zoos. Each zoo has to be evaluated annually but in 2019-20, 117 cases of evaluation are pending,” Yadav said.

Similarly, NTCA has three regional offices looking after 41 tiger reserves. These include Nagpur (17), Guwahati (10) and Bengaluru (14) spread in South, Central India and North-East. However, there is still no representation in Uttarakhand, UP and Rajasthan.

NTCA deputy IG Nishant Verma was of the view that the new structure of regional offices will represent NTCA in all tiger reserves in the country. With the authority being constituted under provisions of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the designated officers in the ROs under proposed structure can be authorized under WPA.

The FSI officials said FSI being a specialized institution created for forest cover mapping and forest inventory, it should not be split and brought under the ambit of regional offices.

Similar views were expressed by Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) officials, who felt WCCB is a body set up to combat wildlife crime and needs intelligence gathering and operations without leakage of information. “This necessitates a linear command structure and hence WCCB should be kept intact,” said officials.

However, most senior officials TOI spoke to were of the view that the new structure would improve functioning of ministry in a

significant manner and will eliminate redundancy and duplication because of multi-dimensional information.

SOME SUPPORT, SOME OPPOSE

* CZA: With proposed strengthening, all responsibilities could be delegated to regional office, thereby cutting both cost and time, as well as comfort level of states and zoos will enhance decision making, make it more local

* NTCA: There is no regional office in Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and UP. New structure of ROs will represent NTCA in all tiger reserves

* WCCB & FSI: Both institutions involved in specialized work, want their status to be kept intact

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/moefcc-regional-offices-to-be-brought-under-one-roof/articleshow/75684817.cms>