

10<sup>th</sup> March 2016

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To: Hon. Chief Minister **Smt. Vasundhara Raje,**

Chief Minister's Office,  
Secretariat, JAIPUR 302005  
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**Re: Sustaining growth of Tigers at Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (RTR) by increasing the Inviolate Space**

Dear Madam,

To offer a quick introduction, I am a corporate leader based in the United States and a strong biodiversity conservation catalyst & supporter and have been involved in multiple social initiatives across US & India. After travelling extensively across most of the North American, African and Indian landscapes, I have built a personal initiative to help understand and support the green initiatives and wildlife, specifically – Project Tiger. I have always been supportive and appreciative of initiatives underway to safeguard Rajasthan's environment and forests.

In India specifically, during my visits over the past years, I have been involved with the ground level initiatives and village relocation undertaken by the State Forest department at RTR towards habitat development under Project Tiger. While this has provided many insights into challenges habitats face due to anthropogenic pressures, it has also offered perspectives into difficulties faced by the wildlife itself towards their sustenance. My regular visits, association and involvement with this work have given me unique perspectives of life in the semi-arid terrain of Rajasthan for man and animal alike.

To offer a quick update on the relocation work so far, over the past six years the state's Forest Department's RTR staff and the Sawai Madhopur District Administration have been overseeing relocation of approximately 1300 families across 8 villages under Phase I (Kalibhat, Hindwar, Mordungri, Bhid, Kathooli, Paddada & Munderheri). This relocation has benefitted the relocated villagers in many ways. I commend all such initiatives and look forward to supporting your government over the coming years. I understand that over 75% of this initiative is targeted completion by the end of this fiscal.

The key success factor to this initiative is completion of as much of the remaining 25% in a timely manner such that all loose ends are tied. I understand the last disbursement of monies for the work has arrived from the NTCA. Further it is imperative that nothing gets left to chance that will jeopardize the good efforts of your government and forest department's for a better future to the green initiatives at RTR. The areas of land surrendered to the government have to be brought under the greening program and checks put in against re-encroachment. Even though the core N.P. habitat extends over an area of about 392 sq. km. namely Ranthambhore National Park (RNP), the greater CTH extends beyond RNP including the Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary, Sawai Madhopur Sanctuary, KelaDevi Sanctuary and Qualji Reserve forest totaling about 1,100 sq. km. The border areas of RNP viz **Keladevi Sanctuary** and **Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary** are critical to RTR since this is the first overflow space for tigers growing up in the core area. There have been ten litters the past 2 years at RNP and at least 20 cubs – all these needed an inviolate space to move into. The relocation of villages under phase-I has provided precisely this. Per my observations I want to emphasize that tiger numbers have almost doubled during the duration of the relocation exercise. The role taken up by the RFD staff working on relocation has ensured an improvement in about 100-150 sq. kms. of wildlife habitat and much of it is now inviolate. Therefore the increased tiger numbers could be absorbed, in spite of this there have been reports of tiger exodus from the park due to ever increasing numbers and their fight for space. Tigers being prolific breeders will continue to multiply in coming years thereby continuing to make more demands on the existing space at RTR. ***I feel the State of Rajasthan can take increased ownership in coming years and be a leader pan India for Tiger conservation in a very unique way. To support this the relocation initiative needs to be expanded much more and hence my letter,***

There have been some challenges that need your urgent attention,

- a. Per estimates the current land usage density in RTR is at about 10 sq. kms. per tiger in the core of RNP, further growth in animal numbers by 30/40 over the next 5 would require approximately an additional 3-400 sq. kms. of prime habitat. This land need is non-trivial as you can appreciate and the only way it can be realistically achieved is by making large areas of forests within **Keladevi and Sawai Mansingh Sanctuary** bordering RNP free of disturbances to develop as wildlife habitats. To make it inviolate about 40+ villages in Keladevi will have to be reviewed for relocation suitability towards executing a large scale voluntary relocation exercise. After this a secondary way forward would be to develop and safeguard corridors towards Ramgarh Bishdari Sanctuary and newly formed Mukundara Hills TR. All this will bring about much success to Rajasthan's Tiger conservation efforts by providing habitats that will not only preserve the tiger's growing gene pool but also sustain hundreds of other species of flora and fauna. Therefore, **I would request the state to take up an initiative to set up a high level assessment committee to study both material and non-material requirements for such a large scale relocation implementation.** This would go a long way to sustain wildlife in the state and also improve the quality of life for relocated villagers. Once this is documented capital outlays can be planned via Central and State government sources, existing programs like CAMPA, Green India Mission etc. **It is imperative the**

**committee takes into cognizance addressing people's well being at a higher level by addressing all facets of their needs via state's current provisions and welfare schemes. A critical factor is jobs creation.**

- b. Given the success of conservation at RTR and STR, the state **should allocate strong financial outlays using its own budgets** to take it to a new level since tigers are true state assets and can promote eco-tourism and help increase the green cover sustainability.
- c. **To additionally supplement** support the large financial needs of such a critical green initiative the state can pursue a unique and interesting provision in the current central budget using the revised Corporate Social Responsibility provisions. *Quote*

*The ministry of corporate affairs (MCA) has notified Section 135 and Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013, which relate to corporate social responsibility (CSR) that will be effective from April 1, as part of the new Companies Act. The norms will apply to companies with at least Rs 5 crore net profit or Rs 1,000 crore turnover or Rs 500 crore net worth. These companies will have to spend 2 per cent of their three-year average annual net profit on CSR activities in each financial year, starting from FY15.*

It is imperative we make the best use of this and be the **first state** in the country to take it up for both the human and green cause. It will therefore be worthwhile for the state to make outreach to corporate and all qualifying companies to come forward with CSR contributions and join hands with the government making it a win-win for all involved. This should be developed as a comprehensive program that can support other related initiatives as well for the villager's needs and National Parks in a sustainable way.

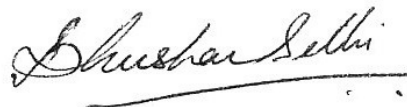
- d. As witnessed in the last 6 years creation of an inviolate space has been a very demanding activity on the Forest Department. It extends much success to the future of wildlife and also improves the conditions of the people relocated to civil areas, therefore **it's imperative now to conduct a study to assess and document the gains derived by relocation for man and animal alike. This can be done by appointing suitable individuals/NGO's.** This exercise will also help identify any challenges in the current processes towards improvements. This is very critical before we proceed on implementation of (a) above. Once this is available the derived inputs can be used to mentor/train RFD officers and retain them for such special skills. Since last 2 years much progress has not been made on the relocation efforts due to challenges with money availability, villagers consent and enthusiasm with field staff. **Therefore similar future relocation efforts in the state will need to be strengthened by enthusing talented manpower and speeding up of all related processes and facets.**
- e. Since the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for village relocation was launched in April 2008 by NTCA, a million Rupees per family are being offered for each eligible family willing to relocate. However given the sharp appreciation of land

prices in Rajasthan & rising inflation of the past decade this amount is not sufficient to buy land outside the forest areas. This especially is causing extreme hardship with Sariska relocation. Other states like **Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh** have successfully supplemented the CSS amounts by a 'State's' contribution via tribal affairs and other budgetary provisions to ensure that the relocations continue. I understand there have been discussions around this in Rajasthan as well but if this can be taken up on a priority footing with any other possible funding sources like Tribal affairs, CAMPA & Green India Mission and implemented in consultations with the offices of Revenue departments, HOF, CWLW it shall be greatly supportive for the relocation exercise.

As is evident **village relocation** has played a **very critical role** for conservation by providing an inviolate space, stability to state's bio-diversity and improving the living conditions of relocated villagers. I write this letter in good faith as a well-wisher, Good Will Ambassador to Rajasthan Forest Department and will continue to support conservation initiatives in Rajasthan's Project Tiger. **Outcome remains to be seen but I truly believe the state has a unique position in being a leader in large scale biodiversity conservation by pursuing the above mentioned initiatives.**

Thanking you in advance for all your help in the matter. Please do the needful and oblige and let me know if any further assistance.

Yours Sincerely,



Cc: Mr. C.S Rajan	Chief Secretary, State of Rajasthan
Mr. N.C Goel	ACS, Forest Department
Mr. S.S Choudhary	HOF, Forest Department
Mr. G.V. Reddy	CWLW, Forest Department
Mr. P.S. Somasekar	ex-RFD & Addl. DG. NTCA
Mr. G.S. Kushwaha	Colonization Commissioner, Bikaner

**Quote Reference :** [Indian Express Feb 28th 2014 Press Article](#)