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RTI Matter

To,
The Central Public Information Officer (CPIO),
Wildlife Institute of India (WII),
Post Box # 18, Chandrabani,
Dehradun- 248001,
Uttarakhand

date: 21/12/15

Sub: Requirement of Information under RTI act, 2005.

Sir,

This is in reference to the fact finding report on complaint against power fencing in Kaziranga National Park dated 19th October' 2015 submitted by Shri.D.P.Bankhwal, Inspector General of Forests, NTCA Regional Office, Guwahati to Additional Director General of Forests (Project Tiger) & Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority, New Delhi. Point 8. of the report states that a total of 69.5 kms power fencing has been done in the Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve since 2008 till date (2008-09: **15kms**, 2010-11:**10kms**, 2011-12: **2kms**, 2013-14: **8.5 kms**, 2014-15: **34kms**)(Annexure I). In view of the same I request you to kindly provide me the following information:

1. Has any scientific study on the effect of power fencing on the wildlife of Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve been done / assessed by Wildlife Institute of India (WII), before and after installation of the power fencing? If yes, provide me the copy of the study.

The application fee of Rs.10/- by IPO No.26F-028336 is deposited herewith.

Sincerely,

Rohit Choudhury
21/12/15

(Rohit Choudhury)
N-71, Lower Ground Floor,
Greater Kailash Part-I,
New Delhi-48,
Email: rohitskaziranga@gmail.com

WILDLIFE INSTITUTE OF INDIA
Right to Information Act, 2005

Apl. No. 10 Qtr. 3 Year 2015-16
Fee 10/- Inward Date 28/12/15

PA (031)
Pl. put up.
SF
28-12-15

Government of India

Application of seeking information under Right to Information Act, 2005.

Part-I

- 1. Name of the applicant : Rohit Choudhury
- 2. Gender: Male/Female : Male
- 3. Father's/Mother's full name : Mr. Debi Prasad Agarwal
- 4. Address for correspondence : Rohit Choudhury
N-71, Lower Ground Floor,
Greater Kailash Part-I,
New Delhi-48,

Part-II

- (i) Specify the particulars of the information sought for in separate sheet
- (ii) Whether the information sought for is required to be supplied
 - (a) ~~In~~ printed form.
 - (b) In diskette or floppy.
- (iii) Whether application fee of Rs.10/- (Rupees ten only) paid and, if so, please specify mode of payment. **I PO**
 - (a) Please give details of the demand draft/Banker's cheque enclosed.
 - (b) In case of cash payment, please enclose original receipt.
- (iv) Whether inspection of records also sought. **NO**
- (v) Language in which information required. **English**

(No fee is required to be paid if the requester belongs to 'below poverty line' category for which proof should be furnished).

Declaration of the Applicant

- (a) I am a bonafide citizen of India and owe allegiance to the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India and have not voluntarily acquired the citizenship of another country.

Place : **New Delhi**

Date : **21/12/15**

Rohit Choudhury
21/12/15
(Signature of the applicant)

(Annexure-I)

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1-4/2012-NTCA-ROGHY
Government of India
Ministry of Environment and Forests
National Tiger Conservation Authority, Regional Office, Guwahati

[Handwritten signature]

4th Floor, HOUSEFED Building,
Rukminigaon, G.S.Road,
Guwahati-781022
Email: igntca.ghaty@gmail.com

Dated the 19th October, 2015

To,

Additional Director General of Forests (Project Tiger)
& Member Secretary, National Tiger Conservation Authority
7th Floor, B-1 Wing, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex
Lodi Road, New Delhi-110003

Sub.: Complaint against the Assam Forest Department for Power Fencing in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, denial of information under RTI Act – reg.

Sir,

Please refer to your letter no.1-3/2008-NTCA (Vol.II) on the above-mentioned subject. As directed, I visited Kaziranga Tiger Reserve and inspected the fenced area, saw the official record, discussed the matter with the field officials and took the views of the villagers impacted by the electric fencing. The report on the findings is enclosed herewith for your kind perusal and necessary action

Enclosed: As stated above

Yours faithfully

1950) MSC NTCA/2015
21/10/15

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21-10-15

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ALY (um)

[Handwritten signature]
19/10/2015
(D.P.Bankhwal)

Inspector General of Forests
NTCA Regional Office, Guwahati

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A. put up in above referred
file for ~~process~~ processing
21-10-15

**Complaint against Power Fencing in Kaziranga National Park
- A Fact finding Report**

This report is with reference to the directive of the head quarter of the National Tiger Conservation Authority to me to ascertain the factual status in the matter raised by the RTI Activist Shri Rohit Choudhary residing at N-71, Lower Ground Floor, Greater Kailash Part-I, New Delhi-110048. As per the complaint given by Shri Rohit Choudhary to the Union Ministry, following main issues were to be ascertained from field inspection and records of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.

- a) Whether the electrical power fencing that has been carried out by the management of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve along the interface of the Park with the villages is without approval of the competent authorities?
 - b) Implications of the electrical power fencing for the protection of wild animals straying into human settlements on the fringes of the Park
 - c) Implications of the electrical power fencing on the dispersal of wild animals into the neighbouring Karbi Anglong district council forest areas
 - d) Implications of the electrical power fencing for the villages on the fringes of the Park
 - e) Whether there is embezzlement of money by Kaziranga management in the work, as alleged by the RTI activist?
- 1) I visited the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve on 2nd and 3rd October, 2015 and inspected the extent and quality of work on fencing of villages through the wires which are energized by electrical pulses to ward off animals crossing the barrier. I talked to the villagers also to get their perception about the impact of electrical fencing on their lives.

I started inspection with the D.F.O. and his team from Difaloo pathar Eco-Development Committee (EDC) area in Kaziranga (Central) Range of the Park. This was nearly 3 km electrical fencing continuing with the next village. Fencing from Difaloo pathar to Japari pathar, a distance of 5 km, was done in 2008-09. Earlier, the posts were of bamboo and financial sanction was also for bamboo posts. But, now the posts were of bamboo now. In this village, there are 130 households. I talked with a section of

villagers at Dhaja Chariali. The group of villagers was headed by the president of EDC, Shri Jagat Bahadur Chhetri. The villagers told me that they were quite happy, as the crop raiding, mostly by wild boars and elephants has stopped and their agricultural yield has increased substantially after fencing of the area.

Going along the side of the fencing, I saw herds of cattle on the side of the villages close to fence. I was told by the field staff of Kaziranga Tiger Reserve that for the Park, following two benefits have emerged due to fencing:

- (i) The wild animals, mostly rhino and hog deer, which used to stray into villages, particularly during flood seasons, are not getting hunted in these villages, as animals are not crossing into these human settlements.
- (ii) The cattle of the villages, which usually enter into Park for grazing, are no more entering into the Park.

From the inspection of this part of the Park, I found that through electrical fencing there is a win-win situation for both villagers and Park management.

As for dispersal of animals, the phenomenon is relevant for long-ranging animals like elephants, tigers and rhinoceros. For rhinos, going through human settlements is fraught with risk of being victim of the bullets of the poachers, who are in abundance in the region. For elephants, using villages as corridors is going to end up in serious raiding of rice paddy crop and death of either human beings or animals in the ensuing conflict. The village area can be used by tigers from movement during night hours to sneak into another forest area across. But, as on now, tiger is also not safe in Karbi Anglong forest area, as there is severe law and order deterioration in the district council for the last few years and militants and criminals are ruling roost. Moreover, it is better, if the behavior of tiger also gets modified to use safe corridors, connecting Kaziranga Park to the forest across its border.

- 2) Fencing continues along the boundary. We then went to Eastern Range (Agaratoli). The fencing is from Dhanbari in the east and Sukani in the

west, totaling 12 km. In this Range, there are villages all along the boundary.

- 3) We came back again in the Central Range and found electric fencing from Sukani in the east to Bheroni towards west, 9 km in length. After that nearly **2km length of border is open near Panbari**. This is **Panbari corridor** for movement of animal across the Park area. After that, again there are villages all along the border and hence the Park management has fenced the border from Tinsuki (towards east) and Laodubi (western border of the Range).
- 4) After this, we went to Western Range. Here also, fencing is done along the border shared with villagers, whereas the corridor areas are left open for unhindered movement of animals to Karbi Anglong hills. Deopani to Kanchanjuri area of nearly 2 km in length is left open, as it is wild animal corridor. Rest of the area, nearly 12.5 km is fenced. Out of this length, 10.5 km length was fenced from the funds of Kaziranga Tiger Conservation Foundation in 2013-14 and 2014-15, whereas 2.00 km was fenced by NTCA funds during 2008-09.
- 5) Next, we went to Burapahar Range. Here, near Deosur there is fencing of nearly 5.5 km. In addition, near the Range office, there is fencing of nearly 2.5 km opposite the National Highway. This latter fencing has been intended to keep the rhinos from reaching close to the highway and being vulnerable to easy poaching from highway itself. I was told by the field staff that previously a rhino had been killed from the highway, as rhinos reach close to the highway. This measure has deterred rhino to reach so close. In corridor areas of Burapahar Range, the Park management has kept the border open for movement of animals across into Karbi Anglong areas.
- 6) In the end, we went to see the electric fencing near Amlakhi Barbheta Mising tribe village, near Panbari, where the Park management has fenced 2 km length of border to protect the crops of villagers from depredation by wild elephants descending down from Karbi Anglong hills. I talked to the villagers there. They expressed happiness on raising good crops after the fencing of their agricultural land on Karbi Anglong side. This fencing was done in 2011-12.
- 7) I have been told that during severe flood times, the fencing is opened at many places to allow animals to move to safer places. At that time, large

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number of volunteers and villagers are drafted into protection and rescue of animals.

8) The report of the D.F.O. detailing the year-wise work of fencing on the boundary of the National Park is enclosed herewith. The abstract is as follows:

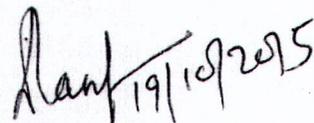
Sl. No.	Year	Range	Length (km)	Funding source	Expenditure (Rs.lakh)
1	2008-09	Eastern Range	5	PT- Gol	18.00
		Kaziranga Range	5		
		Western Range	5		
2	2010-11	Bokakhat Beat under Divisional HQ	10	PT -Gol	25.00
3	2011-12	Bokakhat Beat; Amlakhi Barbheta Mising Village	2	PT-Gol	6.00
4	2013-14	Kaziranga Range	4	KTCF	12.70
		Western Range	2		6.70
		Burapahar Range	2.5		8.20
				Sub-total	27.60
5	2014-15	Eastern Range	12	KTCF	38.80
		Kaziranga Range	9		29.10
		Western Range	7.5		23.90
		Burapahar Range	5.5		17.90
				Sub-total	109.70

NB: KTCF stands for Kaziranga Tiger Conservation Foundation

From the reports and discussion with the D.F.O. and Director of the Kaziranga National Park, it is seen that in the beginning in 2008-09, they used bamboo posts for fencing, but later they switched over to RCC posts. The cost with bamboo posts was nearly half with RCC posts. Moreover, the fence is present all along the length mentioned in the report of the Park and was carried out on the approval of competent authorities. Hence, there does not appear to be a case of embezzlement of funds.

- 9) The electric fencing is on southern part of the Park. There is no fencing on northern side.
- 10) The Park management has kept the corridor areas open for movement of wild animals into the larger landscape.
- 11) Fencing has reduced conflict of villagers with wildlife and Park management. Perhaps, this will be one of the confidence-building steps towards eliciting regular support of the villagers in protection of rhinoceros and other wild animals, particularly in giving tip-off on poachers and rescuing animals during times of distress.
- 12) Fencing has reduced pressure of cattle in the Park.
- 13) It is presumed that fencing will modify behavior of long ranging wild animals to use corridors for dispersing into larger landscape and returning back to the Park. However, the Park management should secure, enrich and protect the corridors, as their importance has increased manifold on account of fencing on village interface.
- 14) As regards denial of information to the RTI activist, I have been told that the officers of Kaziranga Park that they had requested the applicant to wait for some time, as they were intending to put out all the information on their website. It is against the letter and spirit of the RTI Act, as the holders of information are supposed to give information as promptly as possible.
- 15) Report of Kaziranga management on fencing is enclosed. Also enclosed are the maps delineating the lengths of border fenced in the Ranges.

Enclosed: As stated above.



(D.P. Bankhwal,)

Inspector General of Forest,
National Tiger Conservation Authority,
Regional Office, Guwahati