

CENTRAL EMPOWERED COMMITTEE

(CONSTITUTED BY THE HON'BLE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
IN WRIT PETITION NO. 202/95 AND 171/96)

III Floor, Chanakya Bhawan, Chanakya Puri, New Delhi – 21, Tel: 21610612, 21610613
Email: cecindia202@gmail.com, website: www.cecindia.in

F. No: 3-68/CEC/SC/2025

Dated: 29.01.2026

To


The Chief Secretary,
Government of Haryana
Chandigarh

SUB: RECORD OF DISCUSSIONS OF THE CEC MEETING HELD ON 29th JANUARY, 2026, IN IA NO. 244339 & 244340 OF 2025 IN WRIT PETITION (C) NO. 202 OF 1995 FILED BY DR. R. P. BALWAN, IFS (RETD) & OTHERS.

Sir,

Please find enclosed the minutes of the meeting taken by the CEC on 29th January 2026 on the subject cited above for information and necessary action.

Yours faithfully,



(Chandra Prakash Goyal)
Member

Copy to:

29.01.2026

1. The Secretary, MoEFCC, New Delhi
2. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of Haryana, Panchkula
3. The Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi
4. Dr. R.P. Balwan, IFS (Retd.) through Advocate on record.
5. Sh. A.D.N. Rao, Sr. Advocate and Ld. Amicus Curiae
6. Sh. K. Parameshwar, Sr. Advocate and Ld. Amicus Curiae
7. Sh. Siddhartha Chowdhury, Advocate and Amicus Ld. Curiae
8. Applicants / Respondents
9. All Members of the CEC

CENTRAL EMPOWERED COMMITTEE

RECORD OF DISCUSSIONS OF THE CEC MEETING HELD ON 29th JANUARY, 2026, IN IA NO. 244339 & 244340 OF 2025 IN WRIT PETITION (C) NO. 202 OF 1995 FILED BY DR. R. P. BALWAN, IFS (RETD) & OTHERS.

The meeting of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) was held on 29th January, 2026. The list of participants is placed at ANNEXURE-1.

2. During the meeting, it was recalled that the Hon'ble Supreme Court, in its order dated 21.01.2026, has given the following directions to the CEC:

"1. Issue notice to the Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

2. Let a copy of this application be supplied to the Member, CEC, who is present in Court, to enable them to submit their expert opinion through a report, which may be placed on record with an advance copy to the learned Amicus Curiae as well as to the learned senior Additional Advocate General for the State of Haryana.

3. However, the interim directions issued earlier shall continue to operate till further orders.

4. Post the application on 12.02.2026."

3. Ms. Shibani Ghosh, Ld. Advocate, appeared on behalf of the Applicant and submitted the following prayer:

"i. Direct the State of Haryana to cancel the Aravalli Zoo Safari Project;

ii. Direct the State of Haryana to take all appropriate measures for ecological restoration of the Aravalli Protected Forests and to protect them from any illegal mining, encroachments and unsustainable human interventions and projects;

iii. Direct the Union of India to put in place a proper institutional and regulatory mechanism for safari parks in the country;

iv. Direct the Union of India, through the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and the State of Haryana to provide a status report and Action Taken Report on the implementation of the Aravalli plantation project funded by European Union in the 1990s;

v. Pass such other and further orders as this Hon'ble Court may deem fit and proper under the facts and circumstances of the case and in the interests of justice and equity."

4. Ms. Shibani Ghosh apprised the CEC that the proposal would spread over 10,000 acres of protected forest land in the Gurugram and Nuh districts of Haryana, and is being planned primarily to promote tourism in the State. The project would also involve the construction of several permanent structures and facilities. She submitted a copy of the rejoinder filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court in response to the State's reply in the IA. A copy of this rejoinder is placed at **ANNEXURE-2**

5. One of the Applicants, Ms. Prakriti Srivastava, apprised the Committee of her objections to the proposed Safari project and raised the following concerns:

- a) The project would involve the construction of a substantial number of permanent buildings and associated infrastructure within the protected forest area.
- b) There is a lack of clarity and inconsistency regarding the total forest area proposed for diversion, with varying figures (including approximately 3,300 ha) being cited.
- c) Though roads may not be included in the first phase, subsequent phases are likely to introduce road and connectivity infrastructure, resulting in habitat disturbance and fragmentation.
- d) The proposed development would impede natural regeneration and ecological restoration of the forest landscape.
- e) Establishment of a safari would commodify wildlife for entertainment purposes rather than prioritizing conservation.
- f) The area, instead, may be considered for protection as a conservation/protected area rather than for tourism-centric development.
- g) The emphasis on tourism appears inconsistent with principles of ecotourism, which contemplate only temporary and low-impact structures.
- h) Clearances from the Central Zoo Authority may not adequately address ecological and landscape-level impacts, as its mandate is limited in scope.
- i) The site forms part of an important wildlife corridor in the Aravalli landscape, critical for the movement of leopards and other fauna, and should be preserved to maintain connectivity.
- j) A scientific assessment, including camera trapping and biodiversity studies, should be undertaken prior to any intervention to ascertain wildlife presence and movement patterns.
- k) Adequate provisions for solid waste and other waste management arising from tourism activities have not been specified.

- l) Increased human presence may elevate risks of human-wildlife conflict and potential zoonotic disease transmission.
- m) Earlier restoration initiatives in the region, including projects supported by external aid during 1999 2000 and noted by the Forest Survey of India, demonstrated positive outcomes, indicating that ecological restoration is feasible. However they are not existent now and no accounting of its reasons of failure have been undertaken
- n) Past governance and implementation issues, including unsuccessful plantation efforts and earlier road proposals in adjoining areas, warrant caution in permitting further infrastructure development.
- o) The precise locations and boundaries of the proposed facilities and interventions have not been clearly identified.
- p) The project may entail extensive cutting, land levelling, and manipulation of the natural terrain, which could significantly alter the existing landscape and ecology.
- q) Local communities and other stakeholders have not been adequately consulted prior to conceptualization of the project.
- r) No Clarification has been provided whether the areas identified for Compensatory Afforestation (CA) for a project sanctioned by the Central Government in A&N Islands are being used for this project or not.
- s) No carrying capacity or capacity assessment study has been undertaken to evaluate the ecological sustainability of the proposed tourism activities and visitor load.

6. The other Applicant, Dr. R.P. Balwan, made the following submissions:

- a) No further road construction should be permitted beyond the road already existing in the area, as additional roads would lead to fragmentation of the forest and increased disturbance to wildlife habitats.
- b) The project site falls within a notified "dark zone" with respect to groundwater availability, indicating severe water scarcity and over-extraction concerns. Extraction and diversion of water for project purposes may adversely affect local hydrology and create water stress and habitat fragmentation, thereby constraining wildlife movement and survival.
- c) The source of water required for the proposed project has not been clearly identified, and the manner in which such water demand would be met or substituted remains uncertain.

- d) Part of the area is governed by the provisions of the Punjab Land Preservation Act (PLPA), and any development activity must strictly comply with the statutory restrictions and conservation objectives under the said Act.

7. Dr. Vivek Saxena, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), appeared on behalf of the Government of Haryana and submitted written submission before the CEC (**ANNEXURE-3**). He stated that the State Government is committed to balancing conservation with sustainable development and eco-tourism, and that the proposed Safari project has been conceptualized with environmental safeguards and wildlife protection. Necessary statutory clearances would be obtained prior to commencement of work. He also assured the Committee that issues relating to water availability, waste management, carrying capacity, and wildlife movement would be addressed through appropriate studies and management plans in accordance with applicable guidelines and statutory requirements.

8. Dr. Subhash Yadav, Chief Conservator of Forest, Gurgaon, submitted that the project aims to promote regulated eco-tourism, generate local employment opportunities, and enhance protection and management of the Aravalli landscape through scientific planning, habitat improvement measures, and monitoring. It was further stated that care would be taken to minimize tree felling, avoid sensitive wildlife habitats and corridors, and adopt mitigation measures to reduce ecological impacts.

9. Dr. V. Clement Ben, Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority, New Delhi, appeared and submitted that the proposal was first submitted to CZA on 24.04.2023, and in-principle approval was granted on 08.08.2024. Clarification on the land status was sought from the State Government. A revised proposal was submitted on 27.03.2025. Written submissions submitted by the Member Secretary, CZA, are at **ANNEXURE-4**.

10. In light of the above submissions, the Committee directed the State Government to examine the issues raised and file point-wise comments, along with relevant records, supporting documents, and statutory clearances, on or before 02.02.2026. The CZA and the Applicants were granted liberty to file additional documents within the same period.

11. The Chairman, CEC, directed that concerned officers of the MOEFCC be called to record their views in the next meeting.

The next meeting will be held on **02.02.2026** at **16:00 hrs.**

The Meeting concluded with thanks to the Chair.



(Chandra Prakash Goyal)
Member

Dated: 29.01.2026

29.01.2026