



Executive Summary

Background

*The protected area concept for Biodiversity conservation has figured prominently around the world. KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK, legally notified as a National Park in the year 1974, is a name known worldwide for its success in the conservation history of one horned Indian Rhinoceros. It also provides a natural habitat for a number of rare, threatened and charismatic species. A symbol of dedication for the conservation of animals and their habitat, Kaziranga, with a National Park status represents the single largest protected area within the North-east Brahmaputra valley to provide long term viable conservation. The outstanding conservation values made Kaziranga National Park to get inscribed on the **World Heritage List** of "Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage" in the year 1985.*

However, sudden increase in poaching of Rhinos has attracted attention of the public, wildlife lovers, Government and other non-government organisations working on the field. Further, deaths of animals due to floods, biotic disturbance from human encroachments around the Park had been the matter of concern for the wildlife authorities of the State of Assam. Also, eminent citizens of the State expressed their concerns for protection of the Rhinos from the threats posed from poachers during the meeting of the Audit Advisory Board in December 2013. In view of the above, it was decided to take up this performance audit.

The Objectives of this Audit were to ascertain whether:

There was a long term perspective plan supported by annual action plans aligned to the former – for long term conservation, protection and development;

Funds allocated were adequate to manage the activities of the wildlife habitats and funds were made available to the wildlife managers in time;

Manpower available was sufficient and adequately trained to effectively face the challenges;

The protection measures undertaken by the authorities were adequate and effective in view of the present threats;

Efforts were made to continuously develop the wildlife habitat and notify additional areas to make it favourable for the wild animals and the existing territorial integrity of the park was intact; and

Efforts were made to reduce the biotic disturbance caused by human settlements and industrial activities around the Park.

The Performance Audit revealed the following:

Failure to review the management plan despite the need for deviations from the core objectives in view of poaching pressure rendered it partially redundant resulting in a disconnect with the Annual Plan of Operations (APOs) which should otherwise flow from the management plan.

(Paragraph 7.1 to 7.7)

Against the financial outlay of ₹ 93.76 crore proposed in the original APOs for 2010-11 to 2012-13, the KNP authorities got only ₹ 17.37 crore which was about 19 per cent of the funds demanded.

(Paragraph 8.2.4 to 8.2.6)

The funds allocated by the State Government towards wildlife sector and KNP vis-à-vis total plan outlay of the State ranged between 0.03 to 0.07 per cent and 0.005 to 0.02 per cent respectively during the years 2008-09 to 2012-13.

(Paragraph 8.4.1)

Out of 100 freshly recruited forest guards and Foresters – 1 deployed in KNP, 73 were withdrawn within one year resulting in deployment of aged staff on frontline duties. Reasons for transferring out the fresh recruits out of KNP despite increase in poaching cases/arrests of poachers were not on record.

(Paragraph 9.3.1 to 9.3.3)

None of the wildlife guards of KNP were imparted any training during 2008-09 to 2012-13. Besides, these guards do not have firing practice as the fresher training module contains only theoretical training on arms and ammunition.

(Paragraph 9.5.1&9.5.2)

Though 83 personnel had laid down their lives while on duty, family members could only get casual jobs instead of compassionate appointment; besides, there is no adequate insurance on the life of the frontline staff. Further, the additional allowances paid to the frontline staff are not commensurate with the arduous nature of duties.

(Paragraph 9.6 to 9.8.3)

There is neither adequate number of anti-poaching camps on the periphery of the park nor a foolproof periphery protection plan which resulted in increased poaching instances mainly near the park boundaries.

(Paragraph 10.2.1 to 10.2.8)

Out of six additional areas preliminarily notified in 1984-85, the KNP authorities are yet to take over three additional areas though records available show that these areas had already been handed over to them by the civil administration in 2005. Survey conducted by Circle Officer in 2009 revealed that substantial area of Government land was under illegal encroachment.

(Paragraph 12.1.1 to 12.5.10)

33 eco-development committees had been formed in 2002, but not a single has started functioning even after 12 years.

(Paragraph 13.1 to 13.3)

Recommendations

On the basis of the audit findings, six sets of recommendations had been incorporated in this Report under various issues namely – planning and financials, human resource management, anti-poaching action plan, habitat management, management of additional areas, eco-development activities and biotic-pressure.

How this Report is organised

Chapter I contains the introductory. Chapters II to VII contain the audit findings relating to – planning and financials, human resource management, anti-poaching action plan, habitat management, notification of additional areas vis-à-vis encroachments and other issues impacting conservation of wildlife. The conclusions of this study are incorporated in Chapter VIII. The annexures referred to at various places of the Report are placed at the last part of the Report.

Response of the Department

The Department thanked the Indian Audit and Accounts Department for carrying out the Performance Audit on Kaziranga National Park and stated that a number of issues had been brought out which had hitherto remained unattended. They have accepted all the recommendations suggested through this Report and informed that the Department was working on these suggestions for better conservation and preservation of the endangered animals, especially the one-horned Indian Rhinoceros.