

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the Assam State Biodiversity Board

26th March 2012

The 3rd Meeting of the Board took place at the new office premise at Paryatan Bhawan, Rehabari, Guwahati. The Chairman had desired that the PCCF and Head of Forest Force-Assam, and PCCF (Wildlife), Assam, shall be the permanent invitees to the Board Meeting. Accordingly the PCCF (Wildlife), Assam, took part in the meeting however the PCCF & HoFF was out of station and could not attend. A list of Member/Invitees who attended the meeting is at **Annexure-A**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, thereafter, agenda-wise discussions started.

Agenda Item-1: The Action taken report:

- a. As regards correction in the para-31 of Assam Biodiversity Rules the Principal Secretary (Forests) informed that the matter been taken up for an amendment. It was suggested that Member-Secretary may work out other amendment/s, if required, so that a consolidated proposal for amendment to the Rules is moved.
- b. The progress regarding translation of Act/Rules was noted. It was suggested that translated material may be vetted by the Department of Official Languages and by the Legal Department of Assam Government before putting the same in public domain.
- c. Regarding website of the Board it was suggested that the English version should be launched immediately. Bilingual inputs can be added in due course. It was also suggested that the Website should be interactive with have hyperlinks with important websites particularly with the Assam Forest Department website.

Agenda item-2: Information to the Board:

- a. Grants received: Board was informed that a sum of Rs 21.80 lakh has been sanctioned and released by the National Biodiversity Authority. The State Government of Assam has sanctioned Rs 5.0 lakh which is yet to be received. It was emphasized to secure release of funds granted by the State Government.

- b. Expenditure made: The Board was informed that an expenditure to the tune of Rs 9,71,156 (Rupees nine lakh seventy one thousand one hundred fifty six) only has been made on broad items such as office interior works, furniture, equipments and other miscellaneous items.
- c. Staff engaged: It was informed that presently the Board is functioning with a single support staff, that is, a Computer Assistant on contractual basis. The Board desired that since NBA grant has now been made available, requisite staff may be engaged observing due formalities.
- d. Staff proposed to be engaged: The Board was informed that process for engaging staff has been initiated and that the Selection Committee has made its recommendations. The Chairman of the Selection Committee, however, informed that the choice for Technical Associate was limited as only two candidates had applied.

Member-Secretary informed that the matter of support staff engagement on contractual basis has been referred to Finance Establishment Division for advice, if any, on remuneration proposed, however, no response has yet been received.

The Board deliberated extensively on the issue of immediate engagement of contractual staff and on the basis of analysis of information (**Annexure-B**) on Job requirement, essential qualification, corresponding scales of pay in government, and the proposed remuneration in the took following decisions:

- i. Position of Technical Associate may be re-advertised in a fixed remuneration of 15,000/- pm. To cope with the workload two Technical Associates may be engaged.
- ii. The candidates recommended by the Selection Committee against Administrative-cum-Accounts Assistant, Steno-cum-Personal Secretary and Dak-Runner-cum-Office Attendant may be engaged immediately.
- iii. The advice of Finance Establishment Division can be dispensed with as due process has been followed for selection, the proposed remunerations are well below the corresponding scales in the government and the financial support is being provided by the NBA and no State exchequer is involved.

Agenda item-3: Ratification by the Board:

- a. Expenditure: The broad items of expenditure of Rs 9,71,156 (Rupees nine lakh seventy one thousand one hundred fifty six) only were presented before the board and Board ratified the same.

Agenda item-4: Creation of Secretarial posts for the Board:

The Member Secretary proposed for creation of following 7 (seven) posts for the Board:

◦ Technical Officer	2
◦ Administrative Assistant	1
◦ Accounts Assistant	1
◦ Steno / PS to Member Secretary	1
◦ Office attendant	1
◦ Dak Runner / Driver	1

The Board approved the proposal with following suggestions:

- i. Taking into account the nature of job and required qualifications, the nomenclature of posts should be derived from the existing designations in the ROP Rules of the State Government.
- ii. Remunerations shall be commensurate with similar posts mentioned in the ROP Rules
- iii. Recruitment against these posts shall be either on contract or deputation basis.

Agenda item-5: Contents for Website:

Regarding information to be put on website the Board recommend that input on 'Vision' and 'Mission' may be e-mailed to all Members/Invitees for their response and details on objectives need not be displayed as they are narrated in the Act/Rules.

Agenda item-6: Applications pending with Board for permission:

- I. The Board thoroughly discussed details of the applications such as nature of the proposed studies; the nature of resource involved (whether it is endangered, rare, critical or otherwise significant); funding agency; facilities available with the applicant etc. After detailed discussions the Board arrived at following general guiding

principles for consideration of applications for accessing a natural resource or for seeking no objection of IPR:

- a. Expert Groups may be constituted to examine any important application before it is put up to the Board. The Group may be Chaired by the Member-Secretary ASBB and two expert Members to be selected from the Expert database.
 - b. If proposed study does not entail commercial benefits but involves access to any biological resource which is rare, critical, endangered, scheduled in WL Act or otherwise significant to the State, the Board shall consider the proposal only if a National or State Institute or an educational institute of repute is involved.
 - c. For considering IPR applications, as far as possible, the applicant may be requested to make a presentation before the Board/ Expert Group.
 - d. For studies involving commercial gains, complete details of funding agency shall have to be made available by the applicant.
- II. Decisions on pending applications
- a. Proposal of Aaranyak: In view of the guiding principles decided in the Meeting, the Board was of the considered view that the proposal in its present form cannot be allowed.
 - b. Application of Mrs Upasana Talukdar and two others: the Board decided to convey no objection for IPR subject to usual conditions prescribed in the Act/Rules.
 - c. Application of Registrar, Assam Agriculture University, Jorhat: The Board decided to convey no objection to IPR request subject to the condition that the applicant would ensure flow of financial benefits, if any, arising out of the IPR with the local people from where the biological resource would be extracted and that the aspect of existing local traditional knowledge would be kept in mind while considering grant of IPR.

Agenda item-7: Selection of Logo for the Board:

Form the six different options presented before the Board, the option number '5' was found to be most appropriate and was selected. This approved logo design is enclosed at

Annexure-C.

Agenda item-8: Any other issue:

Regarding constitution of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) and preparation of Peoples' Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) detailed discussions were held and it was agreed that:

- a. At District level, apart from an active role to be played by the Forest Department, collaboration with various other government departments such as agriculture, horticulture, fisheries etc would be necessary and therefore, the role of Deputy Commissioners would be significant. Therefore, self-contained letter may be sent to all DCs seeking their active role.
- b. The Chairman desired that in the upcoming State Level conference of the DCs an agenda item for sensitization on Biodiversity Act, Rules and ground-level functions may be included. Member-Secretary to take up the issue with the Principal Secretary (Forests).
- c. A huge repository of knowledge and expertise exists with the Universities, educational institutes and some NGOs. Therefore, efforts should be made to start dialogue and collaboration with these institutes for the task of preparation of PBRs.
- d. Similarly, active role of *Zila Parishads* is also essential for stakeholders involvement for constitution of BMCs and preparation of PBRs. Efforts should be made in direction as well.

Agenda item-8: Date and Venue for next Meeting:

The next Meeting of the Board was agreed to be held at Tezpur University in consultation with them sometime during the week after Bihu.

The meeting ended with Thanks from the Chair to all present.