

MOST URGENT

Shri Rajeeva Swarup
Chief Secretary of Rajasthan
Tilak Marg, Panch Batti, C Scheme
Government of Rajasthan Secretariat
Jaipur 302 005

18 September 2020

Via e-mail: csraj@rajasthan.gov.in

Subject: Urgent Action Regarding Recent Deaths of Captive Elephants in Jaipur

Dear Sir,

I'm writing to you from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India – an animal protection organisation with 2 million members and supporters – to request that you issue necessary directions to investigate the death of four elephants who were suspected of having contracted tuberculosis (TB). Please test all captive elephants in Jaipur for TB and introduce a policy to prohibit bringing any new captive elephants into Rajasthan.

These important subjects were raised with the office of the chief wildlife warden of Rajasthan in a letter dated 6 August ([Annexure 1](#)) – however, no action has been taken so far.

Since March of this year, four elephants (numbers 24, 64, 99, and 132) who were suspected of suffering from TB have died ([Annexure 2](#)). A 2018 evaluation report of 102 captive elephants in Jaipur by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) revealed that 10% of the elephants checked who are used for rides and other tourist interactions near Jaipur were found to be reactive for TB ([Annexure 3](#)). One elephant out of the 10 who tested reactive for TB in the AWBI's test died before any action could be taken. Thereafter, the Rajasthan Forest Department recklessly declared that seven out of the 10 elephants were TB-free after using unapproved test kits. The forest department also miraculously declared that two elephants were TB-free within two to three months of testing reactive, indicating that the standard treatment protocol, which usually takes at least six months, hadn't been followed. Of the four elephants who recently died, two had been reactive for TB in tests conducted by the AWBI in 2018.

The AWBI's report from that year states that the post-mortem reports for four other elephants who died within a period of five months in 2017 indicate that all had been suffering from respiratory diseases – possibly TB. The elephants in Jaipur are at particular risk of contracting TB because they are frequently transported around the city and routinely made to interact with mahouts and tourists, which may expose them to infected humans or elephants. In addition, they are more vulnerable because of stress resulting from painful restraining methods, extreme confinement, variable water quality, an inconsistent food supply, poor nutrition, and other factors.

Affiliates:

- PETA Asia
- PETA Australia
- PETA Foundation (UK)
- PETA France
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA US

Registered Office:
F-110, 1st Floor, Jagdamba Tower
Plot No 13, Community Centre
Preet Vihar, New Delhi
110 092

The AWBI's inspection also revealed numerous apparent violations of the Wildlife (Protection) Act (WPA), 1972. These include the illegal transfer of custody and transport of elephants into Rajasthan from other states and the illegitimacy of many ownership certificates. Forty-eight ownership certificates issued by the Rajasthan Forest Department refer to the "present market value" of elephants, even though assigning a commercial value to them is prohibited by law, making the certificates invalid. The tusks of 47 elephants were found to have been cut, and the custodians couldn't produce any documents to prove that the forest department had granted them permission to do so, leading the AWBI inspectors to conclude that these tusks likely entered the illegal wildlife trade.

As per a response received under the Right to Information Act, 2005, ([Annexure 4](#)) none of the elephants at Hathi Gaon is registered with the AWBI, in apparent violation of the Performing Animals (Registration) Rules, 2001. In addition, the 2010 order of the Rajasthan government mandates that the AWBI must give permission for any use of elephants in any type of performance – including rides at Amer Fort ([Annexure 5](#)).

The high prevalence of TB and the illegal custody and use of captive elephants in Jaipur are huge liabilities for the state government, as these protected wild animals are state government property, as per Section 39 of the WPA.

Under these circumstances, we request that you issue a directive to the forest department to do the following:

- Investigate and report the actual cause of death of the four elephants who recently died
- Prevent any new elephant from contracting TB by testing all elephants in Jaipur as well as by quarantining and treating those who have tested reactive
- Make a policy decision under Section 40(2) of the WPA prohibiting the entry of any new captive elephants into Rajasthan and warning that strict legal action against violators will be taken under Section 51 of the WPA

I can be contacted on +91 9910397382 or at KhushbooG@petaindia.org. I look forward to hearing from you about this important matter.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Khushboo Gupta
Chief Advocacy Officer

cc: Smt Shreya Guha, IAS, Principal Secretary, Forest and Environment Department, 4 Jhalana Institutional Area, Jhalana Doongri, Jaipur, Rajasthan 302 004 (env_raj@yahoo.co.in)

Sh Arindam Tomar, Chief Wildlife Warden, Room, No A 111, Aranya Bhawan, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Jhalana Doongri, Jaipur 302 004 (cwlv.raj@gmail.com)