



22nd February 2011

Press Note

First meeting on the National Steering Committee for Gharial

Gharial is *the* most critically endangered large animal in India, much more than the elephant, tiger, Indian rhino, Ganges river dolphin, lion-tailed macaque, snow leopard, Nilgiri tahr, pygmy hog or Asiatic lion. Recent assessments indicate that only a small breeding population of less than 200 breeding adults survive today in India.

In tune with the progressive steps taken for, and the experience gained by the Ministry of Environment and Forests from protection, conservation and development of the elephant and the tiger conservation in shape of Gajah Report and the National Tiger Conservation Authority, similar suitable coordinated measures have been proposed for Gharial also. The National Tri-State Chambal Sanctuary Management Coordination Committee is a three tier de-centralised mechanism, formed to look into the entire gamut of issues (from socio-economic to monitoring and research protocols), devise an institutional framework to ensure proper coordination among all stakeholders and develop better coordination amongst three States and Centre for concerted conservation initiatives with focus on involvement of local community.

The first meeting of the National Steering Committee of the coordination Committee, was inaugurated by the Minister of State (I/C), Mr. Jairam Ramesh, who stressed that he wanted the Gharial conservation strategy to be as important and successful as the tiger and elephant initiatives. A booklet on Gharial for general public, which has been uploaded on the website, was also released on this day. The 1st tier of the National Steering Committee, chaired by Additional Director General of Forests, Mr. Jagdish Kishwan took several key decisions with clear deadlines and implementable action. The tri-state management plan for Gharial will be developed in consultation with experts, local communities, state forest departments and sister line Ministries. The Chief Wildlife Wardens and Divisional Forest Officers of the three states will be actively involved in preparation of the Management Plans. This first meeting and this initiative has provided an excellent platform for concerted conservation action in our efforts to save Gharial.