



No. WII/RTI/CPIO/2021-22 (Qtr-I)/12

Date: 7th June, 2021

To,

Sub.: Information under RTI Act, 2005-reg.

Ref.: Your Online RTI No. WLIOI/R/E/21/00038 dated 26/05/2021

Madam,

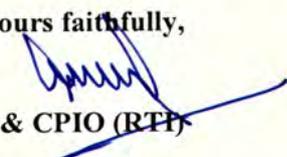
Please refer to your application cited above under RTI Act, 2005. In this context, point-wise response to your queries is given below:

Information Sought under RTI	Reply
a) Copy of the comments of the Director, WII sought by MoEF & CC on denotification of Galathea Sanctuary, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.	Copy of the Comments of the Director, WII sought by MoEF&CC on denotification of Galathea Bay Sanctuary is attached herewith as Annexure-I
b) List of scientific studies conducted by the WII on leatherback turtles of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.	So far, WII did not conduct any study exclusively on Leatherback turtles of ANI. However, the following study has observed the nesting of leatherback in Nicobar group of islands. Sivakumar, K., 2021. An assessment of the environmental sensitiveness of sea turtle nesting beaches of the Great Nicobar Island, Wildlife Institute of India, 30 pp.
c) List of scientific collaboration of WII with other Governmental or non-Governmental institutions/organisations to study leatherback turtles of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.	WII did not conduct any study on Leatherback with collaboration of other institutions.

If you are not satisfied with the aforesaid reply, you may appeal to the **Appellate Authority** i.e. "Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Post Box 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun – 248 001, Ph. 0135-2640910".

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,


NO & CPIO (RTI)

Encl.: as above.

Comments on proposal of 'De-notification of Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (intention of which was notified)' from the Chief Wildlife Warden, Government of Andaman & Nicobar Islands

1. Five of the seven species of marine turtles found worldwide are reported to occur in Indian coastal waters, of these, four species nests along the coastline of Andaman and Nicobar islands. Andaman and Nicobar Islands have some of the best nesting beaches and foraging grounds for marine turtles in India. A proportion of world's Leatherback turtle population migrates every winter to the off coast of Little Andaman and Great Nicobar islands. They nest on the beaches of Galathea, Dagmar and Alexandria in Great Nicobar Island as well as on the beaches of Little Andaman. The Leatherback turtle nesting population in Andaman and Nicobar islands forms one of the four large colonies in Indo-Pacific region. Leatherback turtles that nest on the beaches of Andaman Nicobar Islands migrate up to Australia and Africa on either side.
2. Increased egg predation by domestic and feral dogs, hunting and incidental capture of turtles and fishery related mortality have been reported in the islands. Therefore, the Forest Department has already identified all-important sea turtles nesting beaches of islands and continuously monitoring these beaches with a Special Sea Turtle Monitoring and Protection Force (STPF). Andaman administration has also banned sand mining in all turtle nesting beaches in the region. Feral dogs, which pose a great risk to the survival of turtles, were also monitored and regulated. The use of Turtle Excluder Device needs to be made mandatory in shark and gills nets. Artificial hatcheries have been established at several nesting sites to protect turtle eggs

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predation to enhance nesting success. Further, the department is successful in getting support of communities and other stakeholders in conservation of sea turtles and their habitats in islands. Department has prepared a 'Turtle Conservation Plan cum Status Report' that is going to be a road map for the long term conservation of turtles of the islands.

3. Beaches of Galathea Bay is one of the two important nesting sites of Leatherback turtles in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, other one being at Little Andaman. About 150 to 480 Leatherback turtles nest at Galathea Bay every year. In 1997, the Department of Environment and Forest, ANI had declared its intention to constitute an area of 11.44 sq.km of South Bay, Great Nicobar comprising 8.4 sq.km area of bay water and 3.1 sq.km area of adjoining coastal lands as the Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary to protect and propagate the Giant Leatherback turtles. As per the CWLW's Agenda Note, the area could not finally notified as a Sanctuary till now owing to non-settlement of rights.
4. In Great Nicobar Island, beaches around the mouths of Alexandria and Dagmar rivers have also reported with sporadic nesting of Leatherback turtles. The 2004 tsunami has adversely affected this species and its nesting areas. But after few years, the species could bounce back, which indicates that this species has a good resilience and adaptability for the changes, provided their habitats are protected.
5. The Government's vision for holistic development of Great Nicobar Island, which *inter alia* envisages the sustainable development of Great Nicobar Island, including development of a deep berth port.
6. In this context, The Government of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Government of India plan to develop the area in and around the South Bay for the International Transshipment Terminal as it is of national importance owing to strategic and economic reasons.

Housing activities based around the transshipment terminal, comprising three zones, of which Port Logistics area fall around the Galathea Bay.

7. As per the CWLW's Agenda Note, it was stated that the validity of earlier notification as 'Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary' has now been legally questionable while the Leatherback turtles continue to nest on the beaches of Galathea Bay.
8. In this context, if the Government would like to 'De-notify the Galathea Bay WLS' then it is strongly urged that the concerned authorities develop and implement a mitigation plan to facilitate leatherback and other turtles to continuously nest for which the connectivity between the Galathea River and the Bay should be ensured. The mitigation plan needs to be developed through a detailed study so that marine turtles to continue to nest on the beaches near the Galathea Bay during both construction as well as operational phases of the International Shipment Project.
9. Further, as mentioned in the CWLW's Agenda Note, the preservation and conservation of the Leatherback turtle habitat will not be compromised even if the area is de-notified. As also suggested by the Chief Wildlife Warden that the provision of CRZ should be rigidly enforced in the area being in ICRZ-1A category, to ensure the continuance of Leatherback turtles nesting on this traditional nesting beach. Further, we urge the concerned authorities to secure and conserve all other important turtles nesting areas of Andaman and Nicobar islands with enhanced protection/conservation measures through appropriate legal/administrative means and through a Management Plan.

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