



**IN THE HIGH COURT OF GUJARAT AT AHMEDABAD**

**R/WRIT PETITION (PIL) NO. 56 of 2018**  
**With**  
**CIVIL APPLICATION (FOR DIRECTION) NO. 1 of 2020**  
**In R/WRIT PETITION (PIL) NO. 56 of 2018**  
**With**  
**R/WRIT PETITION (PIL) NO. 206 of 2016**

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SUO MOTU

Versus

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

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**Appearance:**

LAW OFFICER BRANCH(420) for the Applicant(s) No. 1

MR HEMANG M SHAH(5399) for the Applicant(s) No. 1

for the Opponent(s) No. 6,8

MS MANISHA LAVKUMAR SHAH, ADDL. ADVOCATE GENERAL, WITH MR  
CHINTAN DAVE, AGP and MR UTKARSH SHARMA, AGP for the  
Opponent(s) No. 3

KSHITIJ M AMIN(7572) for the Opponent(s) No. 1

MR RAMNANDAN SINGH(1126) for the Opponent(s) No. 2

MR. PARTH H BHATT(6381) for the Opponent(s) No. 1

NOTICE NOT RECD BACK for the Opponent(s) No. 4,9

NOTICE SERVED for the Opponent(s) No. 5,7

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**CORAM:HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE MRS. JUSTICE SUNITA  
AGARWAL**

and

**HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE ANIRUDDHA P. MAYEE**

**Date : 09/04/2024**

**ORAL ORDER**

**(PER : HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE  
MRS. JUSTICE SUNITA AGARWAL)**

1. There is a complete silence in the affidavit of the Deputy Conservator Forest, Gir-West Division, Junagadh supplied in the Court today, about any steps having been taken at his level to find out the cause of two railway accidents occurred in one month, viz. January 2024 wherein



two lions of Gujarat Forest and Sanctuary had died.

2. On the order passed by us dated 26.03.2024, asking the Forest officials as well as Railway authorities to work out Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to curb any such accident in future, and to achieve the target of zero occurrence of such accidents, affidavit has been filed today to assert that in a joint meeting of the Forest Department as well as Railways held on 03.04.2024, SOP has been worked out to curb accidental deaths of Asiatic lions on the railway tracks.

3. In the affidavit of the Deputy Conservator of Forest, various steps taken by him to track the movement of lions, caution orders issued to railway officials, watch towers erected on strategic locations to locate lion movement on railway tracks, installation of solar lights on certain hot-spots for illumination of lion movement, etc. have been narrated in the affidavit to assert that for the period from April 2023 to February 2024, total 1014 untoward incidents that may have caused death of lions, have been avoided. However, there is no whisper in the affidavit about any inquiry being made at the ends of the Forest Department to find out the actual cause of death of two lions on railway tracks in the month of January 2024 itself.



4. Similarly, in the affidavit filed on behalf of the Railways, by the Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) Western Railway, Bhavnagar Division, Bhavnagar Para, reference has been made to the SOP prepared on 05.04.2024 pursuant to the meeting held on 03.04.2024 wherein various steps have been worked out to ensure that lions of Gir Forest and Sanctuary are saved from death on the railway tracks.

5. In our considered opinion, when these accidents occurred in the month of January 2024, the appropriate course of action for the Forest and the Railway officials was to make an inquiry jointly or severally to ascertain the cause of death on the railway track and take corrective measures, which ought to have been done at their own ends without intervention made by us in the order dated 26.03.2024.

6. As regards the issue regarding conversion of meter gauge into broad gauge in Khijadiya-Amreli section, from the map appended along with the affidavit of the Deputy Conservator of Forest, Gir-West Division, it is evident that the section wherein conversion has been proposed by the Railways is an important lion corridor.

7. Therefore, we call upon the response of the



Chief Conservator of Forest, Wild Life Circle, Junagadh and Divisional Railway Manager, Western Railways, Bhavnagar about the assertion made by the Railways in paragraph 7 of the affidavit filed today and to answer as to the impact of conversion of meter gauge into broad gauge in an important lion corridor.

8. The above aspects are to be answered by the Chief Conservator of Forest, Wild Life Circle, Junagadh by filing his personal affidavit representing the case of the Forest Department and the Divisional Railway Manager, Western Railways, Bhavnagar representing the case of the Railways in the Court on the next day fixed.

9. In the meantime, appropriate steps in the right direction shall be taken to ensure the implementation of the SOP worked out in the meeting held on 03.04.2024.

10. The learned amicus curie shall also go through the affidavit filed by the respondents and make his suggestions on the next date.

11. The response may also be given on all other issues raised in the instant petition.



Let the matters be posted on 23.04.2024 at  
1.00 p.m.

(SUNITA AGARWAL, CJ )

(ANIRUDDHA P. MAYEE, J.)

BIJOY B. PILLAI