

18 February 2020

Shri Uddhav Thackeray
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Chief Minister's Office
Government of Maharashtra
6th Floor, Mantralaya
Mumbai 400 032

Re: Request to block plans to set up a US-style SeaWorld in Maharashtra, as it would violate the central government circular dated 17 May 2013

Shri Uddhav Thackeray Ji,

I'm writing to you from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India, on behalf of our more than 1.5 million members and supporters, regarding a recent article published in the *Hindustan Times* titled "**US-Style SeaWorld out of Sindhudurg? Govt to Invite Bids for Alternative Sites**". A copy of this article can be found as **Annexure A**. We urge you to *stop this plan, as it would apparently be illegal*.

According to the article, the Government of Maharashtra is planning to set up a SeaWorld-like park and to invite an expression of interest from private players to choose an alternative location in Maharashtra since the plan to set up this venture in Sindhudurg was not successful.

When the issue of setting up a SeaWorld park at Sindhudurg was first publicised, PETA India and other groups provided your Ministry, the honourable chief minister, and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) with details and excerpts from scientific publications on the suffering of dolphins and other cetaceans when they're kept in captivity. These studies establish that confining such animals – who are genetically adapted to swim in vast oceans – to chemically treated concrete tanks is cruel and often leads to premature deaths. They are often given psychoactive drugs to dull their senses and housed incompatibly, leaving them unable to escape from the attacks of aggressive animals. They have nothing to do but swim in endless circles, causing them such frustration that they break their teeth gnawing on the concrete walls of the tanks.

We also informed the Government of Maharashtra that countries around the world – including Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Luxembourg, Norway, Switzerland, the UK, and now Canada (in addition to our own nation) – have laws banning or significantly restricting the captive display of marine mammals. The information previously sent to your office, is appended as **Annexure B**.

In 2011, after critically examining the proposal for the establishment of a SeaWorld park at Sindhudurg, the MoEFCC issued a letter, dated 14 December 2011, to the Government of Maharashtra requesting that it "not entertain the proposal for the construction of Dolphinarium/ 'Water Parks' at Sindhudurg through Private Public Partnership (PPP), which is meant for commercial purpose, and not permitted under Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972". The MoEFCC gave the following legal reasons for not establishing the park:

PEOPLE FOR
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OF ANIMALS

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CIN: U74899DL2000NPL103217

- i. The objective of the said water park does not conform to the objective of its operation, i.e., conservation of wildlife, as laid down under Rule 10 (1) of the Recognition of Zoo Rules, 2009.
- ii. The operation of the Water Park for extracting performance out of the animals shall also be in violation of Rules 10 (11) (2) of Recognition of Zoo Rules, 2009.
- iii. It has been observed by this Authority from the similar proposal received in the past and those who acquired dolphins/other live marine animals lead to the death of animals because of ill-preparedness on the part of management of the organisation and inadequate care of the animals that are so difficult to maintain in captivity.

The letter issued by the MoEFCC is appended as **Annexure C**.

Later, the MoEFCC issued a circular, dated 17 May 2013, titled "**Policy on Establishment of Dolphinarium**". It noted that South Asian river dolphins and Australian snubfin dolphins are listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and that other cetacean species are listed in Schedule II. Part 1 of the Act also notes that the Government of India has named the South Asian river dolphin its national aquatic animal, in an effort to protect this endangered species. Furthermore, the MoEFCC policy acknowledges that cetaceans are highly intelligent and sensitive animals and should be seen as "non-human persons". As such, they have their own specific rights, making it morally unacceptable to hold them captive for the purpose of entertainment. The circular categorically stated that "[c]etaceans in general do not survive well in captivity. Confinement in captivity can seriously compromise the welfare and survival of all types of cetaceans by altering their behaviour and causing extreme distress". In its conclusion, the circular declared the following:

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India have decided not to allow establishment of Dolphinarium in the country. The State Governments are advised to reject any such proposal for Dolphinarium to any person/persons, organisations, Government agencies, private or public enterprises that involve import, capture of cetacean species to establish for commercial entertainment, private or public exhibition and interaction purposes whatsoever.

A copy of the circular is appended as **Annexure D**.

In the United States, SeaWorld has a notorious reputation and is widely condemned. Twenty orcas are still suffering at its parks, but more than 40 others have died on the company's watch – all of them short of their natural life expectancy – from causes such as bacterial infections and fractured skulls. Other dolphins at SeaWorld are still being bred – forcibly and, in some cases, after being drugged – and 140 of them are crammed into just seven tanks across the company's US parks.

In light of these facts and the circular issued by the MoEFCC, please block any plan to establish a SeaWorld in Maharashtra.

Affiliates:

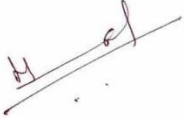
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I can be reached at ManilalV@petaindia.org or on +91 9910817382. I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Manilal Valliyate, CEO

Appended

Annexure A: A copy of the *Hindustan Times* article titled "US-Style SeaWorld out of Sindhudurg? Govt to Invite Bids for Alternative Sites"

Annexure B: A copy of information previously sent by PETA India

Annexure C: A copy of the letter issued by the MoEFCC to the Government of Maharashtra

Annexure D: A copy of the circular issued by the MoEFCC titled "Policy on Establishment of Dolphinarium"

cc: Shri Aaditya Thackeray, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Protocol

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