

## MOST URGENT

Shri Prahlad Singh Patel  
Hon'ble Minister of Tourism  
Government of India  
Transport Bhawan  
1 Parliament Street  
New Delhi 110 001

10 June 2020

### Re: Request to Advise States and UTs to Ban the Use of Animals in All Tourist Attractions in India

Dear Shri Prahlad Singh Patel 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 to request that you ban the use of animals in all tourist attractions in India.

As [reported by Livemint on 19 May](#), your respected office is taking active and commendable steps for ensuring the safety of tourists and is working on a process of certification which will establish minimum standards of safety and sanitation measures to be followed by the tourism industry. (The article is appended as **Annexure 1**.) However, it's imperative that you consider the various issues posed by the unnecessary use of animals at tourist attractions, which need to be banned because of the reasons listed below.

**1. Issues of public health and safety:** [According to the World Health Organization](#) (WHO), "Over 30 new human pathogens have been detected in the last three decades, 75% of which have originated in animals" (**Annexure 2**). Animals commonly used in the tourism industry can transmit zoonotic diseases (which spread to humans from other species), such as tuberculosis from elephants, glanders from horses, psittacosis (parrot fever) from birds, and both camelpox and MERS – which is caused by a coronavirus – from camels. Some details about animals used in the tourism industry follow.

- **Elephants:** A 2018 evaluation report of captive elephants in Jaipur by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) – a central government statutory body – revealed that in a rapid serological test, 10% of the elephants checked who were used for rides and other tourist interactions near Jaipur were found to be reactive for TB (**Annexure 3**). [A scientific study](#) of 600 elephants in Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu published in 2012 found "evidence for high prevalence of asymptomatic *M. tuberculosis* infection in Asian elephants in a captive Indian setting" (**Annexure 4**). A [study](#) published in 2013 discovered "two probable cases of cross-species transmission of *M. tuberculosis* between mahouts and captive elephants. First is [a] case of human-to-elephant [transmission] and second is a case of elephant-to-human transmission of *M. tuberculosis*" (**Annexure 5**). [Another paper](#), published in 2016, states, "There is evidence to suggest cross-species tuberculosis transmission," based on one-time screenings of nearly 800 elephants and their mahouts over a period of three years (**Annexure 6**).

#### Affiliates:

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

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CIN: U74899DL2000NPL103217

- **Horses:** Horses commonly suffer from glanders, an often-fatal disease that can infect humans. A right to information (RTI) response from the National Research Centre on Equines detailing state-wide data on infectious disease from 2012 to 2017 reported the prevalence of glanders in 239 equines in India. (The relevant extract of the RTI response is appended as **Annexure 7**.) Humans may become infected with the disease through contact with an infected animal or inhalation. In humans, the disease can affect the skin, the lungs, and the entire body and, in the absence of proper treatment, can lead to a painful death.
- **Camels:** Camels used at tourist sites can spread fatal zoonotic diseases, including MERS and camelpox. MERS is an acute respiratory disease caused by a coronavirus, with a fatality rate of about 35%. The symptoms are similar to those of COVID-19 and include fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. According to WHO, by July 2019, MERS had infected more than 2,442 people worldwide. Similarly, cases of camelpox have been confirmed in India. Humans in direct contact with camelpox-infected animals developed skin lesions on their fingers and hands. (Copies of relevant reports and studies are appended as **Annexure 8**.)

2. **Violations of animal protection laws:** The use of animals at various tourist entertainment venues often leads to violations of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (in the case of captive elephants); The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960; or the various rules framed under the PCA Act and various guidelines issued by the government. For instance, most of the animal rides using elephants, camels, and horses are apparently illegal since the animals aren't registered with the AWBI, in clear violation of the [Performing Animal \(Registration\) Rules, 2001](#). Elephants are also commonly kept in chains continuously and jabbed with ankuses. Painful spiked bits and nose pegs are used to control horses and camels, and these animals are overloaded at work, all of which is prohibited under the law. Most of these animals are deprived of basic veterinary care, adequate food, sufficient water, and even suitable shelter, in violation of the legal provisions that have been enacted to safeguard them.

In its 7 May 2014 judgment in the matter of *Animal Welfare Board of India v A Nagaraja and Others*, the Honourable Supreme Court of India noted, "Entertainment, exhibition or amusement do not fall under ... exempted categories [under Section 11 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960] and cannot be claimed as a matter of right under the doctrine of necessity."

3. **Issues of animal welfare:** Whether it's abusing animals for rides, allowing interactions with them, or taking selfies with them, all such activities raise a number of animal welfare concerns. When used for rides, animals are dragged around and forced to bear the weight of humans, carriages, and tourists' luggage. Tourists don't typically intend to harm wildlife or other animals, but they are often unaware that animal rides and training are inherently cruel.

In light of these facts – and the lessons offered by the COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in a live-animal market – we hope you'll agree that actions must be taken immediately to protect animals and public health. Therefore, we urge you to advise states and union territories to prohibit the use of animals in the tourism industry and to include this as part of the proposed certification process for the industry.

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May I please hear from you? Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. I can be reached at [ManilaV@petaindia.org](mailto:ManilaV@petaindia.org) or on +91 9910817382.

Sincerely yours,



Dr Manilal Valliyate, CEO

cc: Shri Yogendra Tripathi, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism

Smt Meenakshi Sharma, Director General (Tourism)

PEOPLE FOR  
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