

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
RAJYA SABHA
QUESTION NO 06.12.2010
ANSWERED ON
DEATH OF TIGERS IN SARISKA .

374

Shri Motilal Vora

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :-

- (a) whether it is a fact that a probe was ordered into the death of 28 tigers in Sariska, Rajasthan in the year 2005;
- (b) if so, the outcome thereof and the persons found guilty;
- (c) whether the investigating officer has not submitted any report as on date and if so, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the steps taken by Government for protection of tigers?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a), (b), (c) & (d) :-A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was mandated to undertake an investigation on disappearance of tigers from the Sariska Tiger Reserve of Rajasthan. The Special Investigation Team of the Central Bureau of Investigation, in its enquiry report, has indicated that there is no evidence of the presence of tiger in Sariska and the entire population seems to have become extinct primarily because of poaching. It has also been stated that since July, 2002, at least 2-3 organised networks of poachers were involved in poaching of tigers and leopards in the tiger reserve. As reported by the State, the short-term and long-term recommendations of the said report, given at Annexure-I, have been acted upon.

(c)The Special Investigation Team has submitted its enquiry report to the Government.

(d)The milestone initiatives taken by the Government of India for strengthening tiger conservation are at Annexure-II.

Annexure-I

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) & (b) OF THE RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *374 ON DEATH OF TIGERS IN SARISKA DUE FOR REPLY ON 06.12.2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION Short-Term

(i)With the consent of the State Governments of Rajasthan and Delhi, the CBI should urgently take over investigation of Sariska Tiger Reserve Crime No. 11/91 dated 15.03.2005, 45/91 dated 11.03.2005, 11/92 dated 15.03.2005, 11/93 dated 15.03.2005 and Kamla Market PS, New Delhi FIR No. 82/2005 dated 31.01.2005. Any other case arising out of incidents of poaching shall also be registered and investigated by CBI for which a general consent may be given by the State Governments.

(ii)Extensive search of all the villages within the Tiger Reserve area should be conducted for recovery of steel traps, guns and other equipments, used for killing wild animals.

(iii)An alert may be issued to all the Tiger Reserves about the modus operandi of the poachers and for recovery of such steel traps, wherever possible.

(iv)Searches may be conducted in all possible places where steel traps are being manufactured and supplied to the poachers.

(v)The local Police should be sensitized and their active participation ensured in anti-poaching enforcement operations, in association with Forest Department staff.

(vi) Provisions of Section 34 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which requires every gun licence holder residing within 10 kms. area of the Sanctuary, to apply to the Chief Wildlife Warden, for registration should be strictly enforced.

(vii) The incumbency profile of the staff of Sariska Tiger Reserve should be analysed and transfer of those who have stayed long enough or are suspected to have developed vested interests, should be ordered.

(viii) The forest guards should be supplied proper uniform, lathis and other necessary equipments.

(ix) Anti-poaching Squads should be constituted in each range, consisting of at least ¼ regular armed Policemen.

Long-Term (x) An administrative overhaul of the Sariska Tiger Reserve by recruiting younger field staff and training the staff in enforcement activities.

(xi) More than 50% staff of the Tiger Reserve are work charge employees who were originally recruited as casual labourers for plantation of trees. There is need to increase the number of regular employees of the Tiger Reserve by recruiting more number of Forest Guards to cover inaccessible areas and to maintain effective watch against continuous human intervention.

(xii) The inflow of tourists and vehicular traffic needs to be controlled and regulated. As already directed vide letter dated 09.04.2003 of Director, Project Tiger, in place of open jeeps and smaller vehicles, medium sized buses with closed bodies and sliding windows should be used for the pilgrims.

(xiii) Immediate action should be taken to get a favourable judicial order pertaining to use of by-pass already constructed, to avoid increased vehicular traffic on State Highway No. 13.

(xiv) A time-bound programme for relocation of villages within the National Park area should be taken up while return of relocated villagers to original settlement areas should be prevented.

(xv) There is no possibility of Tigers relocating to Sariska because of absence of a fringe population and link with any tiger habitat. Hence after implementation of the short-term measures suggested above, there should be a programme for reintroduction of tigers which should be executed under the aegis of a scientific body.

(xvi) The SIT observed that there is no scientific monitoring programme, because of which the park authorities failed to track the dwindling population. Hence, it is recommended that scientific monitoring protocol should be implemented in respect of habitat, prey and predator. The park management should do periodic assessment of all the recorded data at least on a bimonthly basis.

Annexure-II

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PART (d) OF THE RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *374 ON DEATH OF TIGERS IN SARISKA DUE FOR REPLY ON 06.12.2010. Milestone initiatives (including the recent) taken by the Government of India for conservation and protection of tigers Legal steps

1. Amendment of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 for providing enabling provisions for constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority and the Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau.

2. Enhancement of punishment in cases of offence relating to a tiger reserve or its core area.

Administrative steps

3.Strengthening of antipoaching activities, including special strategy for monsoon patrolling, by providing funding support to Tiger Reserve States, as proposed by them, for deployment of antipoaching squads involving ex-army personnel / home guards, apart from workforce comprising of local people, in addition to strengthening of communication / wireless facilities.

4.Constitution of the National Tiger Conservation Authority with effect from 4.09.2006, for strengthening tiger conservation by, interalia, ensuring normative standards in tiger reserve management, preparation of reserve specific tiger conservation plan, laying down annual audit report before Parliament, constituting State level Steering Committees under the Chairmanship of Chief Ministers and establishment of Tiger Conservation Foundation.

5.Constitution of a multidisciplinary Tiger and Other Endangered Species Crime Control Bureau (Wildlife Crime Control Bureau) with effect from 6.6.2007 to effectively control illegal trade in wildlife.

6.Declaration of nine new Tiger Reserves and in-principle approval accorded for creation of four new Reserves, namely Biligiri Ranganatha in Karnataka, Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh, Ratapani in Madhya Pradesh and Sunabeda in Orissa.

7.The revised Project Tiger guidelines have been issued to States for strengthening tiger conservation, which apart from ongoing activities, interalia, include funding support to States for enhanced village relocation/rehabilitation package for people living in core or critical tiger habitats (from Rs. 1 lakh/family to Rs. 10 lakhs/family), rehabilitation/resettlement of communities involved in traditional hunting, mainstreaming livelihood and wildlife concerns in forests outside tiger reserves and fostering corridor conservation through restorative strategy to arrest habitat fragmentation.

8.A scientific methodology for estimating tiger (including co-predators, prey animals and assessment of habitat status) has been evolved and mainstreamed. The findings of this estimation/assessment are benchmarks for future tiger conservation strategy.

9.An area of 31407.11 sq. km. has been notified by 16 Tiger States (out of 17) as core or critical tiger habitat under section 38V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006 (Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal). The State of Bihar has taken a decision for notifying the core or critical tiger habitat (840 sq.km.). The State of Madhya Pradesh has not identified / notified the core / critical tiger habitat in its newly constituted tiger reserve (Sanjay National Park and Sanjay Dubri Wildlife Sanctuary).

Financial steps

10.Financial and technical help is provided to the States under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, viz. Project Tiger and Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats for enhancing the capacity and infrastructure of the States for providing effective protection to wild animals. International Cooperation

11.India has a Memorandum of Understanding with Nepal on controlling trans-boundary illegal trade in wildlife and conservation, apart from a protocol on tiger conservation with China.

12.A Global Tiger Forum of Tiger Range Countries has been created for addressing international issues related to tiger conservation.

13.During the 14th meeting of the Conference of Parties to CITES, which was held from 3rd to 15th June, 2007 at The Hague, India introduced a resolution along with China, Nepal and the Russian Federation, with

directions to Parties with operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale, for restricting such captive populations to a level supportive only to conserving wild tigers. The resolution was adopted as a decision with minor amendments. Further, India made an intervention appealing to China to phase out tiger farming, and eliminate stockpiles of Asian big cats body parts and derivatives. The importance of continuing the ban on trade of body parts of tigers was emphasized.

14. Based on India's strong intervention during the 58th meeting of the Standing Committee of the CITES at Geneva from 6th to 10th July, 2009, the CITES Secretariat issued notification to Parties for submitting reports relating to compliance of Decisions 14.69 and 14.65 within 90 days with effect from 20.10.2009 (Progress made on restricting captive breeding operations of tigers etc.). During the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties, India intervened for retaining the Decision 14.69 dealing with operations breeding tigers on a commercial scale.

Reintroduction of Tigers

15. As a part of active management to rebuild Sariska and Panna Tiger Reserves where tigers have become locally extinct, reintroduction of tigers / tigresses have been done.

16. Special advisories issued for in-situ build up of prey base and tiger population through active management in tiger reserves having low population status of tiger and its prey.

Creation of Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF)

17. The policy initiatives announced by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech of 29.2.2008, inter alia, contains action points relating to tiger protection. Based on the one time grant of Rs. 50.00 crore provided to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for raising, arming and deploying a Special Tiger Protection Force, the proposal for the said force has been approved by the competent authority for 13 tiger reserves. Rs. 93 lakhs each has been released to Corbett, Ranthambhore & Dudhwa Tiger Reserve for creation of STPF during 2008-09. Since then, the guidelines of the STPF have been revised for deploying forest personnel in place of Police as an option-II, with scope for involving local people like the Van Gujjars.

18. In collaboration with TRAFFIC-INDIA, an online tiger crime data base has been launched, and Generic Guidelines for preparation of reserve specific Security Plan has been evolved.

Recent initiatives

19. Implementing a tripartite MOU with tiger States, linked to fund flows for effective implementation of tiger conservation initiatives.

20. Rapid assessment of tiger reserves done.

21. Special crack teams sent to tiger reserves affected by left wing extremism and low population status of tiger and its prey.

22. Chief Ministers of tiger States addressed at the level of the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests on urgent issues, viz. implementation of the tripartite MOU, creation of the Tiger Conservation Foundation, stepping up protection etc.

23. Chief Ministers of States having tiger reserves affected by left wing extremism and low population status of tiger and its prey addressed for taking special initiatives.

24. Steps taken for modernizing the infrastructure and field protection, besides launching M-STrIPES for effective field patrolling and monitoring.

25. Steps taken for involvement of Non-Governmental Experts in the ongoing all India tiger estimation.

26. Special independent team sent to Simlipal for assessing the status, besides constituting State level

Coordination Committee for redressing the administrative problems.

27. Issue of tiger farming and trafficking of tiger body parts discussed at the level of Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment and Forests with the Chinese Authorities.

28. Action taken for amending the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 to ensure effective conservation.

29. Initiatives taken for improving the field delivery through capacity building of field officials, apart from providing incentives.

30. Steps taken for the independent Monitoring and Evaluation of tiger reserves.

31. Action initiated for using Information Technology to strengthen surveillance in tiger reserves.

32. Providing special assistance for mitigation of human-tiger conflicts in problematic areas.

33. As an outcome of the fourth Trans-border Consultative Group Meeting held in New Delhi, a joint resolution has been signed with Nepal for biodiversity / tiger conservation.