

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1336
TO BE ANSWERED ON 31.07.2025

Chilika Lake ecosystem in Odisha

1336. DR. SASMIT PATRA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) the measures being taken to conserve the Chilika Lake ecosystem in Odisha, status of mangrove restoration and water quality monitoring;
- (b) the impact of tourism and illegal prawn gherries on biodiversity;
- (c) any special funding by the Centre for Ramsar sites; and
- (d) the involvement of local fishing communities in conservation programs?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) As reported by Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department, Government of Odisha, the Chilika Development Authority (CDA) has taken several measures to conserve the lake ecosystem. It includes excavation of the feeder channel, de-weeding of the water hyacinth, dredging of the lead channel, bird monitoring and conservation at Nalaban and Mangalajodi important bird congregation areas. Construction of fishing jetties, boat sheltering yards, Community Hall for fishers and construction of approach roads, lighting, and water supply to ten fish landing centers have also been taken up. In the outer channel of the lake near the villages Sipakuda and Gabakunda, plantation of mangroves has been carried out.

The water quality of the Chilika Lake at predefined 33 stations spread over four sectors of the lake is monitored monthly to ascertain the health of the lake. Specific actions have been taken to control human-induced pollution and restore ecological balance in these wetlands, such as, dredging channels are regularly maintained to stabilize the lagoon's physico-chemical parameters which are a critical factor for biodiversity. Proactive approach ensures the safety of aquatic life, such as fish and shellfish, while promoting sustainable biodiversity conservation in these ecosystems.

(b) Several measures have been taken to reduce the impact of tourism on biodiversity, particularly the Irrawaddy Dolphins population in the narrow outer channel, such as, Standard Operating Procedure for dolphin watching has been developed. Further, the regular patrolling is done by Chilika Wildlife Division staffs to ensure its adherence. Puri District Authority formed a high level committee to suggest the carrying capacity for the boats plying in Chilika outer channel for maintaining the biodiversity. Regularly, the eviction of the gherries have been undertaken by the District authorities and CDA supports the same by provisioning of manpower, boats, excavators and logistics. More than 152 square kilometers of gherries have

been removed from Chilika during joint enforcement drives which restored the sea grass ecosystem.

(c) Ministry has provided funds for Chilika Lake, a Ramsar site under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems and Development of Wildlife Habitats, for its conservation and management.

(d) During preparation of Integrated Management Plan for Chilika Lake, local fishing community's views and opinions were taken. Local fishing communities were involved in creating awareness on dolphin conservation, migratory bird protection and olive ridley conservation during the nesting season. Local youth were engaged as watchers for the information collection and patrolling. The local fishermen also help during marine animal stranding, release of bycatch and also in many other ways to support the mandate of conservation. Continuous stakeholders meet and sensitization of the fishermen has led to increase in bird and dolphin population and also olive ridleys visit in Chilika Lake.
