GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 126
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.12.2025

Enhancing safety measures

*126.   SMT. MAMATA MOHANTA:

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

(a)   whether Government would consider enhancing safety measures and community participation programmes in areas frequented by elephants to reduce human–wildlife conflicts;
(b)   whether additional training and equipments would be provided to strengthen the capacity of forest fire prevention and rapid-response teams; and
(c)   whether Government would consider launching special initiatives to enhance the participation of local communities in the conservation of Similipal?

<u>ANSWER</u>

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV)

(a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) to (c) OF THE RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. *126 REGARDING 'ENHANCING SAFETY MEASURES' DUE FOR REPLY ON 11.12.2025.

(a)   The Government through various Centrally Sponsored Schemes is supporting states for strengthening safety measures and enhancing community participation in areas frequently visited by elephants. Various States have adopted people-centric initiatives to reduce human–elephant conflict. Chhattisgarh has introduced a Radio Alert System and Hathi Mitra Dal to provide timely warnings on elephant movement to vulnerable villages. Several States, including Jharkhand, Odisha and Kerala, have established WhatsApp-based community alert networks, and advisory letters have been issued to all States for adopting similar real-time information systems. Further, Tamil Nadu has deployed AI-based early-warning systems with sensors and automated alerts to inform local residents and frontline staff about elephant presence near settlements or transport corridors. These initiatives complement ongoing community outreach programmes and strengthen local participation in human–wildlife conflict management. Under Project Elephant, the 'Gaj Gaurav' Awards have been instituted to recognise exemplary community initiatives and individual contributions towards elephant conservation and coexistence.

The management of wildlife including mitigation and management of human-elephant conflict (HEC) is primarily the responsibility of State Governments/UTs Administration. The State Forest Departments work with the local people to address the HEC issues through periodic awareness campaigns to sensitize, guide and advise the general public on human-animal conflict including dissemination of information through various forms of media. Further, State Forest Departments engage with local communities to monitor the movement of elephants and to caution local people to avoid human-animal conflict, prevent damage or loss of human life, property and elephants.

In addition, the following measures are taken by Ministry for prevention and management of human wildlife conflict:

(i)   The Central Government provides financial assistance to State/Union Territory Governments under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes 'Development of Wildlife Habitats' and 'Project Tiger & Elephant' for management of wildlife and its habitat in the country.

(ii)   Various other Centrally Sponsored schemes being implemented by this Ministry contribute to the improvement in the natural habitat of elephants by augmenting water sources, planting of fodder trees, regeneration of bamboo etc. Such scheme includes Development of Wildlife Habitat. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act 2016 and the Rules made there under also provide for use of the Fund for development of wildlife habitats, including for elephants, establishment of animal rescue centres, etc. which also contribute to reduction in Human-Elephant Conflict.

(iii) The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has also issued Guidelines to States/UTs on 3rd June, 2022 on managing Human Wildlife conflicts including damage to crops. It includes promotion of crops in forest fringe areas which are unpalatable to wild animals and agro forestry models which include cash crops like chillies, lemon grass, khus grass etc. suitably mixed with tree/shrub species. It also includes preparation and

implementation of comprehensive long-term plan for alternate cropping by the state Agriculture/Horticulture Department under different schemes in vulnerable areas.

(iv) A field manual for frontline staff to manage Human Elephant Conflict was released during the 16th meeting of the Steering Committee of Project Elephant on 29th April, 2022.

(v) The Ministry also released a Guidelines for Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation-Taking a Harmonious Coexistence Approach (2023) for addressing human-elephant conflicts.

(vi) Capacity Building Workshops for different stakeholders were organized time to time to sensitize them on matter related to minimization of human elephant conflict.

(b) The Ministry provides financial assistance to State Governments and Union Territory Administrations under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes 'Project Tiger and Elephant' for management of wildlife and its habitat in the country. The activities supported include prevention of forest fire and firefighting.

Further, the Ministry provides financial assistance to the States and Union Territories under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme –Forest Fire Prevention and Management to deal with forest fires.

The Ministry has put in place the National Action Plan on Forest Fire-2018, which provides comprehensive measures to prevent forest fires and to improve the resiliences of the forests against fire hazards. The State Governments/Union Territory Administrations also prepare State Action Plans in tandem with the National Action Plan to undertake State/ Union Territory-specific measures towards forest fire prevention and management.

The Ministry, through the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun provides Pre-Fire Alerts (one-week in advance), Large Forest Fire Alerts and Near Real Time Forest Fire Alerts to the registered subscribers and State Forest department officials to deal with forest fires.

The Ministry in coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority and the National Disaster Response Force have trained three teams consisting of 150 personnel to tackle Large Forest Fires. These teams are deployed as per the requirements to control forest fires.

(c) Similipal National Park, spanning 2,750 sq. km, is a major Tiger Reserve located in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The park hosts a rich variety of flora and fauna, including the world's only known wild melanistic tigers. Ecologically, Similipal represents an important extension of the Eastern Ghats creating a unique transitional landscape that enhances its floral and faunal diversity. Established in 1980, the park forms an integral part of the Similipal Biosphere Reserve.

The Central Government and State of Odisha have decided to establish a centre of Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM) in Mayurbhanj. This centre once established help in capacity building for wildlife conservation and management, sustainable forest management, community-based forest practices and research & extension activities.

Local institutions such as Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) and Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) are encouraged to participate in planning and executing conservation activities tailored to site-specific needs. Awareness initiatives and capacity-building programmes are also undertaken to enhance local engagement.

The Government accords high priority to the conservation of Similipal and supports State-led efforts through the Centrally Sponsored Schemes 'Development of Wildlife Habitats' and 'Project Tiger and Elephant'. Assistance is provided for habitat improvement, protection activities, eco-development works, community-based conservation programmes, and livelihood-support measures for forest-dependent communities.

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