

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2925
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.08.2026

Conservation of river dolphins in Assam

2925. SHRI TERASH GOWALLA:

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

- (a) whether Government has conducted a recent assessment of population of Gangetic river dolphins in the Brahmaputra river;
- (b) if so, the details of conservation measures undertaken;
- (c) whether any additional funds have been sanctioned for dolphin habitats in Assam; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof, the projects undertaken and the status of their implementation?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): The Government of India undertook the first-ever range-wide population assessment of river dolphins during 2021–2023 under Project Dolphin. The survey covered the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Beas river systems using a standardized scientific protocol comprising boat-based visual surveys and passive acoustic monitoring. The assessment estimated a population of 6,324 Gangetic river dolphins in India.

In Assam, the survey covered the main stem of the Brahmaputra and its major tributaries, namely the Subansiri, Beki, Kulsi, Kopili and Barak rivers. The assessment estimated a total population of 635 Gangetic river dolphins, comprising 584 dolphins in the main stem of the Brahmaputra and 51 dolphins in its tributaries.

The Ministry provides financial assistance to States for conservation, protection and management of wildlife including river dolphins under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme ‘Development of Wildlife Habitats’. The Governing Body of CAMPA approved a project titled “Implementation of the Dolphin Conservation Action Plan: Conservation and Recovery of River Dolphins and their Aquatic Habitats” for financial assistance through National CAMPA, which covers 131 districts across nine States, including the State of Assam. The activities identified under the project include rescue and rehabilitation, capacity building, advanced technology deployment, multi-species ecological monitoring of aquatic species.

The important measures taken for conservation of Gangetic dolphin include:

- (i) A Comprehensive Action Plan (2022-2047) has been developed under which role of various stakeholders have been identified for conservation of river dolphins and aquatic habitats.
- (ii) Important dolphin habitats and priority conservation areas have been identified based on the findings of the range wide assesment for focused management interventions.
- (iii) Research on dolphin ecology, habitat use, prey availability and anthropogenic threats using modern techniques such as passive acoustic monitoring, environmental DNA (eDNA) and satellite telemetry have been undertaken.

- (iv) Awareness generation and capacity-building programmes for dolphin conservation involving State Forest Departments, local communities, fishermen undertaken.
- (v) Scientific and technical support provided to States for conservation of river dolphin and its habitats.
