

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO 6477**  
**TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.04.2018**

**Knowledge of Taxonomy**

6477. SHRIMATI POONAM MAHAJAN:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware that the knowledge of taxonomy is deteriorating fast in the country due to lack of trained manpower;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (c) the sanctioned strength of the manpower position in the Botanical Survey of India and the number of vacant posts in all categories of taxonomy staff; and
- (d) the action taken by the Government to augment the number of taxonomists in order to meet an enormous task of documenting the plant and animal resources of the country?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE**  
**(DR. MAHESH SHARMA)**

(a) & (b) Yes. Taxonomy plays a vital role in understanding the biodiversity of any geographic region in general and plant diversity in particular. However, this traditional science is on the verge of extinction. In India, taxonomy is neglected at school, colleges and at university level too. It is mainly due to lack of interest among students in the discipline and significantly lower career prospects. In fact, even at research level, the funds allotted for taxonomic research are meagre, and there are only a very few organisations like BSI and ZSI doing exclusive research in taxonomy and systematics in India.

The science of taxonomy has been declining for several years now, with very few qualified practicing taxonomists and teachers in India. In 1999 the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change launched an All India Coordinated Project on Capacity Building in Taxonomy which has trained several students in various groups of plants like Algae, Fungi, Lichens, Bryophytes, gymnosperms and some families of flowering plants. But, the full cataloguing of diversity of life in India is far from complete.

The mission of the AICOPTAX is "Enhancement of country's capabilities for inventorying, monitoring, conserving, community participation in the assessment and

utilizing biodiversity as well as for establishing leadership in the field of taxonomy at regional and global levels -also survey, collection and maintenance of collections of taxonomic groups including microbes for which no information is available. Out of 30 identified thematic areas, 15 have been implemented so far, and the investigation under AICOPTAX in the balance 15 thematic areas is under progress.

BSI & ZSI are the implementing agencies for the scheme and are responsible for achieving quality milestones of the scheme.

(c) The sanctioned Strength of the manpower position in the BSI and the number of vacant post in all categories of Taxonomy staff (as on 01.01.2018):

Post	Group-A			Group-B (Gazetted)			Group-B (Non-Gazetted)			Group-C		
	Sanctioned Strength	Main in position	Vacancy	Sanctioned Strength	Main in position	Vacancy	Sanctioned Strength	Main in position	Vacancy	Sanctioned Strength	Main in position	Vacancy
Scientific	109	81	28	46	20	26	96	59	37	124	42	82
Technical	1	0	1	5	2	3	30	15	15	33	13	20
Total	110	81	29	51	22	29	126	74	52	157	55	102

**Total Strength: 110+51+126+157 (444); Total Man in Position: 81+22+74+55 (232)**

(d) This Ministry has implemented the following programmes to revamp taxonomy in India. These are:

- ALL INDIA CO-ORDINATED PROJECT IN TAXONOMY to encourage the priority gap areas (e.g. virus, bacteria, microlepidoptera, etc.) in the field of taxonomy, education and training (fellowships, scholarships, chairs, career awards, etc.) and strengthening of BSI and ZSI as the coordinating unit
- Green Skilled development programme (GSDP) on Taxonomy
- Flora India Project in Taxonomy
- Post Doctorate Fellowship Project in Taxonomy

- MoU signed between BSI & Natural History Museum, London, UK for Scientific exchange on faunal Taxonomy
- Training and capacity building in lesser-known taxa through national and international collaborations.
- Awarding of Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Fellowships for taxonomic and ecological studies in lesser-known taxa.
- Updating the database on taxonomists of India and developing a network of taxonomists and institutions.

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