

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SHIPPING
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3140
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11TH JULY, 2019

IMPACT OF GANGETIC RIVER DOLPHINS

3140. DR. SHASHI THAROOR:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

पोत परिवहन मंत्री

- (a) whether the Government is aware about the various concerns raised regarding the impact on the Gangetic river Dolphins due to the National Waterways Projects and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the proposed waterway for cargo vessels will pass through the Bhagalpur district, which is a reserve for Gangetic river Dolphins and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has undertaken any study to measure the impact of these projects on the Gangetic river Dolphins and other aquatic animals and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to ensure that the Gangetic river Dolphins will not be adversely affected by the National Waterways Projects?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR SHIPPING
(SHRI MANSUKH MANDAVIYA)

(a) to (d) To augment the navigation capacity on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of National Waterway-1, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is implementing the Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP), with the technical assistance and investment support of the World Bank. The Sultanganj-Kahalgaon stretch of NW-1 passes through Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS), Bhagalpur.

In order to ensure safe navigational activities, and as part of the Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy of the World Bank, IWAI undertook a comprehensive Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) study on NW-1 including on stretches falling within VGDS. The EIA reports include the impact assessment with reference to the Gangetic Dolphins and Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, Bhagalpur. The report recommended a numbers of mitigation/ safeguard measures for safe navigational activities in NW-1 including dolphins and other aquatic animals protected areas as indicated at **Annex**.

To address the concerns raised on the impact of barge movement during the operational phase of the project, IWAI has undertaken a special study in association with IIT, Delhi on the effect of navigational activities on the Gangetic Dolphin and other aquatic animals in order to take remedial measures. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for this study were finalized after detailed consultations with experts on the subject.

Further, similar measures as adopted in Kashi Turtle Sanctuary, Varanasi have been adopted in Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary, Bhagalpur to ensure safety of aquatic life.

Annexure mentioned in reply to parts (a) to (d) of Lok Sabha Admitted Unstarred Question No. 3140 to be answered on 11.07.2019 raised by Dr. Shashi Tharoor, M.P. regarding Impact of Gangetic River Dolphins

Mitigation/ safeguard measures for safe navigational activities in NW-1 including dolphins and other aquatic animals protected areas.

- Vessel speed would be restricted to 2.7 knots in Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS) area to reduce the noise generation from propeller. Restricting speed of vessels in sanctuary area can maintain noise levels lower than tolerance levels of dolphins, thus minimizing impact of noise on dolphins.
- Vessels would be fitted with propeller guards and dolphin deflectors to minimize dolphin accidents.
- Usage of non-toxic and non TBT containing anti-fouling paints for painting vessel.
- Barge/vessel movement would be restricted to the designated route only to minimize disturbance of aquatic life.
- If any aquatic mammal/dolphin is spotted, then the measures will be taken to push it away through sirens/signals.
- All waste from vessels shall be discharged at designated terminals/vessel repair facility only.
