

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 5495**  
**TO BE ANSWERED ON 26.07.2019**

**Protection and Conservation of Vultures and Eagles Population**

5495. SHRI DEVUSINHJESING BHAI CHAUHAN:

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

- (a) whether there has been a sharp decline in the Vulture and Eagle population in the country over the years and if so, the details thereof, and the reasons therefor;
- (b) whether the Government has received reports of death of Vultures and Eagles due to drug poisoning in some parts of the country including Rajasthan;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) the action being taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (e) the strategy likely to be formulated by the Government for protection and conservation of Eagles and Vultures?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE**  
**(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)**

- (a) There has been a sharp decline in the vulture populations which was first noticed in the mid-nineties and by 2007, there was a 99% decline in the population of three resident Gyps species of vulture viz. White-backed Vulture, Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture. By the year 2011, the population though very small appeared to be establishing but during the year 2015, it was noticed that the White-backed Vulture population was stable but for Long-billed Vulture, it was still declining. The major cause of mortality of vultures was found to be the veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug 'Diclofenac', given to cattle in pain and inflammation.

As per the information received from Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), there is no systematic data on population of Eagles, however, it has been reported that 'Diclofenac' has adverse effect on Eagles also.

- (b), (c) and (d) Several States in the country including the State of Rajasthan have informed the Ministry that there is no report of Vulture and Eagle deaths due to drug poisoning. However, the State of Assam has informed about the deaths of Vultures in the

State due to drug poisoning.No such deaths of Eagles due to drug poisoning has been reported by Assam State.

The numbers of death records of Vultures in Assam due to consumption of poisoned carcass during the last three years and the current year are as follows:

S. No.	Year	No. of deaths due to consuming of drug poisoning
1.	2016	51
2.	2017	19
3.	2018	56
4.	2019 (till July)	42

The actions being undertaken by the State Government in this regard are as follows:

- i. Strict vigilance are being kept on death of Vultures in the State of Assam. If any incidence of death is found, samples are immediately collected and sent for chemical/forensic test to determine the cause of death.
  - ii. Awareness campaigns have been launched among the people in the State of Assam.
  - iii. Eight Vulture safe zones have been identified in the Country including one (01) in Assam.
  - iv. Rapid response teams have been constituted by the State Forest Department at some divisions/fields of Vultures populated area.
  - v. Concerned Drugs Authority of the State of Assam, the Director, Agriculture, the Director of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services have been requested to regulate the sale of the insecticides poisonous to Vulture.
  - vi. A Conservation Breeding Programme of Gyps species of Vulture in Assam by the State Government in collaboration with Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has been established during 2007 and has been successfully conducting breeding programme.
- (e) The Government of India has formulated and is implementing several strategies for protection and conservation of Vultures and Eagles including the following:
- i. Based on the research carried out on the causes of vulture mortalities, the Government of India took immediate steps to ban the veterinary use of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID) – Diclofenac, which was found to be the sole cause of mortality. The same drug was also found to be harmful for eagles.
  - ii. The Government of India also restricted the packaging size of the human

formulation of the diclofenac drug to 3ml in July 2015 to prevent the misuse of multi-dose vials available in 30 ml presentation in treating cattle.

- iii. To conserve the remnant population of vultures in the country and also to facilitate the reintroduction of vultures into the wild from Vulture Conservation Breeding Centres (VCBCs), Eight (08) Vulture Safe Zones have been identified. As part of it, the area in a radius of 100 km around the VCBCs is made secure by community participation by ensuring that there is no use of vulture toxic veterinary NSAID's, there is enough food and habitat and there is no other threat to vultures. This is done by targeted advocacy and awareness programme. These Vultures Safe zones would also act as safe and secure habitats for Eagles.
- iv. The Ministry has sanctioned a project to Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Uttar Pradesh titled "Assessing the safety to vulture (*Gyps spp.*) of non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID's) in veterinary use in India". The total project cost is Rs. 2.71 Cr for a period of 3 years. The project is being implemented by IVRI in collaboration with Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). An amount of Rs. 30.00 lakh has been released to IVRI as part of the installment during the FY 2018-19.
- v. The Ministry has reconstituted the "National Vulture Recovery Committee" to oversee and guide vulture conservation and recovery efforts at the National Level.
- vi. India is a signatory to the Raptors Memorandum of Understanding (Raptors MoU) of the Convention for Migratory Species of the United Nations Environment Program. As a signatory state, India has been actively involved in preparation of Multi-Species Action Plan for Conservation of Vultures, Eagles etc. and is taking active steps for protection of these species.

\*\*\*