

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1989
TO BE ANSWERED ON 19.12.2022

Translocation of Asiatic Lions

1989. SHRI D.K. SURESH:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware that according to the Supreme Court ruling from 2013, priority must be given to the translocation of Asiatic Lions over the African Cheetahs;
- (b) whether the movement of Cheetahs from Africa is the reason for the delay in the transfer of Asiatic Lions to Kuno;
- (c) whether the Union Government is planning to move the Asiatic lions from Gir forest to another location, if so, the details of sites earmarked and time frame fixed for this purpose and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) the reasons for not listing the translocation in the 25-year roadmap of Project Lion instead of Supreme Court ruling in 2013;
- (e) the number of Asiatic lions that have died in the Gir Forest since the Supreme Court judgement from 2013 till 2022 and the steps taken/proposed to be taken to protect the lions in the Gir forest;
- (f) whether the Government has listed other sites for the transfer of African Cheetahs, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (g) the details of the cost of transfer and yearly maintenance cost of African Cheetahs and the Great Indian Bustard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

- (a) and (b) The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India vide order dated 15.4.2013 had directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to take urgent steps for re-introduction of Asiatic lion from Gir forests to Kuno in accordance with the guidelines issued by IUCN. The Hon'ble Supreme Court, vide order dated 28.01.2020 allowed introduction of African Cheetah into India on an experimental basis and Cheetahs from Namibia were translocated in pursuance of the said directions.
- (c) A Committee was constituted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change with a view to assess the suitability of habitat for lions in potential sites in Gujarat and make recommendations regarding facilitation of natural dispersal of lions and the modalities for establishment of lion

population in newly identified sites in the State of Gujarat. The Committee has recommended a participatory management approach for expanding lion population, greater involvement of communities and awareness and sensitization programmes, especially in newly occupied territories. The Ministry is providing financial assistance to the State of Gujarat for lion conservation activities including for habitat improvement, water management, grassland development and prey augmentation. These activities will also facilitate the natural dispersal of lions beyond the Gir landscape.

- (d) As per the document titled '*Project Lion: Lion @47 vision for Amrutkal*' the Barda Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat has been identified and assessed by the Wildlife Institute of India as a potential site where a population of 40 adult and sub-adult lions can be accommodated in the larger landscape of Barda-Alech hills and coastal forests through natural dispersal.
- (e) The Gujarat Forest Department has informed that during the period from 2013-14 to 2022-23 (up to November 2022), 240 lions have died in Gir forests.

The important steps taken to protect lions includes:

- i. Listing the species in Schedule-I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, thereby, according it the highest degree of legal protection from hunting.
- ii. The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for punishment for violation of its provisions. The Act also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that is used for committing wildlife offence.
- iii. Asiatic Lion has been identified by the Ministry as one of the 22 Critically Endangered species for focused recovery program under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Development of Wildlife Habitat'.
- iv. Financial assistance is provided to the State Government of Gujarat under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Development of Wildlife Habitats' for the conservation and protection of Asiatic Lions and their habitat.
- v. Appointment of 'Vanya PraniMitra' (Wildlife Friend) in villages around Gir area.
- vi. Wireless Network in and around Gir area for fast communication.
- vii. Checking Nakas on entry points for keeping track of movements of

vehicles and people.

- viii. Law enforcement authorities in the State of Gujarat maintain strict vigil against poaching of wild animals, including Asiatic Lions.
 - ix. Wild Life Crime Control Bureau has been set up to gather intelligence about poaching and unlawful trade in wild animals and animal articles and to achieve inter-state and trans-boundary coordination in enforcement of wildlife laws.
 - x. The Ministry has formulated the 3rd 'National Wildlife Action Plan' for a period of 2017 to 2031 to save wild animals, including Asiatic Lions in the country. The Plan focuses on landscape approach in conservation of all wildlife irrespective of where they occur.
 - xi. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change released the Advisory for management of Human Wildlife Conflict in February 2021 and guidelines in June, 2022, which also provide for improvement of wildlife habitats.
 - xii. In order to further strengthen conservation of wildlife, Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) are notified around National Parks and Sanctuaries under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- (f) As per the action plan on introduction of Cheetah into India, Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, Shahgarh Bulge, Bhainsrorgarh Wildlife Sanctuary and Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan have been identified as other suitable areas for Cheetah in India.
- (g) Under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger a budgetary provisions of Rs. 38.7 Crore has been made for five years besides funding support of Rs. 29.47 Crore under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) which includes cost of transportation, maintenance and management of African Cheetahs and the habitat.

The Ministry has taken initiative for conservation breeding of the Great Indian Bustard in collaboration with the Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra Forest Departments and technical support from Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun and has sanctioned a Project titled 'Habitat Improvement and Conservation Breeding of Great Indian Bustard-an integrated approach' with a budget outlay of Rs. 33.85 crores for the duration of seven years.
