

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2908
TO BE ANSWERED ON 07.08.2023

Poaching of Elephants

2908. SHRI RAJESH VERMA:
DR. TALARI RANGAIAH:
SHRI TIRATH SINGH RAWAT:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken concrete measures to stop the rampant illegal poaching of elephants in the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the details of objectives of Project Elephant in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha; and
- (c) whether the Government has taken any steps to solve the problem of human-elephant conflict, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

- (a)to(c) The State Governments and UT Administrations are the primary responders for prevention of Human Elephant Conflict including the crimes related to elephant poaching. The Project Elephant scheme launched by Government of India with major objectives to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, to address issues of man-elephant conflict and welfare of captive elephants in the country including Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. The Ministry has taken following measures to prevent human elephant conflict including poaching of elephants in the country:
- (i) The Ministry provides financial and technical assistance to States/UTs under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Project Tiger and Elephant' for protection and conservation of the species and their habitats in the country including creation of anti-poaching Squad/camps, patrolling duties, reward to informers on information on poachers etc.
 - (ii) An advisory on Human-Wildlife Conflict including dealing the wildlife crime has been issued by the Ministry on 6th February, 2021.
 - (iii) To reduce human-elephant conflict and to avoid retaliatory killing of elephants, compensation is being provided to local communities for loss of their property

and life caused by wild elephants. The Ministry has notified enhancement of ex-gratia rates related to wildlife depredation vide letter No. 14-2/2011 WL-I (part) dated 9th February, 2018.

- (iv) Various other Centrally Sponsored schemes being implemented by this Ministry contribute to the improvement in the natural habitat of elephants by augmenting water sources, planting of fodder trees, regeneration of bamboo etc. The Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act 2016 and the Rules made there under also provide for use of the Fund for development of wildlife habitats, including for elephants, establishment of animal rescue centres, etc. which also contribute to reduction in HEC.
- (v) A guideline for Management of Human Elephant Conflict has been issued by the Ministry on 6.10.2017 and elephant range states have been requested for implementation of the same.
- (vi) An advisory on dealing with human-wildlife conflict has been issued by the Ministry in February 2021. The advisory recommends coordinated interdepartmental action, identification of conflict hot spots, adherence to Standard Operating Procedures, establishment of rapid response teams, formation of State and District level committees to review the quantum of ex-gratia relief, issuing guidance/instructions for expedited payments, and provision of adequate funds for suitable portion of ex-gratia relief to be paid within 24 hours to the affected persons in the case of death and injury to persons.
- (vii) Wildlife Institute of India in consultation with the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, National Highway Authority, National Tiger Conservation Authority and World Bank Group has published a document namely 'Eco-friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts of Linear Infrastructure' to assist project agencies in designing linear infrastructure, including electric transmission lines, in a manner that reduces human-animal conflicts.
- (viii) The Ministry has released a book titled "Best Practices of Human Elephant Conflict Management in India" for the benefit of States and other stakeholders.
- (ix) A field manual for frontline staff to manage Human Elephant Conflict was released during the 16th meeting of the Steering Committee on 29th April, 2022.
- (x) The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 provides regulatory functions for dealing with human wildlife conflict situations.
- (xi) Regional coordination meeting for the Eastern Region to address Human-Elephant Conflict was conducted on 19th January, 2023 at Kolkata.
- (xii) Capacity building of frontline staff for investigation, forensics and successful prosecution of wildlife cases are being organised at regular interval.
- (xiii) In addition, the Ministry in coordination with Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) has taken following measures to prevent wildlife crime including poaching of elephants:
 - Conducting joint operations with State enforcement agencies to apprehend criminals involved in smuggling.
 - Conducting capacity building for Forest & Police Officials on investigation of Wildlife cases under the provisions of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
 - Conducting sensitisation programme for the officials of Border Guarding Forces, Customs, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Judicial officers, RPF, GRP and other stakeholders.

- Issuing alerts and advisories on poaching and illegal trade of wildlife to the concerned state and Central agencies for preventive actions.
- The WCCB has developed an online Wildlife Crime Database Management System and shared user credentials with 970 Divisional Forest Offices, 50 Field Directors of Tiger Reserves and 37 Chief Wildlife Wardens in the Forest Department and 34 Director General of Police to upload data pertaining to wildlife crime detected on a day to day basis.
- The WCCB has also conducted special pan India enforcement operation to coordinate action among State/Central enforcement agencies. Ivory seizures have been effected in the “Operation WILDNET-I, II, III and IV”.
- Moreover, WCCB participated in global operations such as operation Thunderbird envisaged by INTERPOL’s Wildlife Working Group, Operation THUNDERSTORM, Operation THUNDERBALL and Operation Thunder 2021, which resulted in the arrest of many criminals and seizures.
