

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1070**  
**TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.11.2019**

**Extinction of Vultures**

1070. SHRIMATI PRATIMA MONDAL:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware that vultures are close to extinction in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to protect them;
- (c) the details of centres that ensure the task of protecting vultures in the country;
- (d) whether the Government has conducted any programme/census for vulture count;
- (e) if so, the details thereof, State/ UT-wise; and
- (f) if not, the time by which the Government is likely to start such programme/census?

**ANSWER**

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

- (a) and (b) Decline in the Vultures populations in the Country was first noticed in the mid nineties and by the year 2007, there was a 99% decline in the population of three resident Gyps species of Vultures. By the year 2011, the population started getting stabilized though the population was still small in size. By the year 2015, it was noticed that the White-backed Vulture population was stable but the population of Long-billed Vulture was still declining.

The steps taken by Government for protection and conservation of Vultures in the country includes:

- i. Protection status of White backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed Vultures has been upgraded from Schedule IV to Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- ii. 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), attempts are being made to create Vulture Safe Zones in the areas where there are vulture

populations. 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.

- iii. There are eight (08) identified vulture safe zones in the Country which includes Pinjore in Haryana, Rajabhatkhawa in West Bengal, around Majuli Island in Assam, Bukswaha in Bundelkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Dudhwa National Park and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh, Hazaribagh in Jharkhand, Central Gujarat and Saurashtra in Gujarat.
- iv. The Ministry has also taken initiatives to strengthen the mass education and awareness for vulture conservation in the Country.
- v. The Government of India has formulated a National Action Plan (2006) on Vulture Conservation. The Action Plan provides for strategies, actions for containing the decline of vulture population through *ex-situ*, *in-situ* vulture conservation.
- vi. The Government of India banned the veterinary use of the drug 'Diclofenac' which was found to be the cause of vulture mortality and crash in vulture population.
- vii. 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.
- viii. Department of forests of all states/UTs has been requested to constitute a Monitoring committee for vulture conservation with a view to implement the Action Plan, 2006 and for recovery of existing vulture sites.
- ix. The Ministry has initiated the Vulture reintroduction programme. As part of it, two Himalayan Griffon Vultures were released from the Vulture Breeding Centre, Pinjore, Haryana in the year 2016.
- x. The Ministry has reconstituted the "National Vulture Recovery Committee" to oversee and guide vulture conservation and recovery efforts at the National Level.
- xi. Testing of "Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs" (NSAID's) on Vultures (*Gyps spp.*) is being carried out by Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Uttar Pradesh with support from the Ministry and

Bombay Natural History Society.

- xii. The species has been identified for conservation efforts under the component 'Species Recovery Programme' of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) - Development of Wildlife Habitat. Financial and technical assistance is provided to the State/ Union Territory Governments under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Development of Wildlife Habitat for providing better protection to Vultures and its habitat.

(c) For *Ex-situ* conservation of vultures, eight (08) Vulture Conservation Breeding Centres were established in the different States of the country.

Four of the centres, Pinjore in Haryana (established in 2004), Rajabhatkhawa (established in 2006) in West Bengal, Rani in Assam (established in 2009) and Kerwa near Bhopal (established in 2008) are managed by respective State Forest Departments with support from Bombay Natural History Society and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Four more centres i.e. Junagarh in Gujarat (established 2006), Nandankanan in Orissa (established 2006), Hyderabad in Telangana (established 2006) and Muta in Ranchi are established in the State Zoos and are being run by State Forest Department with support from Central Zoo Authority (CZA) of MoEF&CC and technical support from Bombay Natural History Society.

As per the information received from Bombay Natural History Society, there are a total of 731 birds of the three species housed at the 8 different Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre of which 396 have fledged at the centres. All the three species have bred at the centres. The Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, Pinjore has the maximum number of 333 birds.

(d), (e) and (f) Nation-wide vulture surveys are carried out by Bombay Natural History Society every four year sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the Forest Departments of various States since 1990. The surveys are carried out mainly for three species of critically endangered resident Gyps vultures, White-backed Vulture, Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture. These three species were very common in the Country with an estimated population of 40 million in early eighties. Based on the latest survey carried out in the year 2015 and the results published in 2017, there were about 6000 White-backed Vultures, 12000 Long-billed Vultures and 1000 Slender-billed Vultures.

As per the information received from Bombay Natural History Society, the State Forest Departments of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have carried out systematic monitoring of vulture populations in their states. The Forest Department of Gujarat in collaboration with the Gujarat Ecological Education and Research Foundation, an autonomous organisation of Gujarat Forest and Environment Department of Government of Gujarat has been carrying out the

monitoring since the year 2005. The most recent vulture population estimation in Gujarat State was carried out in early June 2018. A decline of 75.8% in the Gyps vulture population was recorded in the State between 2005 and 2018.

In the State of Madhya Pradesh, the population monitoring of vultures has been carried out by the State Forest Department during 2017-18 and 2018-19. The surveys were coordinated by Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal with support from NGOs, NGIs etc. As per the census of the year 2019, a total of 7970 vultures of seven species were sighted giving a 12% increase in the total populations

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