

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2585
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.03.2020

Population of Leopards

2585. SHRI SHRIRANG APPA BARNE:
SHRI SUDHEER GUPTA:
SHRI GAJANAN KIRTIKAR:
SHRI SANJAY SADASHIV RAO MANDLIK:
SHRI BIDYUT BARAN MAHATO:

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

- (a) whether there has been a steep fall in the population of leopards in the country, if so, the details thereof along with the total strength of leopards;
- (b) whether as per a recent study the population of leopards in India with high genetic variations have declined by 75 to 90 percent;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the factors responsible for such a steep decline in the distribution of leopards;
- (d) whether the Government is considering to invest in conservation of leopards on the lines of tigers in the country, if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in this regard;
- (e) whether a large scale decline in grasslands/scrubland and poaching/illegal killing are the main reasons for the declining number of leopards and if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to protect the leopards in the country?

ANSWER

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

- (a) No, Sir.
- (b), (c) and (e) As per information received from Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, a recent article published in journal PeerJ in February 2020 talks about leopard population decline (between 75-90%) across different habitats in the Indian subcontinent over the last 120-200 years and not the current declines.

However, this study also mentions that the magnitude of decline for leopards found in this study is in contrast to some earlier leopard studies in the subcontinent (for example ecological work by Harihar, Pandav & Goyal, 2011, and genetic work by Dutta et al., 2013) which suggest stable

or increasing local leopard population trends. This study further mentions that they were unable to corroborate and support population decline patterns with leopard census data.

(d) and (f) The important steps taken by the Government to protect leopards in the country are as given below:

- i. Leopard is listed in Schedule-I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, thereby, according it highest degree of legal protection from hunting.
- ii. Important habitats of wildlife which includes leopards are designated as national parks/ sanctuaries for their better protection.
- iii. Financial and technical assistance is provided to the States/ Union Territories under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Development of Wildlife Habitat' for providing better protection and conservation of wildlife including leopards and its habitat.
- iv. Leopards are co-predators in its habitat and most of the leopard habitats in India are also part of tiger reserves. Financial assistance is provided to the tiger reserves under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme, 'Project Tiger', for protection and conservation of tigers and other animals including leopards.
