

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 868
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.02.2021.

Conservation of Dolphins

868. SHRIMATI MANEKA SANJAY GANDHI:

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken steps for conservation of Dolphins in Gangetic river basin;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government maintains data of the total number of freshwater Dolphins and sea Dolphins and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether there has been decrease in the population of Dolphins across the country; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the corrective measures taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

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

- (a) and (b) The important steps taken by Government for conservation of Gangetic River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*) include:
- i. Gangetic River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*) has been listed in Schedule-I thereby giving them the highest degree of protection.
 - ii. Gangetic River Dolphin has been designated as the National Aquatic Animal of India.
 - iii. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has included Gangetic River Dolphin as one of the 22 species for taking up recovery programme under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme 'Development of Wildlife Habitats'.
 - iv. Important habitats of Gangetic River Dolphin along the Ganges river have been notified as Protected Areas, such as the Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary, Bihar.
 - v. A project, 'Development of Conservation Action Plan for River Dolphins' has been initiated with financial support from National Authority CAMPA for duration of five years from 2016-2021. This project is coordinated by Wildlife Institute of India.
 - vi. The Prime Minister on 15th August 2020 has announced Project Dolphin for better conservation of both riverine as well as marine Dolphins.

(c), (d) and (e) The estimated population of River Dolphins in the mainstream and major tributaries in India is as given below:

Species	River system		River Dolphin population estimate
Gangetic River Dolphin	Brahmaputra	Brahmaputra	877 ± 19
		Kulsi	37
		Subhansari	48 ± 6
	Ganga	Main Ganga (Bihar & West Bengal)	1337 ± 43
		Main Ganga (Uttar Pradesh)	310
		Hooghly	236
		Roopnarayan	25
		Kosi	82
		Chambal	86
Indus River Dolphin	Indus	Beas	11

Country wide population estimate of marine dolphins are currently not available.

As per the studies conducted on River Dolphins, the population of Dolphins are known to be stable in the main stem of Ganga and Brahmaputra, although there has been decline in the tributaries. The range of the Dolphin has also declined by 40% since its historical distribution.

With a view to provide better protection to Dolphins, the 'Project Dolphin' has been announced by the Prime Minister on 15th August 2020.
