

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT & GANGA REJUVENATION

LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO. *208

ANSWERED ON 13.03.2025

LOSS OF WILDLIFE HABITATS DUE TO RIVER INTERLINKING PROJECTS

*208. SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY:

Will the Minister of **JAL SHAKTI** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the river interlinking projects undertaken by the Government have resulted in the loss of tiger reserves and wildlife habitats;
- (b) if so, the details thereof including the tiger reserves affected and the extent of habitat loss in each reserve;
- (c) the ecological and environmental impact assessments conducted before the implementation of these projects;
- (d) whether the Government has considered/is planning to implement measures to ensure that future river interlinking projects are designed in a manner that prevents the loss of wildlife habitats, including tiger reserves and if so, the details thereof;
- (e) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to mitigate the adverse impacts of existing river interlinking projects on biodiversity and to restore habitats already affected; and
- (f) whether the Government is collaborating with other departments or organizations to adopt eco-sensitive designs and approaches for infrastructure development in wildlife-rich areas and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF JAL SHAKTI

(SHRI C R PAATIL)

(a) to (f) : A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (f) OF STARRED QUESTION NO. *208 TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.03.2025 IN LOK SABHA REGARDING “LOSS OF WILDLIFE HABITATS DUE TO RIVER INTERLINKING PROJECTS”

(a) & (b) The Government of India formulated the National Perspective Plan (NPP) in the year 1980 for the transfer of water from water-surplus basins to the water-deficit basins/ regions of the country. Under the NPP, 30 Interlinking of Rivers (ILR) projects have been identified. The Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP) is the first ILR project under the NPP, that is under implementation. The total tiger habitat in and around the Panna Tiger Reserve (PTR), Madhya Pradesh to be under submergence and for logistic usage in the Ken Betwa Link Project is about 6017 hectares (5761 hectares and 256 hectares respectively).

(c) to (e) For every ILR project, a study for detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is undertaken at the stage of preparation of Feasibility Reports (FRs) and Detailed Project Reports (DPRs). An EIA study aims at the identification of the positive and negative impacts of the project on the physical, biological, and socio-economic environment. Detailed studies on soil type, climate type, groundwater quality, biological environment, floral diversity, forests and wildlife, groundwater recharge, change of hydrological regime of the river, public health aspects, employment potential generated, project affected families, submergence area, etc. and other socio-economic characteristics are done at the stage of preparation of DPRs and the Environment Management Plan (EMP) to mitigate the assessed environmental, ecological and wildlife impacts.

As regards the Ken-Betwa Link Project, which is the first ILR project under implementation, detailed EIA studies done for the project and the mitigation measures as proposed in the DPR have been examined and analyzed thoroughly by the Expert Advisory Committee (EAC) of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the National Board of Wild Life (NBWL), while communicating the Environmental and Wildlife clearances to the project. Further, as per the directions of the NBWL, an Integrated Landscape Management Plan (ILMP) was prepared, in June 2022, by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun under the supervision of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), PTR, Forest Departments of both the States of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and the MoEF&CC. ILMP aims to provide better habitat, keep the wildlife corridor connecting to other Protect Areas (PAs) intact, overall protection & management of flagship species (tiger, vultures, and gharial), and biodiversity conservation covering not only the PTR region but also the surrounding fragile wildlife areas in the two States. A Greater Panna Landscape Council (GPLC) under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary, Government of Madhya Pradesh was constituted in February 2023, for systematic implementation of this ILMP in a time-bound manner. One meeting of the GPLC and two meetings of a Sub-Committee constituted under the GPLC have been held so far.

(f) As intimated by the MoEF&CC, in order to address the challenges of harmonizing conservation and development, the MoEF&CC has published a scientific guidance document titled "Eco-friendly measures to mitigate Impacts of Linear Infrastructure on Wildlife". A copy of the said document is available at <https://ntca.gov.in/documents/#reports2> (Mitigation manual for Linear Infrastructure).
