GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2719
TO BE ANSWERED ON 15.12.2015

Census of Dolphins

2719. SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH:

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

(a) whether the Government has conducted any census of fresh water dolphins in river ganga and its tributaries since 2012;
(b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
(c) whether the developmental activities in and around the river system have resulted in shrinking of its habitat and decline of the said dolphins since 1995; and
(d) if so, the steps/measures being considered for the restoration of their habitats so as to increase their population?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) and (b) The Uttar Pradesh Forest Department in collaboration with the World Wide Fund-India under the auspices of the National Mission for Clean Ganga had carried out census of Ganga River Dolphin during October 2015. The census was carried out in the Uttar Pradesh part of the Ganges River and its tributaries such as Yamuna, Son, Ken, Betwa, Ghaghra and Gerua. During the 2015 census in Uttar Pradesh, around 1263 Dolphins were recorded.

(c) and (d) Although developmental activities like construction of dams, improper water harvesting, indiscriminate fishing and increasing river pollution pose threat to the habitat and well-being of the dolphins, the census of Ganges Dolphins carried out in 2015 indicate an increase in population from the earlier estimate of 671 as per census of 2012. The following are the important steps taken for conservation of Gangetic Dolphins:

i. Gangetic Dolphins are listed in Schedule-I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, thereby according them the highest degree of protection against hunting.

ii. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has designated Gangetic Dolphins as 'National Aquatic Animal.

iii. A Working Group for developing a Conservation Action Plan for Ganges River Dolphin for 2010-2020 has been constituted by the Ministry.

iv. Wildlife Sanctuaries covering important Dolphin habitats have been created in the country under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to conserve their habitats. These include National Chambal Sanctuary, Saranath Turtle Sanctuary, Vikramshila Ganges Dolphin Sanctuary.

v. Gangetic Dolphin is one of the 16 species identified for taking up 'Recovery programme of Critically Endangered Species, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat'.

vi. The National CAMPA Advisory Council in its 6th meeting held on 8th July, 2015 has approved an amount of Rs 23.00 crores in duration of 5 years for recovery programme of Ganges River Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica gangetica*). This project is to be coordinated by Wildlife Institute of India. The amount of Rs. 4.60 crores has been released during the first year, 2015-16

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