

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2337
TO BE ANSWERED ON 18.12.2023

Conservation of Marine Species

2337. DR. SHRIKANT EKNATH SHINDE:
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the steps taken by the Government for conservation of marine species;
- (b) whether the Government provides financial assistance for the protection of marine species; and
- (c) the steps taken to prevent marine species deaths caused by the stranding of abandoned fishing nets and collisions with ship motors, particularly in Andhra Pradesh?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) to (c) In order to conserve marine species, Government of India has notified 130 Marine Protected Areas across the Coastal States and Islands; in addition 106 coastal and marine sites have been identified and prioritized as Important Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Areas (ICMBAs) to take care of marine species conservation.

Many threatened marine species have been listed as Scheduled animals in Indian Wildlife Protection Act 1972. Currently, the Government of India has prioritized some of the rare and threatened marine species such as the marine turtles (all 5 species), humpback whale and Dugong for assessing country wide population status and monitoring under the scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat (IDWH). Under the Endangered Species Recovery Program (ESRP), the marine mammal Dugong has received special attention with a country wide effort towards conservation of Dugongs and their habitat conservation and about 450 sq km area in the Palk Bay has been declared as Dugong Conservation Reserve to conservation of Dugongs and seagrass associated marine species.

The Ministry has released a National Marine Turtle Action Plan with the aim to conserve marine turtles and their habitats in India. In addition, under the Project Dolphin, Ministry is expending to include marine dolphins for species monitoring and conservation of marine biodiversity. Also, more species including marine invertebrate will be added for population monitoring/ recovering under the IDWH or Endangered Species Recovery programme.

The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2019, promulgated under Environment (Protection) Act 1986, has specific focus on conservation and management plans of Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs), like Mangroves, Seagrasses, Sand dunes, Corals and Coral reefs, Biologically active mudflats, Turtle nesting grounds, and Horse shoe crabs' habitats and prohibit developmental activities and disposal of wastes in the fragile coastal ecosystems.

The Biological Diversity Act of India, 2002, as amended and the Biological Diversity Rules 2004, and the guidelines thereof ensure the protection and conservation of biodiversity (including the marine species), sustainable use and equitable sharing of its components, Intellectual Property Rights, etc.,

Following financial assistances are provided for the protection of marine species in the country:

- i. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is granting funds under the centrally sponsored schemes to maritime States for the conservation of Corals and Mangroves.
- ii. Project Dolphin is the Government initiative to conserve both oceanic and riverine dolphin species launched in 2021.
- iii. In order to conserve and manage the declining populations of Dugongs in India, the MoEFCC under the Government of India constituted a 'Task Force for Conservation of Dugongs' to look into the entire gamut of issues related to conservation of Dugongs and implementation of the 'UNEP/CMS Dugong MoU' in India and also to facilitate the country to act as the leading nation in the South Asia Sub-region with respect to Dugong conservation.
- iv. The Ministry under the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds the conservation of Dugongs and their habitats in India.
- v. The Ministry funds the monitoring and conservation of marine turtles, marine dolphins and humpback whale under the PAN India: Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat (IDWH) scheme.
- vi. The Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE), an attached office of Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is mandated with the management strategies development for marine living resources through ecosystem monitoring and modelling activities. Based on 24 years of survey studies, it has generated an extensive knowledge base on the biodiversity aspects within India's Exclusive Economic Zone including hotspots for conservation.
- vii. CMLRE is implementing a national R&D programme on Marine Living Resources (MLR) with an inbuilt component on Societal Services to support the fisher folks of Lakshadweep Islands. The societal services initiative intends to enhance the ornamental and baitfish stocks in the wild. Under the program, CMLRE has organised a series of hands on trainings on "Marine ornamental fish breeding and rearing at Lakshadweep Islands".

- viii. The Government also provides financial assistances to Universities / Research Institutes through research projects that are aimed at conservation of marine species.

The Ministry has released 'Marine Megafauna Stranding Management Guidelines' in 2021 for actions to be taken during stranding and entanglement events as well as to improve coordination between various stakeholders and better management for these events. In Andhra Pradesh, the State Forest Department teams are in place to monitor stranding and cause of deaths through necropsies on dead marine animals. Efforts have been taken for conducting awareness drives to educate the local community, fishermen, and other stakeholders about the impact of abandoned fishing nets and ship collisions on marine species. Turtle Excluding Device (TED) has been installed in the fishing trawlers to prevent the by-catch of turtles.
