

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2580
ANSWERED ON:22.07.2009
DECREASING POPULATION OF VULTURES
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the population of Vultures is decreasing in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to protect Vultures?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) & (b) India has nine species of vultures in the wild. Of these, the population of three species of vultures viz, White Backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed vultures has declined drastically over the past decade in many parts of the country. Post mortem and diagnostic tests have revealed that this decline was due to consumption of the veterinary drug 'Diclofenac' by the vultures who fed on carcasses of livestock. 'Diclofenac' causes deposition of uric acid in the visceral organs of vultures leading to sudden death.

(c) The steps taken by the Government to protect vultures, inter alia, include the following:

1. Government of India has banned the use of the drug 'Diclofenac' for veterinary purposes.
2. Central Government has formulated an 'Action Plan for Vulture Conservation in India' in 2006, which provides for strategies and actions for containing the decline of vulture population through ex-situ and in-situ conservation measures.
3. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme - 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats', an exclusive Recovery programme for vultures has been launched by the Central Government for providing financial and technical support for vulture conservation to State/ UT Governments.
4. White Backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed vultures have been upgraded from Schedule IV to Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, thereby according them the highest degree of protection.
5. State/UTs have been requested to strengthen vulture conservation initiatives.
6. Mass awareness programmes have been conducted for vulture conservation.
7. Vulture Breeding Centres have been set up at Pinjore-Haryana, Buxa-Assam and Raja Bhat Khawa-West Bengal. In addition, captive breeding centres at 4 Zoos viz., Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Junagarh and Hyderabad have also been set up through Central Zoo Authority.