

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1547

ANSWERED ON:15.07.2009

POPULATION OF LEOPARDS

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

- (a) whether the population of leopards has decreased during the last three years in the country including in Andhra Pradesh;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard and also to prevent/avoid man-wild animal conflict in National Parks/Wild Life Sanctuaries?

Answer

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

(a) & b) Fluctuation in the population of wild animals is a natural phenomenon and various reasons like predation, diseases, competition, man-animal conflict, heat stroke, etc are attributed to it. However, the Ministry is not aware of any such report showing decline in the leopard population during last three years in the country, including Andhra Pradesh.

(c) Important steps taken by the Government for conservation of Wildlife including leopard in the country are as follows:

1. Threatened species of wildlife, including leopards are placed in the Schedules of the Wildlife (Protection), Act, 1972, thereby according them the highest degree of protection.
2. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 has been amended from time to time and made more stringent against wildlife related offences.
3. A network of Protected Areas has been established to conserve wildlife and their habitats including rare animals.
4. Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up to check illegal trade in wildlife and its products.
5. The State/ UT Governments have been requested to strengthen the field formations and intensify patrolling in and around wildlife rich areas.
6. Financial and technical assistance is extended to the State/UT Governments under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, viz, 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats', 'Project Tiger' and 'Project Elephant' for providing better protection and conservation of wildlife.
7. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme - 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats', a new component has been added for initiating 'Recovery Programme for critically endangered species and their habitats' during the 11th Five Year Plan period.

In addition, following steps have also been taken to mitigate man-animal conflict:

1. Rescue operations of animals found too close to human habitations are being carried out.
2. Increased vigil and extensive patrolling by forest staff is done.
3. Compensation is paid to people on death, injury to human life, crop damage and cattle lifting by wild animals.
4. Financial assistance is provided for erection of solar power fencing/electric fencing, creation barrier etc.
5. Mass awareness campaigns among local people and schools in the fringe areas of the forests are carried out by the State Forest Department.
6. Involvement of local people in protection works through eco-development and Joint Forest Management programmes.