

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:555

ANSWERED ON:26.11.2012

PROTECTION OF WILD ANIMALS

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

- (a) whether as per the recent census of wild animals, a sharp decline has been registered in the number of Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Elephants and other animals in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years and the current year, sanctuary-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has made any effort to tackle illegal trade to check the declining numbers of Leopards in the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a)&(b) The nationwide census of most wild animal species in the country is undertaken periodically but not on annual basis. As per the last census of the major animal species like tigers, lions and elephants in the country, no decline in the population of these animals has been reported. In fact, their population has increased. As per the latest information available in the Ministry, the estimated population of tiger increased from 1411 in 2006 to 1706 in 2010. The population of lion increased from 359+ 10 in 2005 to 411 in 2010. The population of elephant increased from 26413+10 in 2005 to 27694 in 2007-08. The information in respect of leopard is not available in the Ministry as no nationwide census of leopard population has been undertaken in the country. The sanctuary-wise population of these species has not been compiled in the Ministry.

(c),(d)&(e) Steps taken by the Government to prevent illegal trade in wild animals including leopards include:

- i) Legal protection has been provided to many species of wild animals against hunting and commercial exploitation under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. According to the conservation and threat status, wild animals are placed in different schedules of the Act. Leopard is included in Schedule I of the Act, which affords it the highest degree of protection under the Act.
- ii) The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 has been amended and made more stringent. The punishments in cases of offences have been enhanced. The Act also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that is used for committing wildlife offence.
- iii) Protected Areas, viz., National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves have been created as per the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 covering important habitats all over the country to provide better protection to wildlife, including threatened species and their habitat.
- iv) Financial and technical assistance is extended to the State Governments under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, viz., 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats', 'Project Tiger' and 'Project Elephant' for providing better protection and conservation to wildlife.
- v) The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up with a network of five regional offices, three sub-regional offices and five border units for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and its products.
- vi) The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been empowered under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders.
- vii) The State Governments have been requested to strengthen the field formations and intensify patrolling in and around the Protected Areas.
- viii) Strict vigil is maintained through effective communication system.