

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2085
ANSWERED ON:23.07.2014
DECLINING BIRD POPULATION
Joshi Shri Pralhad Venkatesh

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

- (a) whether the bird population in the country is declining gradually and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has conducted any survey/study in this regard;
- (c) if so, the details thereof including the species identified as critical and the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether the electromagnetic radiation from mobile towers has been identified as one of the reasons for the declining bird population in the country; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the corrective action taken by the Government to arrest the declining population of the birds?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) Yes, Sir. There are indications that populations of several bird species are declining in the country due to various factors such as habitat destruction, habitat deterioration, spread of agriculture and invasive weeds, widespread and uncontrolled use of pesticides; and in few areas, illegal trapping and hunting for clandestine bird trade. Further, the arrival of migratory birds, such as ducks and waders, to India has also declined as their breeding areas in northern parts of the world are subjected to abiotic pressures like habitat loss, and also hunting along the migratory routes etc.

However, populations of some species such as Painted Stork, Asian Open bill, Black-Headed Ibis, Black-necked Stork and few others are increasing or stable, mainly due to protection by public and forest departments. Besides, the bird populations in Protected Areas like National Parks and Sanctuaries are also generally safe.

(b) and (c) There are specific studies on species such as the Great Indian Bustard, Lesser Florican, Bengal Florican, Pheasants, Woodpeckers, White-bellied Heron, Greater Adjutant and few more by NGOs and experts but no all-India survey of all birds has been conducted. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has started a plan to conduct all-India bird survey through citizen science, involving very large number of people. According to assessments of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and as reflected in the IUCN Red List 2013, following 15 Indian bird species are critically endangered:

- i. Himalayan Quail
- ii. Pink-headed Duck
- iii. Baer's Pochard
- iv. Forest Owlet
- v. Great Indian Bustard
- vi. Bengal Florican
- vii. Siberian Crane
- viii. Spoon-billed Sandpiper
- ix. Sociable Lapwing
- x. Jerdon's Courser
- xi. White-rumped Vulture
- xii. Red-headed Vulture
- xiii. Slender-billed Vulture
- xiv. Indian Vulture
- xv. White-bellied Heron

(d) & (e) The Ministry of Environment and Forests constituted a Committee to study the possible impact of communication towers on wildlife including birds. As per the report of the Committee, there are indications that the Electromagnetic Radiations may affect biological systems of animals, birds and insects. The Ministry has issued an advisory on use of Mobile Towers to minimize their impact on wildlife including birds. The advisory, inter alia, recommends to the Department of Telecommunication to prevent overlapping of high radiation fields; new towers should not be permitted within a radius of one kilometer of the existing towers. The advisory has been circulated by the Ministry to the concerned organizations for their information and necessary action.