

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3788

ANSWERED ON:16.12.2014

PROTECTION OF RHINOCEROS

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

- (a) the total number of rhinoceros in the country at present, location and State-wise;
- (b) the number of rhinoceros killed by poachers and the number that died from natural causes during each of the last three years and the current year, State-wise;
- (c) whether the Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change visited Kaziranga National Park in Assam recently and had outlined plans for protection of forest and wildlife therein including the one horned rhino;
- (d) if so, the details and status thereof; and
- (e) the effective measures being taken to protect wildlife and curb poaching particularly poaching of one horned rhinoceros?

Answer

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

(a) The Rhinoceros are found in Assam, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The population of rhinoceros in these States, as per information available in the Ministry, is as below:

Name of the State	No. of Rhinoceros (year of census)
Assam	2544
Uttar Pradesh	30
West Bengal	236

(b) State-wise details of rhinoceros death, both naturally and killed by poachers during last three year and current year as per the information received from the States, are given in the Annexure.

(c)&(d) Yes Sir. Action has been initiated on the following decisions taken by the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment, Forests and Climate Change, during his visit to Kaziranga in the recent past for strengthening rhino protection in the said protected area:

(i) Creation and deployment of the Rhino Protection Force for Kaziranga with 100% central assistance and local recruitment involving Government of India.

(ii) Expediting the completion of 24X7 electronic surveillance system at Kaziranga with 100% central assistance under Project Tiger.

(iii) Advising for investigation of recent rhino poaching cases by the CBI vis-à-vis the ongoing investigation by the said organization on cases as sought by the State.

(iv) Creation of a Rhino Task Force to suggest measures for strengthening rhino conservation in Kaziranga.

(v) Real time monitoring of funds released to Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.

(vi) Supporting a health insurance scheme for Forest Guards in Kaziranga.

(vii) Eliciting public support for rhino conservation through mass movement by fostering a voluntary group known as 'Friends for Rhino' with active local participation.

(e) The Government has taken following steps for protection of wild animals including Rhinoceros in the country:

i. Protected Areas, viz., National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves covering important wildlife habitats have been created all over the country under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to conserve wild animals

and their habitats. Most of the Rhino habitats are part of Tiger Reserves –Kaziranga Tiger Reserve, Manas Tiger Reserve, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve and Jaldapara Tiger Reserve.

ii. A specific component of 'Recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats' is provided in the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats' for focused conservation action on selected critically endangered species. Rhinoceros is one of the identified species under this programme.

iii. Legal protection has been provided to wild animals including rhinoceros against hunting and commercial exploitation under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

iv. In addition to provision of stringent punishment for the offenders, the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that is used for committing wildlife offence(s).

v. Financial and technical assistance is provided to the State/ Union Territory Governments under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes for providing better protection to wildlife including endangered species and improvement of its habitat.

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/Union Territory Governments have been requested to strengthen the field formations and intensify patrolling in and around the Protected Areas.

viii. The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up to ensure co-ordination among various officers and State Governments in connection with the enforcement of law for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and its products.

ix. Strict vigil is maintained by the officials of State Departments of Forests and Wildlife.