

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2327
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.12.2021

Species Of Vulture

2327. SHRI VINOD KUMAR SONKAR:
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government keeps the record of species of Vultures found in India and if so, whether their number has sharply declined since 1990s;
- (b) if so, the reasons for decline and species which have decreased most along with the Government's reaction thereto;
- (c) whether white backed, long billed and slender billed species are facing existential crisis due to rapid rate of decline;
- (d) if so, the details thereof including the action taken thereon including reasons for the rapid decline; and
- (e) the other corrective steps taken by Government to save and conserve them in the country?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

- (a) and (b) Nine species of vultures are recorded from India. They are Oriental White-backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), Long-billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*), Slender-billed Vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*), Himalayan Vulture (*Gyps himalayensis*), Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*), Red-headed Vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*), Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) and Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius calvus*).

As per information available in the Ministry, the population of three species of Vultures, viz., *Gyps indicus*, *Gyps bengalensis* and *Gyps tenuirostris*, had drastically declined during the 1990s. The major cause of mortality of vultures was found to be the veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug 'Diclofenac', given to cattle in pain and inflammation. However, due to the

concerted efforts by the Government, the population of these vulture species has stabilized now. The population estimation of other species of Vultures is not collated in the Ministry.

(c), (d) and
(e)

Oriental White-backed Vulture, Long-billed Vulture and Slender-billed Vulture are endangered and have been listed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 according to them the highest degree of protection.

The important steps taken by the Government to save the vultures and increase their number include:

- (i) All the species of Vultures have been listed in the Schedules of Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- (ii) The vial size of the drug diclofenac has been restricted to 3ml to prevent its use in livestock.
- (iii) Safety testing of various veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, available in the market to identify their toxicity to vultures.
- (iv) Establishing vulture safe zones in different parts of the country for conservation of the remnant population of vultures.
- (v) Raising awareness especially among users of veterinary formulations.
- (vi) Ministry sponsored films 'The Last Flight' and 'Vanishing Vultures' are frequently telecasted on radio and television in order to raise awareness on vulture conservation. States have been requested to develop education and awareness materials, keeping the Animal Husbandry sectors and farmers in mind.
- (vii) Eight Vulture Conservation Breeding Centers have been established in India.
- (viii) The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) led a research study to identify a safe alternative to diclofenac by carrying out safety-testing of the shortlisted drug meloxicam on vultures, in collaboration with BNHS and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, an international bird conservation organization based in the United Kingdom. Meloxicam was proved to be safe for vultures and was promoted as an alternative to diclofenac.

- (ix) India has launched an Action Plan for Vulture Conservation (2020-2025) on 9th November, 2020.
- (x) Government of India provides funding support to the States under Centrally Sponsored Scheme- Development of Wildlife Habitats for conservation of Vultures under the Species Recovery Programme.
