

Parliament Question:- Census on tigers, elephants and lions

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The National Tiger Conservation Authority alongwith the States conducts the quadrennial All India Tiger Estimation, based on which the tiger population has increased to 3682 in 2022 as compared to 2967 in 2018. The lion population has increased as per the 16th Lion Population Estimation conducted by State of Gujarat in 2025, with an estimated number of 891 in 2025 as compared to the 2020 estimation of 674. The latest elephant estimation in the country was completed in 2017. The elephant population was estimated as 29964 in 2017 as compared to the estimated range of 29391-30711 in 2012.

For conservation of tigers, 58 tiger reserves have been notified in India which occupy nearly 2.5% of the geographical area of the country. In context of lions, the State of Gujarat has created a second home for lions at Barda in Gujarat and habitat improvement works, corridor development, improvement of grasslands outside the protected areas are being undertaken to address the habitat requirements for Asiatic Lion in Gujarat State. For conservation of elephants, 33 Elephant Reserves have been established in 14 elephant range States.

The Government has taken several steps for management of human-wildlife conflict including:

- i. A network of protected areas namely, National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves covering important wildlife habitat have been created all over the country under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to conserve wild animals and their habitats.
- ii. An advisory on dealing with human-wildlife conflict has been issued by the Ministry in February 2021. The Ministry has also issued guidelines to States and UTs on 3rd June 2022 on managing human-wildlife conflicts including damage to crops. The Advisory recommends coordinated interdepartmental action, identification of conflict hot spots, adherence to Standard Operating Procedures, establishment of rapid response teams, formation of State and District level committees to review the quantum of ex-gratia relief for its expeditious payments, issuing guidance and instructions for expedited relief payments, preferably within 24 hours to the affected persons, in the case of death and injury to persons.
- iii. The Ministry has also issued species-specific guidelines to deal with human-wildlife conflict situations on 21.03.2023.
- iv. The Central Government provides financial assistance to States/Union Territories under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes, 'Development of Wildlife Habitats' and 'Project Tiger and Elephant' for management of wildlife and its habitat including support for broad activities like- compensation for depredation by wild animals and construction of physical barriers such as barbed wire fence, solar powered electric fence, bio-fencing using cactus, boundary wall etc. to prevent the entry of wild animals into crop fields, capacity building etc.
- v. The Centrally Sponsored Schemes, 'Development of Wildlife Habitats' and 'Project Tiger and Elephant' also provides for payment of ex gratia relief to the victims of human-wildlife conflicts. The Ministry has enhanced the amount of ex-gratia relief in case of death or permanent incapacitation due to wild animal attacks in December 2023 from Rs. 5 lakhs to 10 lakhs under these Schemes, subject to availability of funds, and the payment of which is also governed by

State specific guidelines/ provisions made in this regard.

- vi. The Ministry also provides capacity-building support to the officers and staff of State Forest Departments through institutions including Wildlife Institute of India for adoption of early-warning systems and modern technologies.
 - vii. The Section 11 (1) (a) of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, empowers the State Chief Wild Life Wardens to grant permits for hunting animals falling in Schedule I of the Act, which become dangerous to human life. Further, the Section 11 (1) (b) of the Act empowers State Chief Wild Life Warden or any authorized officer to grant permits for hunting of wild animals falling under Schedule-II of the Act, if such animals have become dangerous to human life or property.
 - viii. Periodic awareness campaigns to sensitize guide and advise the general public on human-wildlife conflict, including dissemination of information through various forms of media is carried out by the respective State Governments/Union Territory Administrations.
- The Project Elephant was started in the year 1992 with objectives to protect elephants, their habitat and corridors, to address issues of man-elephant conflict and welfare of captive elephants in the country. Critical elephant habitats are notified as 'Elephant Reserve' for focus and synergy in elephant conservation and reduce conflict.

In so far as tigers are concerned, the Government of India through the National Tiger Conservation Authority has propagated a 3 pronged strategy which is at Annexure-I.

Annexure-I

The Government of India through the National Tiger Conservation Authority has institutionalized a 3 pronged strategy to manage human-tiger / leopard conflict, which is as under:

- (i) Material and logistical support: Funding support through the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger, is provided to tiger reserves for acquiring capacity in terms of infrastructure and material, to deal with tigers dispersing out of source areas. These are solicited by tiger reserves through an Annual Plan of Operation (APO) every year which stems out from an overarching Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP), mandated under Section 38 V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. *Inter alia*, activities such as payment of ex-gratia and compensation, periodic awareness campaigns to sensitize, guide and advise the general populace on man-animal conflict, dissemination of information through various forms of media, procurement of immobilization equipment, drugs, training and capacity building of forest staff to deal with conflict events are generally solicited.
- (ii) Restricting habitat interventions: Based on the carrying capacity of tigers in a tiger reserve, habitat interventions are restricted through an overarching TCP. In case tiger numbers are at carrying capacity levels, it is advised that habitat interventions should be limited so that there is no excessive spill over of wildlife including tigers thereby minimizing man-animal conflict. Further, in buffer areas around tiger reserves, habitat interventions are restricted such that they are sub-optimal vis-à-vis the core/critical tiger habitat areas, judicious enough to facilitate dispersal to other rich habitat areas only.
- (iii) Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs): The National Tiger Conservation Authority has issued following three SOPs to deal with human-animal conflict, which are available in public domain:
 - i. To deal with emergency arising due to straying of tigers in human dominated landscapes
 - ii. To deal with tiger depredation on livestock
 - iii. For active management towards rehabilitation of tigers from source areas at the landscape level.

The three SOPs *inter alia* include the issue of managing dispersing tigers, managing livestock kills so as to reduce conflict as well as relocating tigers from source areas to areas where density

of tiger is low, so that conflict in rich source areas does not occur.

Also as per Tiger Conservation Plans need based and site-specific management interventions are undertaken by the tiger reserves for improving the quality of wildlife habitat and funding support for these activities is provided under the Project Tiger Component of the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats.

This information was provided by UNION MINISTER OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE, SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH, in a written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today.

VM/GS

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