

of the 4th Central Pay Commission. Any future review by the Government of any retirement benefits will take into account the demands and suggestions made by various pensioners' organisations.

Protection of rhinos

154. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that rhinos is a threatened species; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken and schemes drawn upto protect and promote the species, indicating their number in 1960, 1970, 1980 and at present?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SMT. MANEKA GANDHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) (1) The steps taken to protect and conserve rhinos are given below:—

(i) The rhino has been placed in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, thus giving it maximum possible legal protection;

(ii) A Centrally sponsored scheme has been formulated for conservation of rhinos in Assam for expansion and better protection and

management of the rhino habitats. The scheme includes creation and maintenance of additional protection staff and infrastructure like purchase of elephants, vehicles and equipment, construction of roads, survey and acquisition of lands, rewards to informers, anti-flood measures, etc.

(iii) Central assistance is given under the Centrally sponsored scheme of Project Tiger and Assistance for development of national parks and sanctuaries, to the national parks and sanctuaries, some of which contain rhinos also.

(iv) Under the Centrally sponsored scheme of control of poaching and illegal trade wild-life, assistance is given to the State Governments of Assam and West Bengal to take measures against poaching of rhinos.

(v) Five rhinos have been translocated from Assam and four from Nepal in 1984 and 1985 respectively to the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve in Uttar Pradesh with the aim of establishing as alternative home for the species.

(2) The estimated population of rhinos in India in different years is given in the statement appended. (See below).

Statement

Estimate of rhino population in Different years

State	Year	Estimated population
Assam	1966	400 (Kaziranga)
	1972	658 (Kaziranga)
	1978	939 (Kaziranga)
	1986	1080 (Kaziranga)
	1989	1395 (Kaziranga)
		1500 (Whole State)
West Bengal	1960	76
	1970	88
	1980	30
	1989	39

EP Gee had estimated the rhino population of India in 1958 as 422. PD Stracey had estimated the population in 1960 as 350.