

practicable. They have further informed that the State does not have any empirical evidence regarding the relationship between these activities and hastening of melting of glaciers. As stated by them the Government of Himachal Pradesh has imposed complete ban on polythene/plastic carry-bags made up of non-biodegradable material and on littering of non-biodegradable waste from 02.10.2009 under the provisions of H.P. Non-biodegradable (Garbage) Control Act, 1995.

Protection and revival of wild animals

1851. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the wild animals whose number is less than five thousand in the entire country;
- (b) the reasons for this almost extinct condition of these animals, animal-wise; and
- (c) whether Government proposes to take any steps for protection and revival of these endangered animals in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Population estimates of all the wild animals are not collated by the Ministry except certain flagship species like tiger, lion, elephant and rhinoceros out of which population of tiger, lion and rhinoceros is less than 5000 each. Further, as per the Red Data Book of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), there are 105 - Endangered species, 47 - Critically Endangered species, 169 - Vulnerable species and 134 - Near threatened species of Chordates in India. The main reasons for reduction in population of wild animals are habitat degradation, population pressure, man-animal conflicts and poaching.

(c) Steps taken for protection and revival of these endangered animals by the Central Government are as follows:

1. Threatened species of wildlife are included in the Schedules of the Wildlife (Protection), Act, 1972, thereby according them the highest degree of protection.
2. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 has been amended from time to time and made more stringent against wildlife related offences.
3. A network of Protected Areas has been established to conserve wildlife and their habitats including rare animals.
4. Recovery programmes of certain identified species have been initiated.
5. Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up to check illegal trade in wildlife and its products.
6. Financial and technical assistance is extended to the State/UT Governments under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, viz, "Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats", 'Project Tiger' and 'Project Elephant' for providing better protection and conservation of wildlife.

7. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme - 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats', a new component has been added for initiating 'Recovery Programme for critically endangered species and their habitats' during the 11th Five Year plan period.

Meeting at Prime Minister's Office on Bt. brinjal

1852. SHRI S.ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any meeting was convened by the Prime Minister's Office on Bt. brinjal;
- (b) if so, the details of the agenda and its participants;
- (c) the outcome of the meeting;
- (d) whether the experts, agriculturists and people have expressed their apprehensions about the ill-effects of such genetically modified food items to the health of consumers;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) the steps proposed to be taken to conduct wide range of trial and tests before taking any decision in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) The Prime Minister held consultations on 24.02.2010 to discuss the recent decision on Bt brinjal and the role of biotechnology in food security. The meeting was attended by Shri Sharad Pawar, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution; Shri Prithviraj Chauhan, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology; Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of Human Resource Development; and Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Environment and Forests (Independent Charge). It was agreed that biotechnology is an important option for higher agricultural productivity and ensuring food security. At the same time, it must be ensured that it has no adverse effects on human and animal health, and bio-diversity. It was also agreed that the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee will address the concerns for resolving all scientific issues relating to Bt brinjal.

(d) and (e) Some of the State Governments, NGOs and some sections of the scientific and farming communities have expressed apprehensions on the safety of Bt brinjal for its long-term impact on human health and environment; and have called for extreme caution as Bt brinjal is the first genetically modified food crop to be introduced in the country.

(f) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee in consultation with eminent scientists is drawing draw up fresh protocols for specific tests to establish the safety of Bt. Brinjal before commercialization of Bt brinjal is allowed.