

Considering the high environmental cost associated with the use of Single-use plastic, particularly the adverse effect on soil, water bodies and on marine environment, Hon'ble Prime Minister has announced India's pledge to phase out Single-use plastic by 2022. As per the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, the carry bag made of virgin or recycled plastic less than fifty microns in thickness has been prohibited. There is complete ban on sachets using plastic material used for storing, packing or selling gutkha, tobacco and pan masala. Many States/UTs through their own notifications have also imposed partial or complete prohibition on the use of plastic carry bags/single use plastic. 23 States and 9 UTs have issued notifications/orders introducing regulations pertaining to complete ban on plastic carry bags and/or other single-use plastic items.

The Ministry has also issued "Standard Guidelines on Single Use Plastic" with suggestions on different set of actions for State/UT Governments for minimisation of Single-use plastic.

Protection of endangered species

826. SHRI SANJAY SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there is any increase or decrease in the number of endangered species;
- (b) the details of measures under consideration of Government for the protection and increase the population of endangered species; and
- (c) the measures taken to ensure control of the activities of illegal killing and poaching?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO): (a) Census of major flagship species is undertaken at the State-level by the respective State/Union Territory Governments periodically. However census of tiger and elephant is undertaken at the national level once every four and five years respectively. As per the report of the latest census carried out by the state and central government, the population of endangered species especially lions, rhinos, tigers, and elephants has increased in country.

- (b) Ministry is providing financial assistance to State /UT Governments for the

recovery programme of critically endangered species under the component-Recovery programme for saving of critically endangered species and habitats of the Centrally sponsored scheme 'Development of Wildlife Habitats'. Presently 21 critically endangered species have been identified under this programme.

The Ministry has formulated the 3rd 'National Wildlife Action Plan' for a period of 2017 to 2031 to save wild animals in the country. The Plan focuses landscape approach in conservation of all wildlife irrespective of where they occur. It also gives special emphasis to recovery of threatened species of wildlife while conserving their habitats which includes terrestrial, inland aquatic, coastal and marine ecosystems.

(c) The measures taken by the Government to control illegal killing and poaching of wild animals are:

- i. The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for punishment for violation of its provisions. The Act also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that is used for committing wildlife offence(s).
- ii. Law enforcement authorities in the States maintain strict vigil against poaching of wild animals.
- iii. Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up to gather intelligence about poaching and unlawful trade in wild animals and animal articles and to achieve inter-State and trans-boundary coordination in enforcement of wildlife laws.
- iv. The State/Union Territory Governments have been requested to strengthen the field formations and intensify patrolling in and around Protected Areas.
- v. 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.
- vi. Financial assistance is provided to the State/Union Territory Governments under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes of 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats', 'Project Tiger' and 'Project Elephant', for providing better protection to wildlife and improvement of habitat.