

Poverty in the Seventh Five Year Plan

2527. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is proposed to give new thrust to Forestry in the Seventh Five Year Plan to improve and strengthen the husbandry of the forests of the country and to raise the productivity of the forests for meeting the essential needs of the people and the nation on a sustained basis; and

(b) if so, the broad features of the proposed plan and the nature of the improvement anticipated to be made in this behalf in the Sunderbans area of West Bengal ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The broad features are to afforest as speedily as possible all denuded areas including mangroves. About 5000 hectares in Sunderbans of West Bengal are proposed to be afforested at a cost of Rs. 4.5 crores (5 % or so of the forestry sector outlay) during the Seventh Five Year Plan. These figures are tentative since the VII Five Year Plan is yet to be finalised. This would help minimise wind and wave-induced soil erosion and would stabilise the unique mangrove eco-system in Sunderbans. It would also provide gainful employment to the communities in and around the area.

High Cost of Power Through Nuclear Power

2528. SHRI DHARAM VIR SINGH TYAGI : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) cost of generating one MW of energy in a nuclear power plant;

(b) is it cheaper than the cost of hydel and thermal power per MW;

(c) if not, the reasons for the Government's recent decision to step up the production of nuclear energy; and

(d) whether Government will reconsider its policy of increased generation of

energy through nuclear power plants in view of its higher cost per unit, environmental hazards and comparatively short life of the nuclear reactors ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT, ATOMIC ENERGY, SPACE AND ELECTRONICS (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL) : (a) The prevailing rate of supply of electricity from nuclear power stations in the country is in the range of 35 to 42 paise/Kwh. This includes a rate of return on investment of 12%.

(b) Nuclear electricity is cheaper than electricity produced by coal-fired thermal power plants in the locations being considered. Comparison with hydel power had not been carried out, as it would be desirable to exploit all available resources of hydel power.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) International studies on risks and benefits of various energy sources indicate that use of nuclear energy for electricity generation is an environmentally benign option and has relatively less overall impact on the environment compared to coal-fired power stations. The design life of nuclear power stations and coal-fired power plants is identical.

Nuclear Free Zone in Indian Ocean and South Asia

2529. SHRI DHARAMVIR SINGH TYAGI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the statement of the Prime Minister in the course of his interview to Miss Daniela Kuneva of the Bulgarian TV about the desirability of establishing a nuclear free Zone in the Indian Ocean implies India's recognition of denuclearisation of the Indian Ocean as a part of the Indian Ocean Peace Zone proposal; and

(b) whether the said statement of the Prime Minister signals India's rethinking over her erstwhile stand on the proposal for establishing a nuclear free Zone in South Asia ?