

(b) Apart from the Cupro-Nickel coins as mentioned at (a) above, 1250 million pieces of stainless steel coins are being imported from Canada during the years 1987 and 1988.

(c) The total cost of import of coins as mentioned at (a) and (b) above will be Rupees 157 crores approximately.

(d) The important steps taken are:

- (i) Introduction of an incentive scheme for higher production.
- (ii) Working hours of the India Govt. Mints have been increased from 48 to 60 hours per week.
- (iii) A second shift has been introduced in the Calcutta Mint.
- (iv) The existing Mints at Bombay, Calcutta and Hyderabad are being modernised. 24 new coining presses have been installed. 14 more coining presses are being installed.
- (v) A new mint with an annual capacity of 2000 million pieces per annum is being set up at NOIDA, U.P. It is scheduled to commence production in 1988-89.

Centralised agency for Environmental Conservation

2541. SHRI T. BASHEER: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to set up a centralised agency for environmental conservation, comprising top ecologists and naturalists; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND

FORESTS (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI): (a) and (b). The details of an Environment Protection Authority, which, among other things, will advise the Government on environmental conservation, are being worked out.

Denduation of Himalays

2542. SHRI T. BASHEER: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Himalayan dense forests have rapidly been deforested by indiscriminate felling of trees;

(b) whether the ecology of the Himalaya especially in the lower reaches are declining; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to curb this trend?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND
FORESTS (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI): (a) and (b). No detailed survey has been carried out.

(c) The following steps have been taken to meet the increasing demand of firewood, fodder, timber and to maintain the ecological balance in the region.

Family Welfare and Planning is an integrated part of our economic planning. Quality of livestock is being improved and stall feeding being encouraged. The production of firewood and fodder are being taken up on wastelands. To reduce the demand for firewood, biogas plants, solar cookers and improved chulhas are being introduced. Development of alternatives to woodcrate packing of fruits, is being encouraged. The Central Government has issued guidelines to States that there should be no felling over an altitude of 1000 meters.

Curry of Harijans in Temples

2543. SHRI K. KUNJAMBU: Will the