

Environment Hazard due to Plastic Waste

*564. SHRI VIRENDRA SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the plastic waste has been affecting the environment to a great extent;

(b) if so, the steps to be taken by the Government to solve the problem;

(c) whether the cooperation of the voluntary organisations is likely to be sought in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

[English]

THE Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU): (a) to (d) As per the Report of the National Plastics Waste Management Task Force constituted by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, plastic wastes account for only 1 to 4% by weight of the total municipal solid wastes. Most of the plastic waste is recycled. The Task Force has recommended a programme of preventive, promotional and mitigation measures for management of plastic wastes. An Implementation and Monitoring Committee has been set up by the Ministry of Environment & Forests to oversee the progress in this regard. NGOs will be associated in a consumer awareness programme.

[Translation]

SHRI VIRENDRA SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, an official of World Labour Organisation, Mr. Stalin Smith in his study report says that the industrialized countries like America, Germany, England, Australia and Netherlands are very much worried at the deteriorating environmental conditions in their countries. That is why they are dumping their waste material in India. Due to export of this waste material is posing a grave threat in the country.

According to the report of Director General of Commercial Intelligence, waste material weighing 1,70,000 tonnes, 2,51,000 tonnes and 3,25,000 tonnes was dumped in India in 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95 respectively. Does this practice still continue? Have the Government conducted any study on the adverse effect of this waste material on environment and health? The report probing the cause of fire incident in Delhi says that the terrorists were responsible for this incident but have the Government got any study conducted to assess the

environmental hazards being caused by the import of plastic and its dump in India because the methane gas caused by the waste material of plastic is twenty times more dangerous than the carbon dioxide to health and it may even cause fire. Have the Government of India felt any need to entrust any agency to assess the adverse effect of methane gas on the health of people of India.

[English]

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, there are three components of the Supplementary and let me deal with each one of them separately.

It is true that for the last few years the import of plastic waste is permitted to be imported in the country. All this plastic waste which is imported in the country, is used for recycling purposes. It is very dangerous when we really do not know the source of the plastic, and when it is used for recycling, it could pose serious threats to health and other related matters. So, it is absolutely a matter of fact that one should be very very careful while allowing import of plastic waste into the country and when it is used for recycling purposes. We are in the process of formulating the guidelines for the use of not only imported. ...*(Interruptions)*.

MR. SPEAKER: What is this? Let him complete.

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR: Who is permitting this import? When you say that one should be careful, who is that one?. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, you address the Chair, not the Members.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: In fact, Sir, we are allowing these imports into the country. But the Government is not recycling, Government is the monitoring agency, the implementing agency and the regulatory agency. When I say one, it includes all those who are involved in processing or recycling of the material. The Government's job is to ensure that they are following certain norms and guidelines which are stipulated from time to time. That is why it is very necessary that the imported material is used carefully.

About three million tonnes of plastic is used in the country and about 1.2 million tonnes of plastic which is used, is recycled in the country. That is why we have to

be extremely careful in dealing with recycled plastic. It is also true, as the hon. Member has pointed out, that it could pose serious health hazards. If the recycled plastic contains harmful dyes, heavy metals and plasticizers, then it could also be a potential danger for cancer. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Prakash Ambedkar and Shri Sultanpuri, you please go to your seats.

[*Translation*]

SHRI VIRENDRA SINGH: This is also a sort of pollution. ...(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRI SURESH PRABU: That is the reason, Sir, why we have issued new guidelines. In the next two weeks, we will be taking such measures as will ensure that all those who are recycling the plastic which is used for manufacture of various types of materials, follow certain guidelines and will take all such measures which will ensure that it does not cause any health hazard.

It is also true that plastic could pose fire threats. But then, there are so many inflammable materials which can pose fire threats.

It is not plastic alone which, if not stored and not dealt with in a proper manner poses a serious threat of fire, there are also many other inflammatory commodities. This is also an aspect about which all the local self-Governments, which are supposed to be dealing with problems related to fire, have to be extremely careful while deciding where the plastic should be stored and how it should be dealt with. ...(*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

SHRI VIRENDRA SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, taking me for a farmer, the Minister was explaining the things in English. He was explaining that there is no danger in burning the plastic materials.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: This is not so. I have said that plastic is an inflammable substance and burning it is hazardous.

SHRI VIRENDRA SINGH: I would like to know from the Environment and Forests Minister whether the purity of the river Ganga....

[*English*]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: He is a good Minister, do not spoil him!

[*Translation*]

SHRI VIRENDRA SINGH: I do not say that he is a bad Minister, I too said that he was good Minister. One who convinces my feelings, he would be considered good Minister by me and one who does not, he would be considered a bad Minister by me.

Sir, the river Ganges is considered to be a symbol of purity through out our country. The river Ganga, traverses places like Musourie, Dehradun and Haridwar. Its tributary streams are getting polluted by effluents. Crores of rupees are being spent on cleansing Ganga water but in spite of all this effort Ganga water has not been cleaned. Another danger to the Ganga water is pollution. Wherever there is an abattoir, the remainants and other waste are allowed to be scattered on the roads in rivers and drains which cause pollution. For example the slaughter house of Dailabad. ...(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Virendra Singh, ask your supplementary. What is this?

[*Translation*]

SHRI VIRENDRA SINGH: In the sameway there are many slaughter houses in the country which are dangerously polluting the environment. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Ministry of the Environment and Forests propose to bring a legislation to legally close down such factories which emit hazardous gases or the slaughter houses which emit effluents and waste materials or the factories which create sound pollution and which tell upon our health.

[*English*]

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, the original question which has been raised by the hon. Member pertains to plastic waste. I am not sure whether the hon. Member is interested to know whether the animals which are created from plastic waste will pose any environment problem or he is dealing with a situation of live animals, and their disposals.

Sir, as far as live animals and their slaughtering are concerned, it does not come under the purview of the Environmental Protection Act because the 29 activities which have been mentioned under the Environmental Protection Act for impact assessment do not include the category of 'slaughter houses'. However, it is the responsibility of the State Pollution Control Boards to deal with such a situation.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri P.C. Thomas.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Rama Nand Singh, please take your seat. I have already allowed you one supplementary. What is this?

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Rama Nand Singh, please take your seat.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Sir, it is a fact that many countries are finding it a very good way to dump their waste into our big country.

12.00 hrs.

For that matter, plastic as well as other things which can be used to make plastic like things are being exported. Polyurethane is one thing which is exported and we are reducing import-export duty on such stuffs. Can the hon. Minister do something for importing it into our country? We have, in each Budget, reduced the import duty on polyurethane. So, can the Ministry of Environment take this as a very serious matter, and can the Government increase the import duty on all this stuffs, including polyurethane which is causing great loss to our farmers also?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, the imposition of import duty is not within the purview of my Ministry's responsibility. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance as well as the Ministry of Commerce. However, I would definitely convey the feelings expressed by the hon. Member to the concerned Minister.

Sir, our country is a part of Basal Convention and as a result of Basal Convention's requirements, we do

not allow indiscriminate use of waste and hazardous materials into the country.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Rewriting of Indian History

*565 SHRI G. GANGA REDDY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to rewrite the Indian history incorporating the views of nationalist school of historians;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the said proposal is likely to see the light of the day?

THE Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Funds for Afforestation Programme

*566. SHRI MADHAV RAO PATIL:
SHRI ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his ministry has sought more funds for the afforestation programme;

(b) if so, the details of programme to be launched and the total amount required for the purpose;

(c) the estimated area in each State likely to be covered under the programme;

(d) whether any international institution or donor agency has also been approached in this regard; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU): (a) to (e) The Working Group on Forestry in the Ministry of Environment and Forests for the Ninth Five Year Plan proposed an annual target of 3.04 million hectares for afforestation in the Ninth Plan period. The fund requirement for both the Central and