

a technical team from India. The Government of India has accepted the invitation and a seven member technical team led by Shri Pradip Baijal, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Power has been deputed to hold discussion in Pakistan from November 24-27, 1998.

[English]

Destruction of Forests In Gujarat

118. SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is growing destruction of forests in Gujarat; and

(b) if so, the details of the steps taken to stop the valuable forest resources and wild animals from the destruction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI) : (a) As per the State of Forest Report 1997 published by Forest Survey of India, 1997 assessment indicates a marginal increase of 258 sq. kms. in the forest cover as compared to 1995 assessment. However a marginal decrease of 32 sq. kms. of dense forest and 12 sq. kms. of open forest has been noted. The forest area under mangroves has increased by 302 sq. kms.

(b) Major steps being taken by the Government to stop the valuable forest resources and wild animals from the destruction are as under :—

1. Afforestation programmes are being undertaken.
2. Guidelines have been issued to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests through Joint Forest Management.
3. Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate diversion of forest land.
4. A centrally sponsored scheme "Modern Forest Fire Control Methods" is being implemented to protect and conserve the forest from fire.
5. Hunting of wild animals included in Schedules I to IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 has been banned.
6. Special measures for protection and conservation of lions and their habitat are being implemented.

7. A network of 21 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 4 National Parks has been set up for conservation of wild flora and fauna.

8. Raids are carried out by the wildlife authorities, whenever information of illegal trading in wildlife animals reaches them.

9. International Trade in Endangered Species of animals and articles made thereof is regulated under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Declaration of Roads as National Highways

119. SHRI PRASAD BABURAO TANPURE :
SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the criteria adopted for declaring a road as national highway;

(b) whether it is a fact that some village roads have been declared as national highways recently in some States;

(c) if so, whether it is a total violation of norms set down for declaring a stretch as national highway; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and action taken by the Government to strictly adhere to the established norms for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN) : (a) The details are given in the statement enclosed.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Statement

The declaration of new roads as new National Highways is dependent on certain factors, which *inter-alia* includes the criteria prescribed for the purpose. The details of the criteria for selection of new National Highways are as under :

- (i) Roads which run through the length and breadth of the country.
- (ii) Roads connecting adjacent countries.

- (iii) Roads connecting State Capitals.
- (iv) Roads connecting major ports and important industrial or tourist centres.
- (v) Roads meeting very important strategic requirements.
- (vi) Roads carrying high density of traffic over an adequate length.
- (vii) Roads which enable sizeable reduction in travel distance and achievement of substantial economies thereby.
- (viii) Roads which complete the 100 km square grid.

[Translation]

Maithon Right Bank Thermal Power Plant

120. PROF. RITA VERMA :
SHRI AJAY CHAKRABORTY :

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state :

(a) the present status of Maithon Right Bank Thermal Power Project;

(b) whether the said project is awaiting clearance from the Government for its execution;

(c) if so, the time by which the work on the project is likely to commence; and

(d) the steps being taken by the Government for its timely completion?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) to (d) Maithon Right Bank Thermal Power Project was given techno-economic clearance by the Central Electricity Authority in 1988 at a cost of nearly Rs. 1300 crores and with financial assistance from USSR. However, the project could not be taken up following the disintegration of the USSR. Attempts to get OECF assistance was also not successful. Offers from M/s. Technopromexpert of Russia, M/s. Kapco of Korea and M/s. Ansaldo of Italy also did not find favour. Thereafter, a joint venture concept with M/s. Bombay Suburban Electric Supply has been mooted by the DVC and in principle approved by the Ministry of Power. A Joint Task Force has been constituted with officers from both DVC and BSES for the purpose of formulating and registering the joint venture company for execution of Maithon Right Bank Thermal Power Project. The physical work at site can start only after registration of the joint venture agreement, finalisation of the financial package, executing of a power purchase

agreement with prospective consumers and often as one of a final project sanction by the Government.

[English]

Establishment of Private Universities

121. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA :
SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL :
SHRI SITA RAM YADAV :

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 3032 on July 6, 1998 and state :

(a) whether the Government have considered the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Private Universities (Establishment and Regulation) Bill, 1995;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the present status of the recommendations; and

(d) the time by which the same are likely to be given effect to?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI) : (a) to (d) Yes Sir, the Bill is under active consideration of the Government and it is expected that the decision will be taken shortly.

Water Transport Facility to Paradip Port

122. SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY :
SHRI RANJIB BISWAL :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have a proposal to introduce water transport facility to Paradip Port through river Mahanadi and Brahmani;

(b) if so, the time/date fixed for the purpose;

(c) the programmes prepared therefor; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN) : (a) to (d) No, Sir. However, a study of East Coast Canal connecting Paradip & Haldia alongwith Delta region of Mahanadi and Brahmani river has been conducted during 1996-97. Further, action will depend on the availability of resources.