

[English]

Pitiable Condition of National Highways in West Bengal

2366. DR. BIKRAM SARKAR : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the condition of the stretches of the National Highways falling within the State of West Bengal is pitiable;

(b) if so, the action taken in this regard;

(c) whether the funds released by the Ministry for the maintenance of National Highways to the State Government of West Bengal during the last three years have been utilised by the State Government in time; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor and action proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. M. THAMBI DURAI) : (a) and (b) National Highways in West Bengal are being maintained generally in traffic-worthy condition within the available resources. However, due to recent floods heavy damages have been reported in some stretches, which are being attended to and adhoc release of Rs.4.00 crores has already been made in this regard.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

[Translation]

"Tiger Sanctuaries"

2367. SHRI RAMSHAKAL : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) the funds sanctioned and released for various tiger-sanctuaries during the Eight Five Year Plan;

(b) the amount of foreign assistance received during the last three years for the purpose;

(c) the extent of increased or decreased in the number of tigers and other wild animals of this species; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government for proper protection and growth of tigers and other wild animals in these sanctuaries during the said period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI) : (a) An amount of Rs.38.79 crores and Rs.9.16 crores was sanctioned and released for various Tiger Reserves during VIIIth Five Year Plan under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Project Tiger and Ecodevelopment respectively.

(b) The foreign assistance of Rs.41.36 crores has been received during the last 3 years under the World Bank Aided India Eco-Development Project and Forestry Research, Education and Extension Project for six Tiger Reserves.

(c) According to the reports received from the States, the comparative figures of tiger and leopard populations as per the past successive estimations carried out in the country are separately given in Statement I and II enclosed.

(d) The various measures taken by the Government to protect the tigers and other wild animals are enlisted as follows:-

- (i) Hunting of wild animals included in Schedules I to IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, has been banned by law.
- (ii) Special measures for protection and conservation of tiger, leopard and their habitat are being implemented.
- (iii) A network of 441 Wildlife Sanctuaries and 80 National Parks covering 1,48,000 sq. km. has been set up for conservation of wild flora and fauna.
- (iv) Raids are carried out by the wildlife authorities, whenever information of illegal trading in wildlife animals reaches them.
- (v) 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). The trade in ivory is totally banned.
- (vi) Regional and Sub-regional offices of Wildlife Preservation have been set up mostly at the main export centres of the country to prevent smuggling of wildlife products.
- (vii) Interdepartmental coordination has been enhanced with other enforcement organisations like Police, BSF, Customs, ITBP, Coast Guards etc. Training programmes on Wildlife enforcement and implementation were also conducted for all these organisations at New Delhi and Dehradun during, 1995.
- (viii) A "Tiger Crisis Cell" has been set up in the Ministry to suggest improvement in the management of tiger bearing areas of the country.
- (ix) The State Governments have been advised to strengthen vigilance and intensify patrolling.
- (x) Steps are being initiated to set up "Special Strike Force" in the Project Tiger areas;