

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Darjeeling is a hill district in West Bengal where there is Rammam hydel power project and at the time of Gorkhaland movement in Darjeeling district, this project was badly affected. There are four units of 12.75 MW each, the total of which comes to 51 MW. Recently the Government of West Bengal have decided to hand over this hill area project to joint sector in order to run this project smoothly. It is a project by which the total hilly area can be provided with power. I want to know whether Central Government has any proposal to make financial assistance to this project so that it cannot be handed over to joint sector by the State Government and whether Central Government can take up this project on their own.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM : Sir, this actually is a State Government project. I am sorry to say that the Central Government does not get any jurisdiction until they voluntarily and willingly hand it over. If they do so, I can assure the hon. Member that we will not only finance it but we will complete the project and run the project as well.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Thank you very much.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : The hon. Minister has informed this House that the hydel potential of this country is 10,000 MW. I would like to know from him what percentage of it has been tapped and what percentage of it would he like to tap during the current plan.

There was a subsidy and there is a subsidy at present. What is the policy of the Government with regard to this subsidy? Would he continue it or is there a proposal to do away with this subsidy?

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM : Sir, may I just point out that there is no proposal to do away with the subsidy. On the contrary, I would like the help of the hon. Chief Whip of the Opposition, Shri Kurien to campaign with me to improve the subsidy a bit.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : I support you in that.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM : The percentage that we have achieved is rather small. Only 1,200 MW have been set up. I would like to achieve all the 10,000 MW because small hydros are really valuable the day the debt is paid back. Then it becomes a cheaper source of power because operation and maintenance is very low.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : What is the target for this year in the current Plan?

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM : Unfortunately, the cost of construction in most of these projects are non-viable in the sense that till the debt is paid back the cost of power is very high. Therefore, the private sector is often reluctant to come into it without enough subsidy being provided. A scheme of subsidy is there but the amount of money that we get has always not been enough over the years to achieve

the objective which we want and I am sure that the hon. Member would help me at the appropriate time.

Conservation Area Surveys

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*263. SHRI KAMAL NATH :
SHRI BIKRAM KESHARI DEO :

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

(a) whether Conservation Area Surveys and/or flora and fauna surveys have been conducted in various National parks and Sanctuaries in the country.

(b) if so, the details thereof, park/sanctuary-wise;

(c) whether about fifty exotic species of weeds are threatening the flora at the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve and also Rajaji National Park to the West of tiger reserve;

(d) if so, whether the State Forest officials have expressed their inability to tackle this problem owing to money and man power constraints; and

(e) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken to help fight this menace?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI SURESH PRABHU) : (a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Forest Survey of India has completed forest cover mapping in 18 tiger reserves using the satellite data and the findings were published in a report "State of Forest Cover in Project Tiger Reserves in 1993". List of these tiger reserves is at Annexure-I to this statement. Forest Survey of India has also published reports regarding forest cover in 2 national parks and 8 sanctuaries. The details are given at Annexure-II to this statement.

Botanical Survey of India has also conducted floral survey around the 18 tiger reserves. 1 national park and 4 sanctuaries, the list of which is given at Annexure-III of this statement.

Zoological Survey of India has carried out faunal survey in respect of 11 tiger reserves. 3 national parks and 10 sanctuaries. The list of the areas is given at Annexure-IV of this statement.

(c) Intensive infestation by weeds like *Lantana*, *Parthenium* and *water hyacinth* does affect the flora and fauna in certain areas of the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve and Rajaji National Park.

(d) and (e) Uttar Pradesh Government have submitted a proposal for weed eradication in Corbett and Rajaji National

Parks to Government of India for financial support under Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Funds have been allocated to eradicate Lantana and other weeds only where the problem is acute. Wildlife experts have advised against total eradication of Lantana because it has a definite ecological value.

Annexure-I

List of Tiger Reserves where Forest Cover Mapping has been done by the Forest Survey of India

1. Bandipur, Karnataka
2. Buxa, West Bengal
3. Jim Corbett, Uttar Pradesh
4. Dudhwa, Uttar Pradesh
5. Indravati, Madhya Pradesh
6. Kalakad-Mundanthurai, Tamil Nadu
7. Kanha, Madhya Pradesh
8. Manas, Assam
9. Melghat, Maharashtra
10. Nagarjuna Sagar, Andhra Pradesh
11. Namdapha, Arunachal Pradesh
12. Palamau, Bihar
13. Periyar, Kerala
14. Ranthambhore, Rajasthan
15. Sariska, Rajasthan
16. Simlipal, Orissa
17. Sunderbans, West Bengal
18. Valmiki, Bihar

Annexure-II

List of National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries where Forest Cover Mapping has been done by the Forest Survey of India

National Parks

1. Rajaji, Uttar Pradesh
2. Great Himalayan, Himachal Pradesh

Wildlife Sanctuaries

1. Naina Devi, Himachal Pradesh
2. Chail, Himachal Pradesh
3. Kugti, Himachal Pradesh
4. Baranwapara, Madhya Pradesh
5. Lao Khowa, Assam
6. Udanti, Madhya Pradesh
7. Sitanadi, Madhya Pradesh
8. Bhairam Garh, Madhya Pradesh

Annexure-III

List of Tiger Reserves, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries where floral survey has been done by the Botanical Survey of India

(a) Tiger Reserves

1. Bandipur, Karnataka
2. Buxa, West Bengal
3. Jim Corbett, Uttar Pradesh
4. Dudhwa, Uttar Pradesh
5. Indravati, Madhya Pradesh
6. Kalakad-Mundanthurai, Tamil Nadu
7. Kanha, Madhya Pradesh
8. Manas, Assam
9. Melghat, Maharashtra
10. Nagarjuna Sagar, Andhra Pradesh
11. Namdapha, Arunachal Pradesh
12. Palamau, Bihar
13. Periyar, Kerala
14. Ranthambhore, Rajasthan
15. Sariska, Rajasthan
16. Simlipal, Orissa
17. Sunderbans, West Bengal
18. Valmiki, Bihar

(b) National Parks

1. Silent Valley, Kerala

(c) Wildlife Sanctuaries

1. Panchmari, Madhya Pradesh
2. Bori, Madhya Pradesh
3. Annamalai, (Indira Gandhi) Tamil Nadu
4. Jaldapara Sanctuary, West Bengal

Annexure-IV

List of Tiger Reserves, National Parks and Sanctuaries where faunal survey has been done by the Zoological Survey of India

Areas where faunal survey has completed :

(a) Tiger Reserves

1. Namdapha, Arunachal Pradesh
2. Palamau, Bihar
3. Valmiki, Bihar
4. Pench, Madhya Pradesh

5. Melghat, Maharashtra
6. Taroba – Andheri, Maharashtra
7. Indravati, Madhya Pradesh
8. Kanha, Madhya Pradesh
9. Ranthambhore, Rajasthan
10. Simlipal, Orissa
11. Sariska, Rajasthan

(b) National Parks

1. Rajaji, Uttar Pradesh
2. Silent Valley, Kerala
3. Borivilli, Maharashtra

(c) Sanctuaries

1. Chilka, Orissa
2. Harika, Punjab
3. Renuka, Himachal Pradesh
4. Annamalai (Indira Gandhi), Tamil Nadu
5. Asolabhati, Delhi
6. Hazaribag, Bihar
7. Mount Harriet, Andaman & Nicobar Islands
8. Govind Pashu Vihar, Uttar Pradesh
9. Campbell Bay, Andaman & Nicobar Islands
10. Sukna, Union Territory of Chandigarh

SHRI KAMAL NATH : We have been concerned about the threat to the tiger till now. There are many reasons for the threat to the tiger. One of the biggest reasons is the shrinking habitat because of biotic pressures.

Now, a new thing is happening, where the habitat is being attacked by weeds. This will create more pressure on the habitat and it would mean a greater threat to the tiger. When we talk of protection of the tiger, we talk about it because the tiger is at the heart of our ecosystem. So, this is a matter of great concern for us. I would like to know from the hon. Minister how much of the Jim Corbett National Park and the Rajaji National Park are infested by weeds like lantana and parthenium, how are we going to address this issue, to what extent will the State Governments be asked to deal with this problem and what will be the component of the Central Government's assistance to the State Governments for dealing with this problem ?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : It is true that some parts of the National parks, particularly the Rajaji as well as Jim Corbett national parks, have been infested with some weeds which are very exotic to India. Though they are very exotic to India, in the case of certain weeds like lantana which have been in India for more than a hundred years now, they are posing a serious threat to the vegetation of the Rajaji Na-

tional Park as well as the Jim Corbett National park. We would like to deal with this problem very carefully because there is already a scientific opinion which has been expressed by persons like Dr. Ulhas Karan, who say that when we want to get rid of such weeds, it could also pose certain ecological problems because these weeds, though exotic in earlier times and have now been in India for more than 100 years, are also playing a useful role in the maintenance of ecological balance in certain areas.

SHRI KAMAL NATH : They are part of biodiversity.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : That is correct. They are part of biodiversity. However, we have to deal with this problem because if it spreads, it might pose a threat to grasslands. Therefore, what we are really trying to do is to make sure that this does not spread beyond a particular point, it is kept at a controllable level and at the same time it is controlled by way of such measures which will not pose other problems. For example, if we use certain chemicals or pesticides, it might damage our ecosystem in that area and destroy biodiversity.

Therefore, we are taking certain very careful steps. It is true that it has been infested. The three major weeds which are really causing this are lantana, parthenium and water hyacinth. These are the three major weeds. In the Rajaji National Park – it has been reported and I have been informed – an area of about 600 sq. km has been infested by this. However, a part of it is also under the periphery. What we really need to do is to ensure that it is taken care of. It is a very important point and as you have very correctly said, this is under serious threat, not necessarily emanating from loss of habitat as a result of deforestation, but also from a natural disaster which could cause this damage. So, I am thinking of constituting a committee to go into this aspect very carefully and take such remedial steps as may be necessary.

As far as offering financial assistance to the State Governments are concerned, we have included this under Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Whatever amount the State Government would be needing, we will definitely be willing to give it to them. But it is not just a matter of financial assistance, but also the type of technical step that we really need to take. For example, when we take out a weed, if you do not destroy it properly, it might cause some other problems. It is really impossible to root it out completely. So, all these steps which are really required to be taken are being taken. I am glad that this question has been raised which is of a very important nature.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Kamal Nath, a very brief supplementary please.

SHRI KAMAL NATH : Yes, Sir. But it is a very important issue.

I agree that it is a sensitive matter because some part of the weed is required as a part of bio-diversity. But one of the

methods by which this can be done is by growing other plant which naturally will attack the weeds. So, within that area if you grow other trees or other kinds of plantations, they will be able to kill these weeds naturally. May I know whether the hon. Minister would consider asking the Zoological Survey of India or the Botanical Survey of India or the Forest Survey of India to get into this to see what other trees etc. can be grown to deal with this problem in a natural way rather than in a chemical manner ?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : That is right. We have already started working on this. Plants like Arjun, Jamun and others are being planted as a counter balancing act to ensure that these do not spread beyond a point. Whenever it is expected, we really try to put some sort of a bund there so that they do not spread beyond a point. But we are really taking the type of steps that are needed. In fact, as I said, the committee that is going to look into this, will also look into which type of alternative plants that are required to be planted. It is a very scientific question and we really need to address it in that fashion.

SHRI BIKRAM KESHARI DEO : Sir, the hon. Minister has given details about the survey of flora and fauna that is going on in the National Parks, in his reply. Will the hon. Minister extend this facility to the Sanctuaries in Orissa, especially the Sanctuaries of Karlapat, Ushakoti and Sunabeda in the districts of Kalahandi and Deogarh ?

My second question is this. May I know whether the hon. Minister is aware of the fact that there is heavy forest fire in the Eastern Ghats, in thousands of sq. miles with the result, thousands of acres of forest land is getting destroyed ? What steps the Government is taking to stop this ?

Lastly, I would like to ask this question. To review the Wildlife Act of 1972, an Inter-State Committee was formed; they had come out with a report. What were the findings of the report ?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Having a survey of the variety of flora and fauna in the country is a continuous process. The two major institutions which are involved in the task are Botanical Survey of India and the Zoological Survey of India. There are about 47,000 plants in the country of which about 15,000 are endangered and there are about 81,000 animals of which about 62 per cent are endemic to India. Therefore what we are really doing is taking a survey of the country as a whole. We have already completed about 70 per cent of the survey of the country through Botanical Survey of India and the Zoological Survey of India. I would certainly include the places that he has mentioned into it in the near future as well as will definitely conduct the survey.

As far as forest fires are concerned, we have got a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. Forest fires are posing a serious threat again to our rich forests which we really need to prevent. For that, whatever assistance the State Governments normally ask, we try to provide that.

If the Member has any specific instance in which the State Government is in need of some assistance, we will certainly consider it in an appropriate manner.

As far as amendment of the Wild life Protection Act is concerned, I would introduce the amended version of this Act probably in this Session or surely in the next Session of the Parliament.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNA DEVRAJBHAI CHIKHALIA : Hon'ble Mr. Speaker, Sir, in part 'A' of the question asked to the Minister of Environment and Forests, it has been enquired whether conservation area survey has been conducted in various National parks and sanctuaries in the country. I have been elected from the Junagarh Parliamentary constituency for the third time. I would like to say that Gir forests and Gir sanctuary park have plenty of medicinal plants and there is a need to protect them. I would like to ask whether the Government is proposing to conduct a special survey to formulate a programme to protect these plants. In the answer to Part 'B' of the question, it has not been mentioned that Flora and fauna surveys have been conducted or not. In the National park and Gir forests*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : There is not much time left. Your supplementary should be brief.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNA DEVRAJBHAI CHIKHALIA : I conclude by making a small point. It is being repeatedly discussed that a proposal is under consideration to inhabitate the Lions of Gir forests at some other place. I would like to be assured in the House regarding the steps to be taken by the Government in this regard. It has been observed that Asiatic lions are no longer inhabited at any other place except Gir forest in Asia. Earlier also efforts were made to inhabitate them in Rajasthan.*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please ask your supplementary.

SHRIMATI BHAVNA DEVRAJBHAI CHIKHALIA : It is a very small point. Efforts were made to inhabitate the lions in Rajasthan but all the lions died in the process. I would like to have a concrete reply regarding the steps to be taken by the Government in this regard.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Regarding the first part of the question, I would like to state that every year National Forest and Ecological Board provide some assistance to Gujarat for the conservation of medically sensitive plants and medically useful plants. Any specific assistance if needed will be certainly provided. In the entire world, Asiatic lions exist only in Gir forests. Therefore, a proposal is under consideration to arrange an alternative habitat. It does not mean that the lions of Gir forest will be shifted to some other place.

But to face any eventually the Government is only thinking of an alternative habitat. For that we are making assessment only on technical level, however Government have no such proposal to shift the lions from Gir forests.

SHRI SHAILENDRA KUMAR : Hon'ble Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I would like to ask the hon'ble Minister of Forests that whether the forest area in Sixteenth range of district Gonda at Nepal Border is covered under the tiger project. One or two months ago, some cubs were found dead there who were victims of hunting. Hunting is being done there on a large scale. How many tigers are found in the various forests of the country and what is the quantum of increase or decrease in their population? The second point I would like to ask you to whether automatic weapons and wireless sets will be provided to the forest officers to prevent the poaching being done by the Jungle Mafia?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Till date, we have managed 25 national parks and tiger reserves under the Tiger Project. The area you have mentioned does not come under the tiger reserve. There are 25 tiger reserves and one of them is in Dudhwa in U.P. As you have stated, census of tiger population is conducted after every two three years. New census will be conducted now. The number of tigers is increasing now which was earlier on decline. We are celebrating the 25th anniversary of Tiger Project. Efforts are being made to provide more and more economical and technical assistance to various tiger reserves.

12.00 hrs.

If foreign assistance is made available we would try to avail it for this purpose. That is why recently, Deputy Prime Minister of United Kingdom was invited so that we could get some assistance from European Union.

[English]

SHRI N. JANARADHANA REDDY : Sir, the hon. Minister was kind enough to say that he is going to amend the Wild Life Protection Act. This Act is an absurd Act. I brought it to the notice of the hon. Minister personally. To protect, say about 100 pelican birds, they have brought 750 sq. kms. of area under the Wild Life Protection Act due to which no house can be constructed, no agriculture can be operated and no road can be laid there. Whereas, at a distance of one kilometre, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Sriharikota is firing rockets there. How are you going to answer for this? I brought it to the notice of the Minister.

Sir, I would like to know from the Minister what action has been taken in this regard.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU : Sir, it is true that there are certain contradictions and there are certain apparent conflicts between the man and the animal which we would like to resolve while considering the amendment to the Wild Life Protection Act.

As for the specific point which the hon. Member has pointed out, we are really getting it examined.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Development of Gas and Petroleum Sector

*264. SHRI JANARDAN PRASAD MISRA :
SHRI D.S. AHIRE :

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to formulate any long term scheme for the development of gas and petroleum sector in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the time by which it is likely to be implemented; and

(c) if not, the manner in which the Government propose to develop these sectors?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI VAZHAPADY K. RAMAMURTHY) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Government is progressively adopting an appropriate policy for the petroleum sector. The reforms in Administered Price Mechanism are being implemented in phases for completion by 2002. New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) has been announced to encourage oil and gas exploration. The oil companies in the downstream sector have been allowed to enter E & P sector. Refining is de-licenced. Government is also encouraging direct foreign investment in this sector.

Besides above, Government has proposed to constitute a special Group of Ministers to work out a specific framework for an 'India Hydrocarbon Vision 2020'. Government is considering proposals to set up Regulatory Bodies for the Upstream and Downstream sectors of the petroleum sector including for Gas. The scope of the regulatory bodies could include promotion of investment, removal of entry barriers, prevention of cartelisation, regulation of supply and prices, supervision of transmission and distribution networks, ensuring quality and security, compliance with appropriate standards, dispute resolution, protection of consumer interest and long term optimal development of sectors of the hydrocarbon industry. Further, each oil company has evolved its own long-term corporate strategy for its sustained growth and development.

[English]

Consumption of Gutka and Tobacco

*265. SHRI PUNNU LAL MOHALE :
SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR :

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :