

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 :