

unprecedented. Saranda forest which falls in Chaibasa district, was set on fire and the forest is burning for the last three years but so far no fire control measures have been taken there. Sakhua forest provides very costly timber and it is very dense at Saranda. The smugglers set it on fire because they want that Department of Environment should either auction it or lease it out. They wanted so because copper depositories are there and gold is extracted from copper. So for gold the smugglers burnt down this forest. An enquiry should be conducted in this matter as the environmental matters have acquired international dimensions.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : This is only a suggestion.

[Translation]

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : The staff and officers of forest department including the rangers are ill-equipped. They do not have arms and jeeps. That is why they feel scared of goons and smugglers and have to run to save their lives. This condition prevails throughout the country. Therefore, what measures Government proposes to take to well equip them so as to enable them to counter smugglers. Because in Maharashtra ...

MR. SPEAKER : Now you have asked the question, so there is no need of this 'because'

[English]

You cannot give the reason also.

[Translation]

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : Cases of certain districts have been mentioned. Whatever cases have figured in records, I will look into them.

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT : What you will look into ?

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : Please hear me with patience. If you do not get the reply, then again raise your question. So far as these districts are concerned, these are in different constituencies of different Members. I will look into the cases of those districts which have been mentioned in the records and the hon. Members will get the reply. As for the forest policy, Sir, through you I would like to submit that I am satisfied with the work being done in the Ministry to protect forests. Hon. Supreme Court had given a judgement in this regard on 12 December, 1996 which is very relevant in this matter. In that judgement right from North-East to J & K ... (Interruptions). Please first listen to me.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : No arguments please.

Mr. Minister please give a short answer.

[Translation]

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : The entire country is anxious to conserve forests. I am aware of this particular anxiety of the people. I shall again make myself available in your service. Lot of work is being done to implement the policies of the Ministry. On this issue the Supreme Court has ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Dr. Saheb it is not the practice.

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : They will be provided arms, I will tell about that later. First of all I will reply to your various questions pertaining to forests. It is a genuine anxiety and we all feel concerned. My Ministry had cautioned all the Chief Ministers of States in this regard. The entire nation is concerned about conservation of forests. Any violation of rules in this regard will not be tolerated.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister please do not prolong your answer. You will attract more supplementaries.

[Translation]

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : I have told about the Supreme Court's order. A high power committee comprising some experts, have been constituted to go through all these issues. As for the staff of the forest department, I will see to it that all facilities are provided to the forest personnel who have to work in jungles. ... (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I have given the floor to her.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAGWATI DEVI : Large scale felling of Khair trees is going on in the forests of my area. The trucks belonging to rich people reach there, their men hack the trees and carry it to factories and big people trade in it. The Central Government may tell us as to what action it is taking against the owners of those factories which illegally purchase this Khair wood.

[English]

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : Sir, this is a general question. I will do everything possible to protect the forests.

Naga-Kuki Violence

*144. SHRI BIR SINGH MAHATO :
SHRI CHITTA BASU :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the recent spurt in Naga-Kuki violence in Nagaland;

(b) if so, the factors responsible for its provocation; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to curb the violence and restoring peace there ?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA) : (a) and (b) It would not be correct to state that there has been any spurt recently in Naga-Kuki violence in Nagaland. As a matter of fact, the number of incidents of such nature, has sharply come down during 1996, compared to the previous 3 years. However, there was only one major incident of Kuki-Naga ethnic conflict in Nagaland in Kohima District on 9 December, 1996 in which twenty nine Kukis were killed. The provocation for the incident could be attributed to the factional rivalry between the two factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN).

(c) Government of Nagaland were advised to review and strengthen the existing security arrangements in the vulnerable areas. Government of the neighbouring Manipur State was also alerted to the possibility of retaliatory attacks.

SHRI BIR SINGH MAHATO : Mr. Speaker, Sir it is felt that there is mistrust and hate between the two communities in the hill area of Nagaland and Manipur. It is also admitted by the Minister that a major Naga-Kuki ethnic conflict took place in the month of December, 1996 in the Kohima District of Nagaland and 29 Kukis were massacred in that incident. Yesterday also, there was a conflict. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any attempt has been made by the Government to promote goodwill and send a peace message to the Nagas, Kukis and Christian community in the hill area.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Sir, in Nagaland, the total number of Kukis is quite small and in the adjoining State of Manipur they are more numerous. The conflict between these two tribal formations has got a long history behind it which I do not want to go into now. The Nagas feel or many of them feel that the areas adjoining these two States which are inhabited by the Nagas are being encroached upon by the Kukis, whereas the Kukis feel that these areas rightly belong, historically, to the Kukis and they have every right to come there.

In addition to this, there is a border town, as you know, called More between Manipur and Burma. It is on the border. That town has become very important in recent times as a very busy trading centre for goods coming and going between India—that is, Manipur—and Burma. All types of commodities including, I am afraid, some narcotics also are reported to be smuggled through this border. As a result of this, quite a lot of money is being earned and this may be one of the reasons also why both the Kukis and the Nagas are anxious to establish some kind of control over that area.

SHRI BIR SINGH MAHATO : Sir, there are two militant groups. One is the National Socialist Council of Nagaland,

Isak Muivah faction and the other militant group is the Kuki National Army. They are silencing the moderate voice. But the people of both the communities are very much keen on peaceful co-existence.

But the role of the paramilitary forces is questionable. It is also learnt from the newspapers that the paramilitary forces are held immobile until attacked. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any clear mandate has been given to the paramilitary forces.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Sir, I do not know exactly what kind of mandate the Member has got in mind. He is accusing from the Press reports. He feels that the paramilitary forces are not active until they are attacked. So, I can only assume from this that he would like the paramilitary forces to be instructed by the Central Government that they should be more aggressive and more active in dealing with these groups. Well, I think, the paramilitary forces, on the contrary, are sometimes being criticised and attacked for being too active and too aggressive.

But as far as these two groups are concerned, I agree with the Member that the ordinary people and general mass of people in that whole area are very much fed up with this kind of constant violence and killings which are going on. They are very anxious to have a return to peaceful conditions and normalcy. Some initiatives in this direction are being sought to be taken by the Government with the help of some moderate elements who are there and are working in that area as well as some people belonging to the Church who are also influential particularly among the Nagas and are preaching the need for an end to this violent conflict and for reconciliation.

SHRI TH. CHAOBA SINGH : Sir, I want to know from the hon. Minister how many Nagas, so called Tankuls, from Manipur are killed in Kohima, Nagaland within one year that means during 1996. Yesterday also four Nagas so called Tankuls were kidnapped by some unknown persons and killed two of them. But two persons escaped. I want to know from the hon. Minister the details of this incident. Yesterday at 5 p.m. one family of a Naga Joint Secretary, the so called Tankul was kidnapped. They killed two persons and two persons escaped. The hon. Minister may please give the details about it.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Sir, I am fully conscious of this incident which the Member referred to which took place yesterday. We are waiting more detailed reports from our people there.

As far as incidents of killings and so on are concerned, in 1996 in respect of Nagaland, the number of incidents was only one; the number of persons killed was 29; and the number of houses burnt was nil. This is progressively showing some improvement just now. But it does not mean that it may not flare up again. It may.

Apart from this, the detailed statistics of Naga-Kuki violence in Manipur during the last four years and up to 25 February this year are indicated. I can give some figures. During 1996, there were 58 incidents in Manipur. The killings between Nagas and Kukis were also 58—25 Nagas were killed and 33 Kukis. The houses burnt down were 136—106 Naga houses and 30 Kuki houses.

So, these sporadic incidents of conflict between these two tribes are continuing. They have receded a bit and come down a bit in the last year. But we are vigilant to see that the situation is not allowed to go out of control again.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am sorry to say that the Home Minister has replied to the 'c' part of this important question in such a casual manner. You yourself have come from the North-east-area and you also know that incidents of Naga-Kuki ethnic violence are usually taking place there and at times these assume alarming proportions. In these circumstances, merely saying that both the State Governments have been directed to keep alert is neither logical nor justified.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you I want to tell the Home Minister that it is not a law and order problem, rather it is a problem of insurgency.

There is spurt in the incidents of conflicts with the increasing hold of NSCN. I want to know from you whether the previous Government had made any efforts to keep contacts with NSCN and some of its Ministers played an active role in that direction. During your rule what progress has been made in keeping contacts with them. To what extent rapport has been established with them or to what extent efforts have been intensified to keep in touch with them. If there is no progress in this direction, then will you make such efforts?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : You know there are two factions of NSCN, one is lead by Mr. Keplong, another by Arjek Muiva. These are the two groups. We have some contacts with both the groups. Perhaps you had asked about the previous Government. They also made efforts and efforts are also being made after formation of our Government. But now it has been reported that leaders of these two groups are now showing some keenness for talks but their followers are agitated. They do not want their leaders to have parleys with the representatives of the Government. Now the difficulty is that Mr. Arjek Muiva is staying abroad. Some days ago he was staying in Bangkok. Now it has been reported that from Bangkok he is going to Manila. I am not sure whether is going there or not. It is not easy to contact him, it is rather difficult. But we are trying to contact him and if we succeed in contacting him and having talks with him, the House will be certainly informed about that.

[English]

Wild Life Protection Act, 1972

+
*145. DR. ASIM BALA :
SHRI MEHBOOB ZAHEDI :

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

(a) whether private units are allowed to construct huge buildings for hotels etc. inside the National Parks as in the case of Nagarhole in Karnataka;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to order closure or withdrawal of all such constructions and projects clearances from the areas declared as the National Parks so as to enforce the provisions of the Wild Life Protection Act strictly; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Under Section 33 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State/UT is the designated authority to control, manage and maintain National Parks in that State/UT. For this purpose, he may construct/allow construction of buildings as he considers necessary/appropriate. However, in the case of the Nagarhole National Park, the Government of Karnataka had leased out the buildings and their premises inside the National Park to a private company. This matter was the subject of a Public Interest Litigation in the High Court of Karnataka, which recently ordered the private company to stop all activities immediately and handover the properties to the State Government, State Government preferred an appeal against the order. The appeal has been admitted and High Court has ordered to maintain the status quo.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

DR. ASIM BALA : Sir, under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 the Chief Wildlife Warden is the designated authority to control, manage and maintain National Parks in the Union Territories and the States. He may construct or allow construction of buildings as he considers necessary and appropriate. He has this full authority and others do not have any authority to intervene in this matter. Recently, the High Court of Karnataka ordered the private company to stop all activities immediately. The State Government contested that order saying that even the High Court cannot do anything to stop the activities.

In Assam, 1,700 zoo animals are suffering from tuberculosis. The Assam Science Forum said that these animals died due to lack of proper management and proper food.