

measures to control the recurrence of floods I would like to suggest to the Central Government to take up the matter with the Governments of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh to construct a dam on the Gahaggra river. Firstly, it will be helpful to check floods and secondly, the stored water will be used for irrigation.

(vi) Need to check deforestation in Sunderbans area of West Bengal

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL (Joynagar) Sir, Sunderbans area in West Bengal, bordering the Bay of Bengal, was once renowned for its Tiger Project and unique flora and fauna. But unfortunately, it has now fallen on bad days resulting from its deforestation. The bane of the whole problem is that the traders in timber with some local people—who are poverty-ridden and ignorant of the resultant damage being caused to their forest wealth as a result of this deforestation—are clandestinely getting the trees uprooted and carting them for being sold at a very high price.

It is high time that the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, responsible for the maintenance of the Tiger Project in Sunderbans and its guardian for ecological protection, moves in the matter and puts an end to these nefarious trade practices and save the scenic forests from degradation.

Further, Sir, nature is also taking its own toll inasmuch as during the tide, the sand brought by it accumulates and spreads and ultimately uproots the trees. Since the Ministry is also responsible for the preservation of bio-sphere ecology in this region, it is high time that it consults some experts and devises some effective measures to check that the sand does not uproot the trees but is utilised more gainfully and purposefully.

(vii) Need to lay railway line between Chatra and Gaya, Bihar

[Translation]

SHRI DHIRENDRA AGARWAL (Chatra) Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Chatra is a very backward district of Bihar which is about 80 km away from Gaya. In the absence of rail route, the people of this district feel difficulty to visit Gaya. Local people have been demanding construction of a rail line from Gaya to Chatra since long. A survey was conducted in this regard earlier but the construction work has not started yet. I am the people's representative of this district. The people of Chatra have urged me to ensure that Chatra is connected by a rail line at the earliest. This is an urgent matter of public interest. It will pave the way for development of this area.

I, therefore, urge upon the Central Government that District Headquarter Chatra should be connected by a rail line on the priority basis so that the development of the area can start.

14.23 hrs.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER

(i) Situation arising due to Kala-Azar in Bihar

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : Mr Deputy-Speaker Sir, Kala-azar is a major public health problem in the States of Bihar and West Bengal. It is spread by the sand fly vector which is predominantly seen in the Gangetic belt, especially to the north of Ganges.

During the current year upto the month of May 196 deaths are reported to have occurred due to Kala-azar in the State of Bihar as against 259 deaths reported in 1995 and 379 deaths reported in 1994. It may be mentioned that both in number of cases and in deaths Kala-azar has shown a declining trend since 1993 upto close of 1995 in the State of Bihar. There has however, been an increase in both cases and deaths over the period January to May, 1996 as compared to the same period last year.

Out of the 196 deaths due to Kala-azar, reported between January and May 1996, the worst affected districts have been Vaishali, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Madhubani, Sitamarhi and Darbhanga.

The increase in the number of the cases in Kala-azar during the first half of 1996 can be attributed to non-spraying of DDT according to the prescribed schedule and the fact that active house-to-house detection and treatment of cases was not carried out adequately.

Health is a State subject and the responsibility of preventing and controlling a disease rests essentially with the State Government. However, the Government of India in the form of a Centrally Sponsored Scheme provides insecticides and anti-Kala-azar drugs required for the control of this disease to the Government of Bihar. The Central Government further provides technical assistance to the State health authorities in the form of evaluation reports, training and offers guidance on strategies relevant to the situation. The implementation of the Kala-azar control programme nevertheless remains the responsibility of the State Government. This includes meeting the operational costs of insecticidal sprays, prompt detection and treatment of cases as well as meeting the expenditure on the staff component etc.