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Title: Need to release the funds sanctioned under the Voluntary Relocation of Settlements plan for rehabilitation of families living in Wayanad wildlife sanctuary area in Kerala.

SHRI M.I. SHANAVAS (WAYANAD): The Wayanad wildlife sanctuary extending to 344 Sq. Kms. was notified in 1973. This stretch of forest in Kerala is most sensitive and vital for the survival of a wide range of species, especially elephants and tigers and exotic flora and its forms the core of Nilgiri biosphere reserve. The sanctuary, despite its 40 years of existence, did not witness any meaningful efforts regarding resettlement of people staying in the Sanctuary, resulting in constant altercations between human settlers and wildlife, causing unexplainable damage to lives and properties of poor farmers and affecting the balance of nature as well.

As an effort at resettling, a project report has been submitted by Kerala forest research institute, which was approved by the state forest department and submitted to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests. As of now, the Union Ministry has released Rs. 4.5 crores out of the approved fund of Rs. 80 crores but the released amount has not yet been transferred to the state till date. I would, therefore, urge the Government to take immediate steps in releasing the funds sanctioned under the Voluntary Relocation of Settlements plan and expedite the steps for rehabilitating the willing families in the sanctuary.