

COMMITTEE ON SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION

[English]

First Report

SHRI DHARAM PAL SINGH MALIK (Sonepat) : Sir, I beg to present the First Report (Hindi and English versions) of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation.

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

[Translation]

Reported destruction of forests and pollution of air, water and atmosphere

SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI (Begusarai) : I call the attention of the Minister of Environment and Forest to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon :

“Reported destruction of forests and pollution of air, water and atmosphere and steps taken by Government thereon to protect and maintain the ecological balance in the country.”

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN) : Government are fully cognisant of the need to maintain ecological balance and control pollution. Recognising the growing importance of environmental issues, a nodal Department of Environment was set up at the Centre in November, 1980. More recently, the Ministry of Environment and Forests was formed. Many State Governments have also created or designated Departments for Environment.

Long-term conservation measures have been initiated on a wide front. The enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act, in 1980 has considerably reduced the diversion of forests to non-forest uses. State/Union Territory Governments have been advised to impose a moratorium on tree felling in

sensitive areas and exercise greater vigilance for protection of forests. Guidelines have been issued for preparation of forest management plans with emphasis on conservation and maintenance of ecological stability. Social forestry programmes have been scaled up. A major recent initiative is the setting up of the National Wastelands Development Board with the objective of raising 5 million hectares of plantations every year for fuel wood and fodder.

13 sites of representative biogeographic areas have been identified for designation as biosphere for conservation of biological diversity. Eco-development programmes have been taken up to demonstrate technologies for improvement of degraded ecosystems with active public participation, especially of students, women and rural youth. Applied research for preservation of degraded ecosystems is being promoted in the universities and research institutes. The Himalayan Institute for Environment and Development and some Centres of Advance Studies in selected priority areas are being set up. Environmental Education and Training have been assigned a special role. A procedure has been evolved for incorporating environmental safeguards into major development projects.

Our rivers on the downstream of major settlements are polluted by municipal and industrial wastes in varying degrees. Air quality deterioration has taken place in pockets of some urban and industrial centres. The Central Pollution Control Board coordinates the activities of the State Boards (18 so far set up) which are responsible for controlling pollution in their respective States. Monitoring of water and air quality is being done through a net-work of stations. The Central Board has completed a use based zoning and classification of all the 14 major inter-State rivers. Basinwise inventories of polluting industries have been made for the rivers Yamuna and Ganga. Minimum National Standards specifying effluent standards have been prescribed for some major groups of industries. The Central and State Boards have been persuading industries to adopt pollution control measures and legal action is also being taken against polluting units wherever necessary. For selected polluting industries, procedures have been laid down for site clearance from environmental angle before converting letters of