

SHRI BAPUSAHEB PARULEKAR:

Part (a) of the reply mentions that a programme for the Western Ghats region falling in the States of Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and Union Territory of Goa is in operation since 1974-75 and is approved on yearly basis. May I know from the hon. Minister the areas so far identified in Maharashtra under this scheme since 1974-75 and the development made so far?

SHRI NARAYAN DATT TIWARI:

As I mentioned earlier, this programme had not been attended to seriously during the last three or four years. It is only recently that we have again put emphasis on this particular programme. Now, we have asked the Administrative Staff College, Hyderabad and the Town and Country Planning Organisation to have a detailed techno-economic survey of the area and to project a macro-regional perspective plan and some micro-level prototype studies at the taluka level. A Committee has been set up under the chairmanship of Dr. M. S. Swaminathan to study the water resources in the Konkan region of Maharashtra. Similarly, we have also been considering irrigation plans for this area.

Dredging of Mineral nodules from Ocean

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727. SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER:*SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA:**

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Research ship of the National Institute of Oceanography has achieved the technological feat of dredging mineral nodules from the ocean floor recently; and

(b) if so, the salient features of the ocean mining technology that is being developed by the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND ELECTRONICS

(SHRI C. P. N. SINGH): (a) and (b). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Samples of polymetallic nodules have been collected from the Indian Ocean by the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), Goa, during the 86th and 87th cruises by its research vessel "Gaveshani".

(b) The existence of polymetallic nodules in the sea-bed on a large scale is of great significance especially because of limited resources of these metals on land. The survey, exploration etc. of deep-sea nodules has therefore been identified by CSIR as a major thrust area of research in oceanography, and has been designated as an All India Coordinated Project in which NIO will play an important role. Among the ships being acquired by the Ocean Science & Technology Agency, to provide national facilities for marine research, is the Oceanographic Research Vessel which will be equipped with special equipment such as under-water camera, deep-sea echosounders, grabs and winches, computer aided navigation system etc.; this vessel will have capability of exploring and mining polymetallic nodules. A programme to train manpower has also been undertaken.

Government expresses its appreciation of our marine scientists for their excellent work.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER: The statement which is laid on the Table, is a very good statement. I would like to congratulate the marine scientists and specially those who have been working on the dredging of the ocean-bed. May I know the steps being taken by the Government to mine these nodules from the ocean floor falling within the Indian economic zone, on its own, free of foreign interference, in view of the position that the country's entry into deep-

sea bed mining has broken the monopoly of big powers in this field? It has been reported that multinational corporations are blocking the signing of the sea law treaty because of their opposition to the provision of transfer of technology. What action is being contemplated by the Government and what is the Government doing to train our own people?

SHRI C. P. N. SINGH: The Hon. Member asked whether the mining of the said polymetallic nodules had been in the exclusive Indian economic zone. I would like to clarify this a little bit because the particular place where these polymetallic nodules have been found is near the equator, about 150 miles from the southern most tip of the Indian territory. Regarding the hon. Member's question about multinationals blocking the issue. We are not officially informed as to what the multinationals are doing. But I would like to inform the House and the Member that at present the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea is in session where these matters are being looked into.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER: As far as the multinationals are concerned, the Hindustan Times carried an article on 6/4/81 where they have named the five multinationals which are blocking the signing of the sea law treaty. Anyhow, I am putting my second supplementary. May I know whether the Government is facing any difficulty in getting specialised and sophisticated equipment for deep-sea-bed mining; if so, whether some more ships like 'Gaveshani' could not be designed and converted at the Garden Reach Workshops, Calcutta? I would also like to know whether the Government intends to float an Indian consortium for undertaking non-stop mining of the sea-bed for these mineral nodules.

SHRI C. P. N. SINGH: Sir, it is a matter of pride that the ship 'Gaveshani' was totally made in Calcutta and there was no foreign collaboration but, for future excavation and

going down to great depths in the sea, what is required is a very very sophisticated vessel. The Planning Commission could not allocate the funds that were required by the Department for going into this. Hence we have taken a soft loan and the Federal Republic of Germany has given us a loan, and certain equipment and we hope to get this particular ship by 1982.

SHRI BHANU PRATAP SHARMA: Will the Hon. Minister inform the House.

(a) Whether the polymetallic nodules have been tested and analysed in our laboratories; if so,

(b) What are the results and the metallic contents obtained in the laboratory; and

(c) What effective steps our Government are taking to explore the possibilities of commercial production of these metallic contents?

SHRI C. P. N. SINGH: The metallic contents today are not verified because they are under testing with various laboratories of the CSIR. But, we have certain information of similar poly-metallic nodules which have been taken out from the sea-bed and the contents of such nodules are approximately manganese, 14 to 20 per cent, Iron 15 to 20 per cent, nickel 30 per cent to 65 per cent cobalt, 25 per cent to 1.25 per cent and copper .06 per cent to 37 per cent. (*Interruptions*).

I would like to remind the Hon. Member that this work that our scientists of the laboratory at Goa have done is tremendous and comparable with some of the most advanced countries like France, U.K., Germany, America and Russia. To mine the particular nodules, great amount of exercise like training manpower and getting specialised equipment is necessary and all this takes time. But we hope that with the thrust that Hon. Prime Minister has given to science and technology, we would be able to do it earlier than most of the other countries.

PROF. N. G. RANGA: What steps are being taken by Government in order to encourage our Universities and other scientific institutions in our country to see that there would be a regular stream of young people who are trained in this direction so that we need no longer depend upon foreign personnel or foreign know-how?

SHRI C. P. N. SINGH: I would like to remind the Hon. Member of what I said earlier that the know-how is entirely Indian. The ship 'Gaveshani' is totally indigenous. I would like to inform the Hon. Member that for future work we have an excellent team of young talented scientists. A Committee has been constituted of major agencies such as the Geological Survey of India, Oil & Natural Gas Commission, Indian Metallurgical Department, NIO, IIT and Universities which would be fully associated in this research programme.

SHRI JAGANNATH RAO: In the Law of the Sea Conference at Caracas, it was one of the points that was discussed that an International Seabed Authority would be set up to exploit the sea-bed minerals.

I would like to know what has happened to that and whether a decision has been taken about its composition, powers and the financial implications. Pending the decision, is it not open to the Member-States to proceed with the exploitation of the sea-bed within the exclusive economic zone of the individual country?

SHRI C. P. N. SINGH: As I have said previously, this UN Conference on the Law of the Sea is in session. But I would like to clarify the other point. As far as India is concerned, we have our territorial waters, continental shelf, exclusive economic zone and other maritime zones of 1976. There is already a consensus in the U.N. Conference about 200 miles exclusive economic zone where a coastal State will have sovereign rights for exploration, exploitation and management of all its resources.

नमक पर लगे उपकर का समाप्त किया जाना

*728. श्री नरसिंह मकवाना : क्या उद्योग मंत्री यह बताने को कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या नमक पर लगे उपकर को राज्य सरकारों को सौंपने का निर्णय कर लिया गया है और यदि हां, तो इसके परिणाम-स्वरूप केन्द्रीय सरकार को कितने राजस्व की हानि होगी ;

(ख) इस समय नमक-उपकर से प्राप्त राजस्व में राज्य सरकारों का हिस्सा कितना है ; और

(ग) क्या नमक पर लगे उपकर को पूर्णतः समाप्त करने का कोई प्रस्ताव सरकार के विचाराधीन है ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): (a) Government have not taken any decision to entrust cess on Salt to State Governments.

(b) Nil.

(c) Salt Enquiry Committee set up by Government in 1978 to undertake a review of the problems facing Salt Industry have recently made recommendations regarding levy of salt cess. These recommendations are under consideration.

श्री नरसिंह मकवाना : माननीय अध्यक्ष जी मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूँ कि नमक पर कर के बारे में आजादी की लड़ाई के जमाने में महात्मा गांधी ने नमक कर के खिलाफ लड़ाई लड़ी थी और आज हम नमक पर कर ले रहे हैं, भले ही थोड़ा हो। तो यह कहाँ तक सही है इस पर सरकार को फौसला करना चाहिये और जल्दी से जल्दी करना चाहिये और जब तक कोई फौसला न हो तब तक जिन राज्यों में नमक पैदा होता है उन राज्यों को नमक पर लगे कर में से कुछ हिस्सा आप देना चाहते हैं कि नहीं ?