

should be made compulsory in respect of babies born in hospitals. Is the Government thinking of making any such provisions?

KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE: In the case of children born in hospitals, I think that it is natural for the doctors to immunise them but it may not be possible for them to do so on a compulsory basis. We are making efforts to ensure that immunisation is undertaken on a compulsory basis so that all doubts of the parents in this regard are removed.

SHRI RAM BHAGAT PASWAN: The hon. Minister has stated that the Centre makes efforts to meet the entire demand of the State Governments. I would like to inform you that at least 30 districts of Bihar are affected by Kala-azar and a large number of children and other people are suffering from this epidemic. An injection named 'Lavodin' is used for the treatment of this disease and it costs Rs. 2200. This injection is not reaching these districts of Bihar and in the meantime, many people are dying. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what has been the demand of the State in 1987-88 and to what extent it was met. It has come to my notice that medicines are not reaching Bihar. Therefore, I would like to know about the details of the supply made by the Central Government.

KUMARI SAROJ KHAPRADE : I think that the hon. Member wants information specifically about Kala-azar. A separate notice is required in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER: A Calling Attention motion was allowed in this regard.

SHRI C.P. THAKUR: Medicines and vaccines are not reaching the rural areas and whatever the hon. Member has stated is a fact.

KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE: The point which has been brought to our notice by the hon. Member will be paid due attention and it shall be our endeavour to ensure that the medicines and vaccines reach these

areas in case they are not already reaching there.

[English]

✓ **New Act to Protect Forests**

*927. **SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT†:**
DR. A.K. PATEL:

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

(a) whether Government propose to enact a new Act to protect forests in the country; and

(b) if so, the outlines of the proposed legislation?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOREST (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI): (a) and (b). Amendment of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 is under consideration of the Government. Outlines of the proposed legislation are yet to be finalised.

[Translation]

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to submit to the hon. Minister that the forests are getting rapidly depleted in the country and the remedial measures undertaken in this connection are not proper. What I mean is that minor irrigation projects are being stalled on the pretext of saving forests and one has to approach the Centre for the clearance of even a very small project. I would cite a case of Nagpur in this regard. A water pipe line which would irrigate 0.4 hectares of land has been pending clearance for the past two years. Consequently the people have not got water facilities so far. I mean to say that this is not fair. The real reason behind rapid depletion of forests is the illegal felling of trees. The large scale denudation of forests is taking place through the contractors. The forests which are cut for essential projects is not doing so much of harm as compared to the illegal felling of trees. The position of

forests today is such that there are little trees in the interior and trees can be seen only in the outer areas. What I mean to say is that the essential projects should be cleared on top priority basis and the people involved in illegal felling of trees should be awarded deterrent punishment so that such activities could be checked. In regard to the new Act, the Government has appointed a committee for it. It is a matter of regret that we are not aware of the guidelines so far. Guidelines have not been laid nor has an outline been prepared as yet. In such circumstances, what can that Committee do? Why is the Government hesitating in this regard and whatever guidelines have been prepared, the House has the right to know about them. The hon. Minister should clarify as to what guidelines have been issued to the committee and by when will that committee submit its report? As it is an important issue, it should not be evaded but a definite reply should be given.

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI: Sir, the hon. Member is confusing two Acts and their provisions. The first one is the Indian Forests Act, 1927, which was a comprehensive Legislation about preservation, control and management of forests. The Second Act is the Forests Conservation Act, 1980, the purpose of which is limited. Under this Act, if forest land is to be diverted for non-forest purposes, prior clearance has to be obtained from the Central Government so that misuse of land is prevented. The Parliament had approved this legislation, and the scope of both the Acts is different. The Indian Forest Act was passed in 1927 and it is 60 years old now. During this period many changes have taken place, and so a comprehensive legislation is required to replace it which is under consideration. The draft Bill was prepared and its various aspect were discussed but the matter was postponed in view of the Forest Policy which was to be announced. A new Act with comprehensive amendments was to be introduced after the announcement of the Forest Policy. The whole matter is in the process and I assure the hon. Member that after the announcement of the

Forest policy, we intend to introduce the new Indian Forest Act.

Regarding Forest Conservation Act and diversion of forest land, Sir, the matter has already been discussed several times. It is perfectly true that a number of hurdles come in the way but it would not be proper to make allegations that clearance of projects is kept pending for 2-4 years.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is true.

MR. SPEAKER: Let him reply.

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is my information. The projects remain pending due to certain shortcomings in the projects themselves and the Government does not receive the information which is sought. The Government have made attempts to streamline the current procedure. We intend to take measures so that the approval of projects relating to pipe-lines, electric transmission lines is not delayed. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the most important issue is of forest conservation. The hon. Minister may kindly give detailed information about the total geographical area and forest area both as per the records and according to the actual survey. What should be the total percentage of land which should be covered by forest area and what is our target in this regard. If statewise figures are available well and good, otherwise the all-India percentage of forest cover may be provided. Kindly tell me three things. The total forest area that is recorded, the area which has been actually verified, the target of forest cover and how long will it take to achieve the target?

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI: This information has been given to the Members several times in the House and I repeat it once again. The recorded forest area is 22.7 per cent of the total land mass area. According to the forest policy announced in 1957 and recently in 1988 the total target has been fixed at 30 per cent. 30 per cent forest cover is

essential in the total land mass area. But the so called tree cover is 15 to 19 per cent.

[*English*]

DR. A.K. PATEL: I am not happy with the reply of the hon. Minister. The hon. Minister has given a stereotyped reply that is the enactment of the Act is under consideration. What is the sense in bolting the stable after the horse has been stolen? Jungles are being destroyed day by day. We are worried about the environment. I give an example of Gujarat. In 1975, 9.2 per cent of the land was covered with jungle; today it is only 3-4 per cent of the land, as per Government figure, covered by jungle or trees. What will be the fate of the jungles in future? These things are happening all over Gujarat. Very recently.....*

(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Not allowed. No allegation.

(*Interruptions*)

DR. A.K. PATEL: I want a categorical reply from the Minister. This thing is happening in Gujarat.

MR. SPEAKER: You cannot do it. How can you do it?

(*Interruptions*)

DR. A.K. PATEL: He already knows about this case.

MR. SPEAKER: Might be; whatever it is, but here, we are going according to the rules.

AN HON. MEMBER: But he is not making any allegation.

DR. A.K. PATEL: Now I want a categorical reply from the Minister.

AN. HON. MEMBER: He is telling his experience.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: He withdraws the wood that is cut.

DR. A.K. PATEL: I want a categorical reply from the Minister by what time he is going to enact an Act so that we can prevent the jungles from being destroyed and we can have nice, better environment in this country.

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI: I have already said that actually the draft of the Bill was ready. But a decision was taken that a new forest policy was coming up in the House which was announced only in the last session. After the announcement of the forest policy, we should take these steps for bringing forward a comprehensive legislation. Now, according to the new policy, we have to think about a comprehensive legislation afresh. I do agree with the hon. member that there is a dire necessity of making the Indian Forest Act more stringent so that deterrent action should be taken against wrong-doers, against those persons who are illicitly felling the trees and destroying the forest resources.

[*Translation*]

PROF. NIRMALA KUMARI SHAKTAWAT: The hon. Minister has stated that a new forest policy was to be announced but reality is something else. I would like to cite an example of Rajasthan. It has been stated that the forest cover should be 19 per cent but practically only 2-3 per cent is left now. Particularly, Aravali ranges which were lush green at one time, have been denuded. We do not know how long would it take to formulate the policy and then to introduce amendments in the Act. Secondly, the entire reserve forest and game sanctuaries are getting denuded. Will the Government issue directions to the State Government to this effect and will the policy would be modified? (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Madam, take it off from your neck.

PROF. NIRMALA KUMARI SHAKTAWAT: Sorry. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI: I agree that there has been large scale deforestation and that is why the Government is taking remedial measures to check this denudation. We want to enact a law which would provide deterrent punishment for those who indulge in such activities. The only solution to this problem is to bring a comprehensive law at the earliest which may replace the Act of 1927.

[English]

Deaths Due to Undiagnosed Disease

*928. **SHRI V. KRISHNA RAO†:**
SHRI NARSING
SURYAVANSI:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to a report captioned 'Unknown disease claims 16 lives' appearing in the Deccan Herald dated the 26th March, 1989;

(b) if so, whether similar reports have been received from other parts of the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken to contain the spread of this disease?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE): (a) to (d). A Statement is given below.

STATEMENT

The Government has seen the news item appeared in the Deccan Herald dated 26th March, 1989 captioned 'unknown disease claims 16 lives'.

On receipt of information of outbreak of mysterious disease from Bihar, teams from National Institute of Communicable Diseases were deputed to visit the affected areas. The disease was diagnosed as Meningococcal meningitis sero-group A. During 1989, seven States/Union Territories viz. Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Delhi have reported cases of Meningococcal meningitis as well as deaths. The number of cases and deaths are as under:—

<i>State</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>Deaths</i>
Bihar	NA	263 (upto 28.4.89)
Orissa	2951	344 (upto 2.4.89)
Andhra Pradesh	792	136 (23.12.88 to 31.3.1989)
Madhya Pradesh	1620	158 (upto 3.4.1989)
Gujarat	586	102 (upto 3.4.89)
Maharashtra	584	109 (upto 4.3.89)
Delhi	329	58

The Control measures for Meningococcal meningitis consist of the following:—

— early reporting of cases by para medical health personnel so that all

suspected cases are treated in hospitals;

— constituting medical teams to visit the affected areas to detect and