

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, December 3, 1986/Agrahayana 12,
1908 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of
the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Threat of Ecological Disaster

*427. SHRIMATI BASAVARAJES-
WARI† :
SHRI LALITESHWAR PRASAD
SHAHI :

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

(a) whether Government are aware that year after year forest land is being lost at the rate of 1.5 million hectares annually as also huge quantity of fertile soil is washed away due to floods; and

(b) if so, the corrective measures Government propose to take to put an end to this ecological disaster ?

[Translation],

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT
AND FORESTS (SHRI BHAJAN LAL)
(a) and (b). A statement is given below.

Statement

(a) Government are aware about the loss of forest land and the fertile soil. According to a study made by National

Remote Sensing Agency the depletion of tree cover between 72-75 to 80-82 was nearly 9 million hectares which works out to about 1.3 million hectares every year.

(b) 1. Specific areas of action have been identified for protection of existing forests like survey of forests, prevention of diversion of forests to non-forests uses through strict enforcement of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, restriction on grazing, ban on monoculture, delineation of right of tribals, substitution of wood by other materials and compensatory afforestation if forest land is unavoidably diverted for other purposes.

2. Government are taking steps to reforest denuded forest lands and to afforest wastelands of the country.

3. Government have established a National Land Use and Wasteland Development Council. A National Land Use Policy has been evolved covering aspects of scientific irrigation, afforestation, catchment area protection, drainage and soil erosion which will help in arresting the loss of soil. In addition, a National Wasteland Development Board has also been created with the object of bringing 5 million hectares of land every year under fuel, wood and fodder plantations.

4. All the State Governments have programmes for soil conservation. On-going centrally sponsored schemes of soil conservation in the river valley projects and integrated watershed management in the catchments of flood prone rivers are also under execution. A special programme of conservation and afforestation in the desert areas is also being taken up to tackle soil erosion.

[English]

SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI :
Mr. Speaker, Sir, as per the world's top biologists, all tropical forests in the world will probably disappear in the next 50 to 75

years losing valuable species and killing 17,500 species of plants and animals each year. The Forest Conservation Act was passed in the year 1980 and subsequently, the Amendment has also been passed to tighten the provisions of deforestation.

So, I would like to ask the hon. Minister the percentage of deforestation that could be stopped after the Amendment to the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 has been passed.

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BHAJAN LAL) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has correctly stated that there has been large scale deforestation between 1951 to 1980, but this process has declined during the last five or six years. On an average 13 lakh hectares of land has been denuded every year. There are several reasons for it. First, there has been indiscriminate felling of trees. Secondly, forest land has been diverted with the Government's approval. I would like to cite figures in this respect. During the period of 30 years from 1951 to 1980, 43 lakh hectares of land has been diverted for other purposes, which comes to about 1,40,000 hectares per year. After 1980, only 34,000 hectares of land has been diverted which works out to be 5,500 hectares per annum. We shall make all out efforts to stop deforestation and for this we have written to State Governments. The Central Government also bears half the expenditure. The expenses involving the provision of jeeps, gunmen, wireless sets, sentry posts, are shared equally by the Central Government. We have written to the State Governments once again. That is why we have enacted a law to stop deforestation. Our Government will make full efforts for the conservation of our forests.

[*English*]

SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI : Sir, I would like to know which are the States where deforestation is at the maximum level and whether Karnataka is also one among them ?

[*Translation*]

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned earlier, in these

7 years, 13 lakh hectares of land has been denuded annually, which comes to a total of 91 lakh hectares of land. It includes all the States. In Andhra Pradesh it has been 8,33,000 hectares, in Assam it has been about 1,25,000 hectares, and in Karnataka it has been less as compared to other States. In Bihar, 11.2 per cent of forests have been denuded. In Karnataka, 1,02,035 hectares of forest area has been denuded. Deforestation has been maximum in Punjab. The next in the list is Rajasthan... .

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : What is the level in Haryana ?

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : I am coming to that. Although there are less forests in Rajasthan, yet there is more felling of trees in that State. Gujarat and Haryana occupy the third and the fourth position respectively. We would make all efforts to ensure that felling of trees is minimum.

SHRI LALITESHWAR SHAHI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the fact, that the people who worked in the mines for the last 30-40 years and who were rendered unemployed due to the closure of the mines are now involved in the felling of forest trees in the Singhbhum district of Bihar.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : It is correct to some extent that the forests are being cut clandestinely. About this I have said earlier also that the Centre is going to shoulder half the cost incurred for looking after the forests and for providing jeeps, guards and so on. The number of cattle has also increased considerably in the country. Earlier, there were 29 crore cattle which have now increased to 45 crores. 20 per cent of these cattle are dependent on the forests. Cattle grazing is also one of the reasons. For this we have written to the State Governments that it should make arrangements for the provision of guards, wireless sets etc. to minimise the damage to the forests.

SHRI RANA VIR SINGH : The Nepalese nationals at Babaraich (U.P.) are felling trees indiscriminately and killing the animals near Indo-Nepal border. I want to know what steps the Indian Government is taking in this direction ?

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : We shall certainly look into it and write about it to the State Governments. The Central Government would also keep a watch over it. We would make all efforts to ensure that forests are protected, because it would protect the environment of the country as well.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the economic factor is also responsible for the denudation of the forests. Are the Government considering some alternative programme on the lines of IRDP and other poverty alleviation programmes in order to stop the felling of trees ?

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the 12th item in the 20 Point Programme of Shrimati Indira Gandhi calls for afforestation. Rs. 40 crores were spent on it per annum at that time and in the Fifth Five Year Plan, Rs. 200 crores were spent and in the Seventh Five Year Plan, approximately a sum of Rs. 2550 crores has been earmarked for this purpose, so that maximum trees could be planted.

So far as felling of trees is concerned, permission is granted only in cases of certain projects, which entail construction of dams and power stations which are in the interest of the poor farmers and the nation. But permission for felling of trees is given in very rare cases, and is given after careful consideration, and a condition is put on the concerned State Government that afforestation will be done in double the area required for the project so that forests are conserved to the maximum extent.

[*English*]

Suitability of New Zealand Afforestation Methods for India

*428. **SHRI I. RAMA RAI :** Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state ;

(a) whether afforestation methods adopted in New Zealand are considered suitable to Indian conditions; and

(b) if so, whether his Ministry have

taken any steps to try those methods in India ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z.R. ANSARI) : (a) and (b). In view of the difference in agro-climatic conditions as well as different forest management practices followed in the two countries, afforestation methods adopted in New Zealand are not considered entirely suitable to Indian conditions.

SHRI I. RAMA RAI : After and during the visit of our Prime Minister to New Zealand and to the Forest Research Institute at Rotorua, we were made to understand that forest management and techniques of afforestation adopted in that country have invaluable lessons for India and, possible areas of cooperation can be opened up in this area. Even China made use of the New Zealand technique for afforestation. At present, a specie called Radiata pine is being encouraged in New Zealand and it is prospering well in New Zealand and it is being imported from California.

It is natural for a country like India to think of importing some species which will help and which will have multiple uses such as fodder, fuel and small timber and other uses for the country.

Will the Government think of any such species for afforestation in our country as is being done in New Zealand ? Will the Government think of importing some other species also from countries all over the world which will be suitable for our country ? Does the Government have any idea of that plan in the near future ?

SHRI Z.R. ANSARI : It is true that as directed by our Prime Minister, the Secretary, Environment and Forests, met Mr. Mike Moore, Minister for Overseas Trade and Marketing, New Zealand. During the discussions, three areas were identified for possible cooperation between New Zealand and India. After those discussions, the New Zealand Minister had promised to send a note indicating the way in which New Zealand would provide assistance to India. But no note containing information has come to us. As I have said in my