

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PLANNING
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:221

ANSWERED ON:01.12.2004

CONSTITUTION OF INTER-MINISTERIAL TASK FORCE ON HIMALAYAN REGION

Shiwankar Shri Maha Deo Rao

Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

- (a) Whether the Government has constituted an Inter-Ministerial task force to view the whole Himalayan region in a unified form;
- (b) if so, whether the task force had been constituted earlier;
- (c) if so, the details given by the Force in its report;
- (d) the names of States identified in Himalayan Region and the main resources, the Government proposes to provide for it; and
- (e) the time by which the task force is likely to give its report?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN)

(a): An Expert Group to formulate National Policy for Integrated Development in the Himalayas was constituted by the Planning Commission in March 1992. The composition and terms of reference of the Expert Group are enclosed as Annexure-I.

(b): An Eco-Task Force was constituted in 1981 under the Chairmanship of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, the then Member, Planning Commission.

(c): The conclusion and recommendations of the Expert Group is enclosed as Annexure-II.

(d): Different Himalayan States facing problems as mentioned in the Expert Group Report are (i) Himachal Pradesh, (ii) Uttar Pradesh, (iii) North Eastern States, (iv) West Bengal, and (v) Jammu & Kashmir.

Uttar Pradesh has since been divided into Uttar Pradesh and Uttranchal. As a result of the recommendation of the Task Force under the Chairmanship of Dr. Swaminathan, Gobind Bhallabh Panth Institute of Himalayan Environment & Development was established at Almora, Uttranchal. Apart from this, the Govt. of India also established Department of North Eastern Region (DONER) and North-Eastern Council (NEC). Resources are provided through these institutional mechanism for the development of the Himalayas regions. Most of these States are declared as special category states which receive special Plan assistance as 90% grant 10% as loan as against non-special category states getting 30% grant and 70% loan. Besides they enjoy a number of concessions in many Central schemes.

(e): The Expert Group under Dr. S.Z. Qasim, the then Member, Planning Commission, submitted its Report in 1993.

ANNEXURE-I

No. Q-12074/1E/01/92-E&F
Government of India Planning
Commission (E&F Unit)
Yojana Bhavan, Sansad
Marg, New Delhi-110 001

27th March, 1992

ORDER

Planning Commission have decided to constitute an Expert Group to formulate a National Policy on the Himalayas for Integrated Development. The composition and terms of reference of the Expert Group are as follows:-

Composition:

1. Dr. S.Z. Qasim Chairman
Member (Environment and Science & Technology) Planning Commission
2. Dr. Jayant Patil Member
Member (Agriculture),
Planning Commission
3. Prof. J.S. Bajaj. Member Member
(Health), Planning
Commission
4. Prof. K.S. Valdia Member
Professor and Head Department
of Geology, Kumaon
University, Nanital
5. Dr. Harsh Gupta, Adviser
Deptt. of Science & Technology Member
New Delhi
6. Dr. P.S. Ramakrishnan
Professor Member
Deptt. of Environmental Science
Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi
7. Dr. D.N. Tiwari Member
Director General I.C.F.R.E.,
Dehradun
8. Dr. Virendra Kumar, Member
Zakir Hussain College
New Delhi
9. Shri D.K. Biswas Member
Adviser
Ministry of Environment & Forests
New Delhi
10. Dr. I.K. Barthakur Member
Principal Adviser
Planning Commission
11. Dr. A.N. Purohit Director
GB Pant Institute for Himalayan Member
Environment and Development
12. Dr. R.S. Mann
Professor Member
Deptt. of Anthropology
University of Delhi
13. Special Secretary, Member
Planning Commission.
Government of India,
New Delhi.
14. Shri K. Rajan, Member
Adviser (Agri, E&F),
Planning Commission
15. Shri R.C- Jhamtani
Joint Adviser Member-Secretary
(Environment & Forests)
Planning Commission

Terms of Reference:

- 1) To make recommendations towards development of a national policy on the Himalayas for an integrated mountain development with a view to ensuring that the entire region is used to the best advantage of our country.
 - 2) To make an assessment of scientific, environmental and material resources of the Himalayan region.
 - 3) To identify specific areas of activity which fit into the ecology of the Himalayan region and are consistent with the socio-economic character of the region/
 - 4) To estimate the carrying capacity of environmentally sensitive areas within the Himalayan region.
 - 5) To suggest suitable organisational mechanism to implement the proposed policy.
- Non-official Members of this Group would be entitled to TA/DA as per Government norms.

The report of the Expert Group would be submitted within three months,

(N.K. MALHOTRA)
Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India

All Members

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION - 1

Constitution of Himalayan Development Authority (HDA)

The Group would recommend the creation of an Apex Body at the national level. Such an apex body called the Himalayan Development Authority (HDA) should be headed by the Prime Minister with Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, the Ministers of the concerned Central Ministries/ Departments and the Chief Ministers of the Himalayan States, as a Policy Planning Authority. This could be assisted by a Steering Group headed by the Member in-charge of Environment in Planning Commission and associating Secretaries of the concerned Central Ministries/Departments and Chief Secretaries of the concerned States. If, however, because of the preoccupations of the Prime Minister, he is unable to chair the Authority, then it should be chaired by the Deputy Chairman. The Secretariat-of the Authority should be the Planning Commission.

RECOMMENDATION-2

Creation of National Himalayan Environment and Development Fund (NHEDF)

The Group recommends, that a National Himalayan Environment and Development Fund (NHEDF) would be necessary to accelerate the implementation of the National Policy for Integrated Development in the Himalayas. The Fund should start with a reasonable allocation and once its effectiveness and role gets established, the allocation should be enhanced suitably.

RECOMMENDATION-3

Enlarged role of the Ministry of Environment and Forests(MOEF)

The Ministry of Environment and Forests must strengthen its role in the Himalayan region. It should have a separate Division dealing with the problems of the Himalayas in an integrated fashion. This Division must have competent staff members dealing with

administration, management and scientific inputs leading to better quality of life of the people of the Himalayan regions. The G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment & Development under the MOEF should be used as a nodal agency to identify the problems to be effectively tackled by the Ministry. Similarly the Botanical Survey of India and the Zoological Survey of India should continuously monitor the biodiversity and the fate of endangered species of plants and animals. The Group will recommend that, if there is a need, the MOEF should be provided with additional statutory responsibility and authority to deal with the implementation of the National Policy. There is also a need for considerable improvement in the management of National Parks, Sanctuaries and Biosphere Reserves spread in different parts of the Himalayan Region. These require, not only policing and vigilance but the enforcement of a proper scheme for the management of wild life, If the MOEF feels considerable difficulty in the management, a decentralised approach of making the States fully responsible for their protection may be considered.

RECOMMENDATION-4

Linkages and Cooperation of Scientific Institutions

There are a host of institutions working in the country where work undertaken would be relevant to both development process and environmental conservation. The Government of India has established the G.B. Pant Himalayan Institute of Environment and Development (GBPHIED) as the Nodal Agency. It is, therefore, necessary that under the leadership role of the GBPHIED, an effective networking with the various other scientific institutions is systematically established.

It may not be easy to bring on one platform different scientific institutions working in different fields. There may be a vast diversity in the orientation of these institutions - educational, basic scientific research, applied sciences and technology generation etc. While some of the institutions are managed by the Central Government, some are run by the State Governments, others by autonomous bodies.

Nevertheless, in view of the critical importance of the Himalayan Region in several ways, it is necessary to create a mechanism where different scientific institutions can interact with each other. They may deal with any one aspect or several others of relevance to the development and preservation of the environment of the Himalayas. The Group recommends that the GBPHIED should organise get-togethers of the scientific institutions annually. The task before the scientific community is large enough to warrant pooling of resources be that manpower, infrastructure, etc. to undertake studies/research of immediate relevance. The possibility of creating a separate all India Association on the pattern of Agriculture Sciences and others called the Himalayan Region Scientific Association with its Headquarters in GBPHIED may be explored. It should meet annually at some selected place in the region.

RECOMMENDATION – 5

Interaction of Natural Sciences with Social Sciences

Many social factors have influence both on development and the manner in which the society looks at the environmental issues as also effective communication to bring about awareness on the sustainability of the development paths being followed. It would be very useful if the Social Sciences are also dovetailed with the Natural Science and Technology inputs in bringing about environmental friendly development process of the Himalayan Region.

The Group feels that the country's socio-economic development should be seen as one comprehensive whole. Any integrated policy of the Himalayan region will be just a segment of the country's socio-economic development process. Islands of exclusiveness in the development of one region or the other may be socio-politically unsustainable. Any attempt at 'we and they syndrome' would result in sub-optimality of the planning for development as also from the conservation angle.

The entire Himalayan region from the conservation angle must be broadly seen as comprising of three sub regions namely, lower hills, the middle hills and the higher reaches. These have significant variations in terms of flora and fauna and the kind of development measures required to be taken up. The Group, therefore recommends a proper interaction between Natural Scientists and Social Scientists in the Annual Session noted earlier.

RECOMMENDATION – 6

Preparation of Guidelines for Development Projects in States

By and large the states action in attempting an environmentally friendly development process may be seen to lie in two broad fields. The first relates to regulation process with a view to preserve ecology and environment. The second looks at programmes which seek to reduce the adverse impact of development projects on environment as well as those measures aiming at qualitative upgradation. The Himalayan Region has been considered as an ecologically fragile area. In this light the Group recommends that the Ministry of Environment and Forests must frame detailed guidelines on various considerations which need to be kept in view while providing environmental clearances for development projects under the Environment Protection Act, be that by the central or state Governments. It is necessary to make these guidelines transparent and enforced in a fair manner free from arbitrariness.

RECOMMENDATION – 7

Preservation of Biodiversity and Genetic Resources

The vast genetic diversity that exists in the Himalayan region, both of flora and fauna, needs to be preserved for posterity, (in situ conservation of the genetic diversity and resources in many situations may be inescapable. However, declaration of any area as biosphere reserve and closing down the area from human interference can have substantial impacts on those living within or in adjoining areas.

The Group recommends a time bound programme for inventonsation of genetic resources in the Himalayan region under the aegis of the Botanical Survey of India and Zoological Survey of India. In this, the traditional universities and other academic institutions or agencies, must also be associated to complete this process in a well- defined time framework.

A fuller understanding of the flora and fauna and their propagation can assist in ex situ conservation of endangered species, wherever such measures are essential or desirable and feasible. A systematic attempt at the conservation of germ plasm and genetic resources must be attempted for which a detailed master plan must be evolved.

RECOMMENDATION – 8

Maintenance of Forest Cover

Maintenance of the forest cover and their upgradation through forestry programmes are matters of urgent importance. Under the Forest Preservation Act. diversion of forest to non-forest uses has been highly regulated. The Government of India has also laid down a policy of compulsory afforestation wherever diversion to non-forest purposes cannot be avoided. The Group recommends that it needs to be examined whether afforestation of degraded areas in the Himalayan region could be accelerated under this policy even by the deployment of resources to be provided by projects being taken up not essentially within the same states. Part of the funds to be provided by the project authorities for compulsory afforestation could be deployed in the Himalayan region, even if such projects are being established in the states outside the Himalayan region.

RECOMMENDATION – 9

Management of Forests

In some of the states green felling has been prohibited. The Group suggests that green felling should be uniformly and totally prohibited in all the states of the Himalayan region. However, the requirements of the local people of fuel wood to be drawn from lopings, branches and fodder should be met and the existing rights of the local communities safeguarded. Commercial-scale exploitation of the forests should be comprehensively banned.

Forest management as traditionally practised in the area needs to be reviewed. The Group accepts the need for species diversity in the forest area. However, to create employment opportunities and improving the economic well-being, the present policy of afforestation in degraded areas needs to be reviewed. In a multiple tree cropping, as part of the social forestry programme, inclusion of some types of horticultural crops especially the nut bearing trees may contribute both to bringing degraded areas under vegetative cover as well as creation of employment opportunities, increased income flow to the local communities.

The country can gain a great deal -from the experiences gained in forestry management in several other countries. A systematic attempt at collection of world experience and selection of management principles of relevance to Hi-malayan region needs to be undertaken.

RECOMMENDATION – 10

Agriculture and Allied Activities

Agricultural development in the-Himalayan region is characterised by extremely small land holdings and very low land: man ratio. Due to migration of the menfolk from the region seeking employment in the plains and outside of region, in several areas, agriculture is predominantly in the hands of women. The issue in agricultural development process is critical. Efforts that agriculture technology reaches the women folk and the financial credit to women need special focussing,

Given the topography of the area, the rainfall, particularly in the mid hills and higher reaches`, agriculture development, defined in a comprehensive way, may have to be quite distinct. Raising of the seasonal crops without proper terracing, an expensive preposition in any event, makes agriculture operations prone to large scale top soil erosion and unregulated surface run-off leading to degradation of land. Agriculture development may essentially centre round raising perennial vegetation in the form of horticultural crops, fuel and fodder trees, pastures to support animal husbandry programmes etc.

Further agro-forestry and sericulture could also be promoted both from the points of view of increasing the income through high value generating enterprises as well as maintenance/upgradation of ecological balance.

A systematic attempt at the development of perennials should be fully backed up with research in terms of tree cropping systems, species to be grown and should be worked out. A master plan for the development of horticulture, sericulture and other tree based farming system, should be prepared in a time bound manner.

It would also be necessary for the concerned State Governments to be associated with the Union administrative Ministries dealing with the subjects to establish all backward linkages in the form of nurseries to raise sufficient planting material to give operational context to the master plan.

RECOMMENDATION – 11

Packing and Marketing of Horticulture Products

Another critical need is to establish adequate and effective marketing arrangements, particularly when the agricultural commodities produced are perishable in nature such as apples, peaches, strawberries, plums, leachies etc.

The Group would recommend that even in the choice of horticulture programmes it may be worthwhile to pay attention to low volume high value crops which are not highly perishable such as the various types of nuts. Marketing of horticulture products to ensure remunerative returns to the growers will largely influence the success of the horticulture programmes.

Growers organisations should be actively encouraged by the States to collect fruits, vegetables to bring these to central points and thereafter market in different parts of the country.

Often the requirement of packing materials has had unhealthy influence on the maintenance of tree cover in the region due to the over-emphasis on using wooden crates. The National Committee on the use of plastics in Agriculture and under its programmes there are several agencies, which have designed polymer-based packing materials, which could be re-cycled. Specific programmes need to be launched for weaning away the producers, traders etc. from using the wooden crates and promoting the use of plastic materials to reduce the dependence on wood.

An attempt had been made to establish processing units to process fruits, particularly culls and, those not fit for table purposes. The Group understands that some of these processing units are languishing. A detailed analysis and review of the functioning of the processing units must be undertaken and corrective measures taken. Establishments for ensuring value addition, higher returns to producers which will also create employment opportunities in these regions are commended.

RECOMMENDATION – 12

Marketing of Horticultural Products to Neighbouring Countries

Another aspect of marketing of agricultural products in the Himalayan region that the products were being earlier marketed traditionally to China or to, Bangladesh. The Group recognises that the Government of India had initiated measures through the Ministry of External Affairs to improve border trade. This speed is critical for the marketing of agricultural products and needs to be substantially stepped up. This could greatly assist in the producers getting marketing outlets for their products and probably getting a better price.

RECOMMENDATION – 13

Jhuming Cultivation

The slash and burn system of agriculture operations called jhuming is widely prevalent in many of the States of North Eastern Region. Increase of population pressure has reduced the slash and burn cycle from 20-30 years to 5 years or even less. The impact of this on the forest cover, soil erosion has been extensive. Agriculture practices need to be substantially stepped up through minimal terracing arrangement and by the provision of appropriate implements and machinery, minimal irrigation facilities to enable farmers to improve productivity in properly cultivated settled plots. The existing jhuming cultivation has disastrous impact especially in steep slopes. Promotion of horticulture, agro-forestry, and sericulture may be intensively carried out under appropriate schemes - for the rehabilitation of cultivators practising Jhuming.

Success of the programme will be contingent on meeting the requirements of foodgrains and other essentials to the population in the region. The Group cannot over-emphasise on an effective public distribution system to reach the basic essentials to the population if a dent on the jhuming is to be made,

RECOMMENDATION – 14

Irrigation

Provision of irrigation in the hilly terrain is not simple. Presently a system of diversion of water for irrigation of crops in the slopes is being resorted to. Technologies for irrigation practices should be systematically studied and extended under appropriate programmes to the farmers. Installation of improved irrigation devices such as sprinklers and drip irrigation in these regions, especially for the orchards, should be actively promoted.

RECOMMENDATION – 15

Energy

The Himalayan region is rich in resources for production of commercial energy, especially the hydel power. The basic conundrum has, however, been that except in one or two states, the extension of electrification in the region has been tardy. If the benefits of generation of hydel power do not reach the local inhabitants, this is bound to create difficulties in the exploitation of the available natural resources. The Group recommends that in all programmes for tapping of energy sources, meeting the requirements of the people living in the area should merit the highest priority even if the cost of the extension of electricity grid is likely to be relatively more expensive than in the plains. The energy needs of those living in the Himalayas arise for cooking, lighting and warming. A larger network of electricity distribution would reduce the dependence on firewood and hence will protect the forestry resources.

The Himalayan region is rich with sites for generation of micro-hydel power based on perennial streams. Recently emphasis has been laid on tapping of the micro-hydel generation potential. To the extent that the local commune is involved in the operation and maintenance of the micro-hydel generation unit through proper build up of skills and distribution is completely entrusted to local people, this could facilitate realisation of the potential.

In the region, sparsely populated villages in remote areas are a common feature. Non-conventional sources of energy, such as photo-

voltaic cells, use of organic materials for gassification (biogas) and wind turbines can enable meeting the needs of lighting and pumping devices in such villages. The Group recommends that a systematic study of the demand and measures for the supply of energy needs should be attempted and concrete programmes drawn up to be implemented in a time bound manner. For this, a proper mix of the supply through both conventional and non-conventional sources of energy should be attempted.

RECOMMENDATION – 16

Non-Farm Economic Activities

Given the fragility of the Himalayan ecosystem, a large scale industrialisation following the pattern in the plains would be totally unsound environmentally. Some attempts have been made to develop service engineering, especially in terms of extension of the use of electronics in the Hill regions. The choice of industry including the services, which could be extended in the region would need to be carefully worked out.

Apart from the agro-based industries, which are highly recommended, it is necessary to explore other industries based upon usufructs of forests, which could be established in the region. This can augment the economic activities, and should generate higher incomes and provide employment opportunities, Mushroom cultivation and bee- keeping have proved to be most remunerative activities leading to prosperity and must be encouraged to develop their full potential.

RECOMMENDATION – 17

Health, Nutrition and Family Welfare

The Himalayan States have major health problems as prevalent in other parts of the country as also some which are more intensively seen in the Region such as Goitre, Malaria, Respiratory Disorders, STD, AIDS etc. Generally, the contributory factors are under-nutrition, special geo-physical, geo-climatic, socio-economic and other variables present in the Region.

The Group, therefore, recommends that the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare should provide more funds on priority basis for strengthening of National Malaria Eadication Programme, National Tuberculosis Control Programme, Child Survival and Safe Motherhood programme, National Iodine Deficiency Disorder Control Programme and National AIDS Control Programme in these areas.

The Group also recommends that the access to health services should be significantly improved in the area particularly in relation to establishment of the Sub- Centres and Primary Health Centres so that adequate Infrastructural facilities are available for delivery of Health and Family Welfare Services. The backlog of establishment of Sub-Centres, particularly in the tribal and difficult areas should be removed as early as possible.

The Sub-Centres, Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres and other health institutions should be fully operationalized by providing physical facilities including buildings and residential quarters, filling up of all vacant posts and ensuring supply of essential drugs, dressings and other consummables. Resources of Rural Development schemes like JRY, special area projects and adoption of cheaper technology for building construction should be used for removing the backlog in physical facilities. Because of the acute shortage of medical facilities in these areas the use of indigenous systems of medicines should be promoted and integrated in general health services.

Pilot studies should be undertaken in a few districts in each Himalayan State to generate district level data base for assessing the prevalence and causes of morbidity and mortality in the Region. National level institutions viz. ICMR, NIHFV, selected Medical Colleges

(including colleges of Indian System of Medicine) may be entrusted the above responsibility.

RECOMMENDATION - 18

Preparedness for living in Earthquake – prone areas

Some regions of the Himalayas are very vulnerable to earthquakes as they form a part of the Alpine seismic belt. More than a dozen earthquakes, equal to or exceeding the magnitude 7.5 have occurred in these areas during the last 100 years including the Uttarkashi Earthquake of October 20, 1991. Since it is difficult to make accurate predictions of the earthquakes, the Group recommends the following measures;

1) Adoption of a building code for earthquake-prone zones. There are inexpensive methods adopted by Japan and other countries which should be strictly followed while designing the buildings and houses in the seismic zone. The Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee has developed some inexpensive designs.

2) Standards for earthquake resistant structures should be developed for the Indian conditions.

3) To reduce future danger in the event of earthquakes, the very pattern of living of the people must be modified and adapted in a suitable manner. Precautions like not keeping heavy objects above the head-level, not leaving heavy objects loose on the ground, keeping first-aid kit and emergency supplies of food ready at all times should be followed. There are many guidelines for preparedness. It is very desirable to discuss these amongst the family and community so that some organised efforts could be made at a time of any eventuality. People are just not aware of them.

RECOMMENDATION - 19

Floods and Communication

Improving the access to the inhabitants of the region, on one hand, and the adverse effect of the construction of large network of roads do produce a dilemma. Adverse effects of the construction of roads, without safeguards, have posed serious problems of land slides. This not only affects the movement of men and material, leading to heavy siltation, but also destroys agricultural lands and forests. Special studies ought to be conducted on the construction methodology of roads in the hills as would minimise the adverse effects and all safeguards, even if these increase the costs, should be taken so that the construction of roads is not environmentally damaging and will not lead to ecological disturbances, land degradation and soil erosion, disruption in drainage pattern, loss of forestry, vegetation and aesthetic degradation. The Group recommends that the Central Road Research Institute of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) must be consulted for the design and construction of roads under specialised conditions such as the Himalayan Region.

It is also necessary that the road network should be so planned that no attempt is made to reach each and every habitation. Alternative construction of bridle paths, trollies, ropeways to move materials from hamlets and orchards to central collection points on the main roads, would need to be explored. All villages or groups of villages with a population of 500 or above should be connected with all-weather roads.

RECOMMENDATION – 20

Tourism

One of the major activities in the Himalayas is tourism both in the form of pilgrim tourism and for pleasure and adventure. While infrastructural facilities would need to be created to enable tourism to develop fully in the Himalayan region and become a major economic activity, it is necessary that the impact of the creation of luxury hotels, eating places at the cost of local ecology must be studied in depth.

Home/cottage tourism, especially for the pilgrim and middle class tourists, would need to be promoted actively. Liberal credit should be available to the local inhabitants to construct paying guest accommodation. This will provide both income and employment to the local population, while simultaneously creating infrastructure for the middle-class tourist coming from outside.

RECOMMENDATION – 21

Development of Tribal Population

Most of the tribal population lives in isolated rural areas. They are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture and agro-related activities. Food security is an important component not only for their survival but also for their well-being. Other element of their overall development is related to employment or their right to work. The Group, therefore, feels that highest priority should be given to agriculture and other food-generating activities. Literacy, primary education, health, shelter and protection of their children should also form components of developmental plan. Promotion of the role and status of women in the tribal society must receive major consideration to make human development holistic. The ultimate objective of our planning should be that all basic needs should become within the reach of the tribal population of the Himalayan region. The concerned state governments must develop action plans to bring in prosperity to the tribals.

RECOMMENDATION – 22

Institutional Arrangements in States

In the states, which fall entirely in the Himalayan region, one could expect that in every aspect of its administration, the special features of the Himalayan region, particularly the fragile ecological system, would be kept uppermost in mind. In Uttar Pradesh, a separate Hill Development Department has been created to address itself to the principal issues peculiar to the region. In the case of West Bengal, a separate Darjeeling Qorkha Hill Council has been established. The District Councils in the North-Eastern region play an extremely important role in guiding the affairs of the local areas. Nevertheless, the Group feels that in many ways the administrative pattern seems to be more or less parallel and on the model, carried out elsewhere. The Group cannot over-emphasise the fact that in every aspect of the administration of the affairs of the people living in the hills, special considerations which require to be bestowed on various aspects of socio-economic development must be integrally incorporated. Preservation of environment and maintenance of ecological balance must merit maximum attention.

RECOMMENDATION – 23

Involvement of NGOs, Voluntary Organisation etc.

In several regions of the Himalayan States, the local people have adopted technologies as have enabled them to meet their needs without serious adverse implications on environmental preservation and ensuring the local ecology does not get impaired. The Group suggests that in the process of generation of technologies for development, adequate attention needs to be paid for integrating indigenous technologies which have stood the test of time and this must be consciously looked at and promoted.

There is an increasing recognition that sound socio-economic development would only be possible through active peoples' involvement and participation in the formulation and implementation of plans, especially in terms of harmonising the environmental concerns and economic growth. The Group recommends that a fuller understanding of the felt-needs of the local people, their wisdom

can be expected to contribute towards this. Several NGOs have been actively involved in the upliftment of the local communities and have been able to articulate the perceptions of the local community. The developmental programmes must associate NGOs, which could improve their efficacy. The Group also feels that the association of the International Centre for Integrated Development of Mountains (ICIMOD) would be extremely beneficial for further guidelines and advice in the removal of poverty.

RECOMMENDATION – 24

Source of Funding

Projects, schemes, new studies or investigations emerging from the recommendations noted above will require financial inputs. For this very reason the creation of a National Himalayan Environmental and Development Fund (NHEDF) has been suggested. This Fund, initially would not be large enough to cover all what might be needed, but depending upon the success in the implementation and the response that this report receives, the quantum of allocation could be enlarged suitably.

The Group has not suggested the establishment of any new institutions or research centres but has stressed upon the need for creating linkages and E-cooperation between the existing institutions, agencies, voluntary organisations and the States dealing with the Himalayan Region. It has identified one institute as a nodal point and has suggested the creation of a platform for holding annual meetings and the formation of an Association in which all the existing institutions (Band agencies would be clubbed to work together to bring in prosperity and sustainable development in the Himalayas. All legitimate expenditure in implementing such a programme should be met by the NHEDF.