

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3599
ANSWERED ON:15.05.2006
LOSS OF HARD CORAL
Gandhi Smt. Maneka

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

(a) whether according to the United Nations Atlas of the Oceans, 250 cu. Mts. of hard coral is being removed from the Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu @ 1 cu Mts. per year for limestone; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to stop this degradation of coral?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRINAMO NARAIN MEENA)

(a) As per the information provided by the State of Tamil Nadu, the removal of corals was in the form of illegal quarrying by the local fishermen in the past. The practice was to collect the coral reefs washed ashore in the coastal areas of Gulf of Mannar. The coral reefs which were damaged during the fishing and other activities were collected illegally and used in the limestone industry.

(b) The steps taken by the Government to prevent the degradation of coral include:

1. The following Coelenterates (corals) are listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 affording highest degree of protection:

a. All Scleractinians (Reef building Corals)

b. All Antipatherians (Black Corals)

c. Tubipora musica{ Organ pipe coral)

d. All Millipora species (Fire Corals)

e. All Gprgonians (Sea Fans)

2. Gulf of Mannar is among four National Coral Reef Areas identified by Ministry of Environment and Forests for intensive conservation and

1 management. Financial assistance is also provided.

3. Gulf of Mannar National Park was notified in 1986 for strengthening conservation efforts. Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve was notified in 1989.

4. The High Court of Tamil Nadu vide order dated 29.3.05 had permitted industry to purchase dead corals being washed ashore. However, Tamil Nadu Forest Department affected a stay of this order.

5. All efforts are being made for protection of the coral reefs in the entire area of the Gulf of Mannar.