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Title: Alleged violation of agreement by DRDO with the Forest and Environment Department of Orissa on protecting the nesting of endangered Olive Ridley Sea turtles at Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary in Orissa.

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the House, through you, and specifically the attention of the Ministry dealing with Defence.

We are all for the testing of missiles. But a new problem has cropped up relating to the nesting of Olive Ridley turtles. This matter relates to the nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles which has been disrupted because of the missile tests that are being conducted by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) violating the stipulated agreement with the Orissa Forest and Environment Department. Environmentalists are up in arms now as the annual mass nesting of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles has not taken place so far this year at Gahiramatha Marine Sanctuary, the largest nesting grounds of endangered turtles in the world.

Missile launches by the DRDO are affecting nesting patterns of this endangered species that enjoys the same legal protection as the tigers. As per the agreement with the Orissa Wildlife Department, the DRDO is not supposed to either conduct missile tests or use bright lights during the turtle nesting season. Despite the agreement, missiles were test fired and at that time turtles were approaching the beach of NASI-I and NASI-II, the two tiny islands of the Northern Portion of Gahiramatha. That is why, I would request the Government to find out how this agreement was breached and to take further steps because, in the near future, towards the end of this month, the Agni-III is going to be tested. So, adequate measures should be taken to protect the endangered Olive Ridley turtles. At the same time, the missiles should be tested without affecting the endangered turtles.