

# LOK SABHA DEBATES

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## LOK SABHA

Monday, April 30, 1990/Vaisakha 10, 1912  
(Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at four minutes past  
Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

#### Environmental Appraisal Committee

636. PROF. MAHADEO SHIWANKAR:  
Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND  
FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the composition of Environmental

Appraisal Committee for River Valley Proj-  
ects;

(b) the recommendations made by the  
Committee; and

(c) the date on which the Tehri Dam  
Project was approved from the environmental  
angle and the items on which expenditure  
has already been incurred on the said proj-  
ect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FOR-  
ESTS (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a)  
and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of  
the House.

(c) The project has not so far been  
approved from the environmental angle.  
However, a sum of Rs. 448.25 crores has  
been incurred on the construction of the  
diversion tunnels, head race tunnels, ap-  
proach adits and other infrastructural works.

### STATEMENT

(a) The composition of the standing Environmental Appraisal Committee of the Ministry  
of Environment and Forests for River Valley and Hydro Electric Projects is given below:—

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1.	Dr. D.R. Bhumbra	Chairman
2.	Dr. B.K. Roy Burman	Member
3.	Dr. H.S. Panwar	—do—
4.	Shri O.N. Kaul	—do—
5.	Dr. K. Srirama Krishanaiah	—do—
6.	Dr. M.V.V.L. Narasimham	—do—
7.	Dr. Subrata Sinha	—do—
8.	Dr. Shekhar Singh	—do—

9.	Prof. Shivaji Rao	—do—
10.	Shri Shyam Chainani	—do—
11.	Prof. Virendra Kumar	—do—
12.	Dr. S. Maudgal	—do—
13.	Dr. (Mrs.) Nalini Bhat	Member-Secretary

*PERMANENT INVITEES:*

1. Adviser, Irrigation and Command Area Development, Planning Commission.
2. Chief Engineer, Central Water Commission.
3. Chief Engineer, Central Electricity Authority.

(b) From the assessment of the data furnished and detailed discussions held with concerned agencies and experts, the Committee unanimously concluded that:

- The Committee is convinced that the consequences of the dam failure are disastrous and, the risk of dam failure is clearly unacceptable.
- The ecological and social impacts have not been adequately studied or planned for. The Status of rehabilitation and catchment area treatment done so far is appalling and, the cultural and social aspects have been ignored altogether.
- The adverse environmental implications of the project are not commensurate with its potential benefits. The project has not clearly established that it can result in optimal use of natural resources.
- The Committee is conscious of the fact that the project has been under execution since 1972, and yet, the requisite data and Action Plans are either not available or are too sketchy. The Committee, therefore, concluded that no purpose would

be served by waiting any longer for further data and formulation of Action Plans to arrive at a decision.

- Therefore, taking into consideration the geological and seismic setting, the risks and hazards, ecological and social impacts accompanying the project, the costs and benefits expected; and after a careful examination of the information and data available, the Committee has come to the unanimous conclusion that the Tehri Dam Project, as proposed, should not be taken up as it does not merit environmental clearance.

**PROF. MAHADEO SHIWANKAR:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Planning Commission had given its approval on the project in 1972. I would like to know as to what was the estimated cost of the project in 1972. I would also like to know as to when the Reappraisal Committee was constituted or its constitution was announced and what was the ground therefor? It may also please be stated whether the 13 persons who were there on the committee were technical or non-technical personnel and also when the report of that committee was received by the Government.

[*English*]

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: Sir, in 1972, this project was initially proposed to have an installed capacity of 600 megawatt at a cost of Rs. 197.92 crores. The administrative approval for the project was given by the Government of U.P. in 1976. It could not be taken up by the Government due to public resentment. Because of the opposition to the project, the Petitions Committee of Parliament constituted in 1977 was to look into the matter. Its report could not be submitted because of the dissolution of Parliament towards the end of 1979. In 1980, the then Prime Minister gave a statement. She directed that certain projects were to be reviewed including the Silent Valley, the Dam in Tehri Garhwal and the Dam in Lalpur, Gujarat. According to her, it seemed that larger areas of land have been submerged without any commensurate gain. It is true that these decisions have been taken over a period of time. But there is a great local distress and a feeling that contractors and other group will be the main gainers. In the light of her statement, the matter was referred to an Export Working Group which submitted its interim report in May 1980, and the final report in 1986. After due consideration of the recommendations of this Working Group and despite the fact that a sum of Rs. 206 crores has already been spent in the project, the Ministry of Environment and Forests arrived in October 1986 at an unequivocal term that the project should be abandoned. However, in November 1986, an agreement was entered into with the Soviet Union for providing technical and financial assistance for this project to the tune of one thousand million Rouble. The need for obtaining environmental clearance even in the absence of Environment Action Plan, became urgent. The Ministry of Finance made a recommendation on the basis of consideration of the revised cost estimate and they said that they would release further funds to the Tehri Dam project conditional to its prior environmental clearance. This, they said in 1989. Accordingly, the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation formulated environmental action plan for consideration and

assessment by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. These plans were received on 29th November, 1989 and 15th December 1989 and discussed by the Environmental Appraisal Committee for River Valley Project on 18th December 1989. The Committee arrived at its conclusion that the project should be abandoned.

Now, the second supplementary put by the hon. Member is about the revised cost estimate over the years. When the project started, it was Rs. 197.92 crores. The revised cost estimate, some years later, went up to Rs. 3008.8 crores.

[*Translation*]

PROF. MAHADEO SHIWANKAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, since 1984 or so, a number of irrigation projects are lying pending. I would like to come to the main issue. Please let me know whether the Tehri Dam Project was prepared in consultation with the Soviet experts? However, the pro-American interests whether inside the country or outside and other Western countries, who enjoy developed facilities, are making, all out efforts to see that the irrigation projects in India are not executed. That is the reason that a large number of irrigation projects in the country have been held up. My question, is whether the Narmada Dam Project which is being opposed by Baba Amte and the pro-American lobby should be stalled for these people who call themselves environmentalists—and thereby hold up the country's development. These pro-American people and the capitalists are speaking in that tone.

MR. SPEAKER: Please put your question.

PROF. MAHADEO SHIWANKAR: I am coming to that.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Let the Minister reply.

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: I think that is extremely uncharitable to call any-

body Americanvadi or a *punjipati* or having vested interests without having detailed information. There has been a move here that anybody who criticises anything that happens is obviously doing so because of vested interests. The environmentalists may be right or wrong, I do not know and I am not taking a balanced judgment. But I think it is for you to call them 'vested interests' and say that there is money behind them: I would say on the other hand that they have no contractor backing them and there is no percentage available. So, it is an unfair judgment to make. On the other hand you have asked me whether the Members to the Technical Appraisal Committee were technical people or not. They were all technical people and the question cannot be asked of me as to whether these people were motivated by pro-American or pro-Russian interests. As far as I am concerned, I am motivated and I presume that my predecessor was motivated only by Indian interests and by the environmental concern for his country. So, you cannot ask us a question: 'Do you think that you are motivated?' It is not correct.

SHRI BHABANI SHANKAR HOTA: I would like to put a specific question to the hon. Minister. Wherever the question of environmental protection comes, generally the schemes and programmes are undertaken by the Government either through the Department of Irrigation or through the Departments of Mines or Steel or whatever it is and the cause of ecology and environment suffers. In this case, as has been correctly pointed out, they are all technical people and I want to have a categorical assurance from the hon. Minister whether the Department of Environment is going to compromise on the Tehri Dam and see that the Tehri Dam is totally stopped because the cost-benefit analysis shows that the cost will be more and the benefit will be less.

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: I must inform you that the Environmental Appraisal Committee has given its report. We have not given the clearance as yet. However, this matter has been referred to an Expert Committee and they have given clearance,

the matter is still to come back to us and it is under consideration.

Regarding the general question about the project suffering because of the ecological consideration, why did no one ever ask the question whether the ecology has suffered because of that?

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAM NAIK: Mr. Speaker, Sir, projects are not cleared by the Ministry of Environment in this manner. In fact, the Water Resources Department, in the case of Centre, and the Department of Irrigation in the case of States, makes a provision of the required funds in the Budget. A sum of Rs. 448 crores was provided for it and the work had been started. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether steps will be taken to ensure that, as a matter of policy, clearance of the Ministry of Environment is invariably be taken failing which no irrigation project, either by the Centre or by the States, would be taken up? Otherwise, for the complications created by the various Ministers, the project work does not make a progress. Will the Central Government decide it finally by taking a policy decision in this regard.

[*English*]

SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI: Sir, there is no difference between the Ministry of Water Resources or me or any other Member of the Government. We all want development of the country. However, a lot of projects were started even before the Environment Ministry was started. For instance, this Tehri Dam project is a project of 1972. It had only come to us for environmental clearance in 1980. The report was given 1986 and again in 1989. In future, I think it would be better for all concerned if the environmental clearance is obtained at the planning stage itself so that all projects can be safe, speedy and beneficial—costwise and environment wise.

SHRI RAM NAIK: Has the Government

taken any decision in this regard?

**SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI:** I think the Government has already taken a decision and all future projects will come under it.

**SHRI P.M. SAYEED:** Sir, I am a victim of this Environment Ministry. As you know, this Environment Department is testing the two Union Territories of Andaman and Lakshadweep as laboratories. An amount of Rs. 50 lakh was spent in the case of break water project in Lakshadweep and Andaman. After giving clearance, the Environment Ministry had asked some foreign concern to conduct a study. So, may I know from the hon. Minister that this kind of repetition would be stopped in future?

**SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI:** Sir, as far as the hon. Member's question is concerned, I am unaware of the details.

#### **Social Forestry Programme**

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\*638. **PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:**  
**SHRI SRIKANTHA DATTA NARASIMHA RAJA WADIYAR:**

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

(a) the amount spent on social forestry programmes during the last three years, State-wise;

(b) the targets fixed and achieved both in terms of area as well as number of trees planted and survived during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise;

(c) the outcome of evaluation study, if made, in respect of these programmes; and

(d) the steps taken or contemplated to give a further fillip to these programmes?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI):** (a) to (d). Statement is laid on the table of the House.

#### **STATEMENT**

(a) and (b). Details of State-wise expenditure, targets and achievements in terms of area and number of trees planted are given in Annexures I, II and III below.

(c) The main achievements of the Social Forestry Programme have been:

(i) During the Seventh Plan period (1985-90) targets for afforestation and tree planting have been achieved.

(ii) Tree planting activities have been taken outside the forest areas and Farm/Agro Forestry has been promoted.

(iii) There has been increase in the production of wood biomass in the country.

(iv) Employment and income in the rural areas have been augmented.

However, the scope of the programme has been limited to tree planting and the thrust in favour of fuelwood/fodder production and people's participation has not been appreciable results.

(d) With a view to increase the effectiveness of the programme, there will be special emphasis on enlisting peoples' participation, harnessing the inputs of science and technology planning and implementation. The new strategy aims at integrated land use planning on watershed basis, village level action plans, emphasis on conservation and natural regeneration, fuelwood, fodder and timber production and technology extension.