

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, I shall put the main Resolution to the vote. The question is:

"This House is of the opinion that in order to make it possible for the people to be involved in the democratic process and developmental activities, the freedom provided under the Constitution to the individuals, organisations and political parties to carry on their legitimate political activities should be restored, all political prisoners be released, and the press censorship established after the proclamation of the Emergency and the recently adopted press acts should be repealed."

The motion was negatived.

17.34 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE: NATIONAL FOREST POLICY

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we take up the next Resolution. Mr. P. K. Deo.

SHRI B. V. NAIK (Kanara): What is the time allotted to this?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two hours.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: We will not get this time today. May we have the time extended today, so that this important Resolution on forests is discussed today?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have allotted two hours for this. The question of extending the time can be considered when we come to the end of two hours. Now, let him start.

SHRI B. V. NAIK: If we close today at 6.00 p.m., then we are not going to have one more day for this Resolution during this Session. That means, it will come up only in the next Session.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. P. K. Deo

SHRI P. K. DEO (Kalahandi): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to move:

"This House notes with concern the large scale denudation of forest in the country and urges upon the Government to have a more pragmatic national forest policy so that 33.3 per cent area of the country is covered by forest."

In this regard, I would like to point out that there is nothing new in my Resolution. I have simply reiterated the National Forest Policy which was formulated in 1952 when the need for afforestation was recognised so as to cover 33.3 per cent of the entire area of the country. I now urge upon the Government to have a more realistic and a pragmatic national policy in view of the disappearance, at a frightening pace with huge economic and ecological cost, of the forest in this country.

We had enough lip-sympathy regarding preservation of forests and we have enough of *Vanamahotsav*, but as far we have been unable to fulfil our target; not more than 22.7 per cent of our country has been covered with forests. That too, to me is a very big claim because I know that there are many reserve forests just for name sake, and not a single tree is to be seen there. Those areas have been encroached by unauthorised cultivation. Stealing of timber has been going on on a large scale by the contractors and by the neighbouring villagers.

80.1 per cent of India's 550 million people live in the villages and one-fifth of the world's cattle population lives in rural India. This vast human and animal population has been growing at a fast rate. So far as population growth is concerned it has been rising at a rate of 2.5 per cent every year with accompanying enormous demand for fuel wood, small timber for agricultural implements for rural housing, thorns and bamboos for fencing, thatch for roof and timber for doors and furniture. The requirement of firewood alone is estimated to grow upto 250 million cubic metres by

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1980 and 300 million cubic metres by 1990 as compared to 203 million cubic metres in 1970. This will result in a gap of 100 million cubic metres of timber between demand and supply. This has to be looked into from today.

Per capita forest area in this country is only 0.14 hectare as compared to double this figure so far as Asia is concerned. It is 16 times in Africa, 28 times in U.S.S.R. 34 times in Pacific region, 40 times in South America and 9 times in the world as a whole.

Contrary to our National Forest Policy of 1952, 1,83,625 hectares of reserve forest has been lost in River Valley Projects, expansion of agriculture, in new townships and resettlement of refugees, more particularly in the Dandarkanya area in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, by setting up of various industries, construction of roads, canals, transmission lines, and last but not the least, illicit felling which is the biggest menace to the forest growth in this country. While our forests have been dwindling, the demand for fuel wood and timber and minor forest produce has been increasing very fast. In my State of Orissa, the total forest area is 6740 sq. km. of which 3158 sq. km. are yet to be demarcated and reserved. So, nearly half of the forest area has been converted into reserve forests and the rest are still lying undemarcated. We note here with great concern the forest denudation that has been going on at an alarming pace. Deforestation causes more misery to the people and there is no doubt about it. And this disappearance of forests will bring in its train awesome land slides and soil erosion, land productivity will go down, climatic changes will take place, streams dry up and the irrigation and power projects on which so much money has been spent will be silted up in no time and it will bring more incidence of floods. Both ecological and environmental damage will be done affecting the climate, the flora and fauna of the entire

area. So, taking into consideration all these factors, when I tried to analyse them, I found that there are three main causes. No. 1 is the indiscriminate cutting of the trees by the villagers to meet the demand for firewood. So far as the avenue trees are concerned, I feel it my duty to bring to the notice of the House that even avenue trees which are 100 or 150 years old and particularly in my constituency, trees which have been planted by my ancestors, have been mercilessly hacked under the very nose of the government officials. All my attempts to bring it to the notice of the authorities in the Block Development Board meetings and the District Development Board meetings have been just a cry in wilderness.

A directive has been sent from the Centre that fast-growing trees should be planted on both sides of the roads and on the bank of the canals. But it is only in Haryana and Punjab that they have taken steps in this regard. It is really a pleasure to drive on the State Highways or the National Highways in Punjab and Haryana and you feel as if you are driving through a garden. But, so far as other States are concerned, it is far from satisfactory, and the avenue trees are being mercilessly cut down. Even mango groves are being cut down in UP and Bihar where it used to be considered a pious and religious duty to plant a mango grove during the lifetime of an individual and the mango trees are also fast disappearing. So, there has been a complete denudation of the forest wealth of the country.

The States have been asked to form Forest Corporations to exploit the forest wealth of the States. But once the juggernaut of the contractors moves into the forest area, they overbid at the auction of copes even though there has been enumeration of the trees by the forest officials and they know what is the worth of the timber that will be available from the area. In spite of that, for the sake of revenue, they permit overbidding and

they give the licence to the highest bidder. As a result they come there and try to steal from the neighbouring forests and they completely upset the working plan of the forest which has been prepared on a scientific basis, to provide a rotation of nearly 30 years for the trees to re-grow. In this regard, I would request the Minister or if he likes, let him send the IG of Forests or any other big officer in his Ministry to go and see in my area. Especially, I request him to come and see the Utladani reserve forest which is the catchment area of the UTAI project which is on a perennial river and where just by diversion, we are irrigating 30,000 acres of land even in the dry season. Its perennial flow in the catchment area will no longer be there because of indiscriminate felling of trees. In no time that beautiful irrigation project will be spoiled. Let him go and see the Karla-pat Reserve Forest which is the source of the Sagra river. This is a perennial river and on it depends upon the water supply system of the town of Bhawani Patna the headquarters of the Kalahandi District. In my lifetime the Sagra river has never dried up. It is because of the discriminate felling of the trees in the catchment area that last year there was no flow of water in the Sagra river and the people of the district headquarters had to suffer for shortage of drinking water.

The third problem is about the shifting cultivation resorted to by the tribals. So much money has been spent for the tribals. I request that they should be persuaded to take to plough and they should be settled on the plain land. All the surplus land which would be available after the land reforms should be earmarked to settle these tribals and to persuade them to come down from the hill slopes, take to plough and to give up their old traditional way of cultivation.

The fourth is hunger for land. There has been a systematic encroachment. In spite of the best effort of the Government officials, it is because

of the petty corrupt forest guards or 'oresters in the forest area, that the forest has been destroyed by the local villagers. So I beg to submit that there should not be any isolated approach or tinkering with a problem like this. We shall have to go to the root of the problem and its various ramifications. Then only we can expect concrete results.

Sir, some experts have pointed out that Rajasthan Thar desert has been advancing eastward at the rate of 1 K.M. every year. So far as my district is concerned, when I was a child, I remember, we used to have an annual rainfall of 65" but now it has come down to 35". It is because there has been discriminate felling of trees, and complete denudation of forests, in that area. And, more so, it has become a post-independent feature. We had independence on 15th of August, 1947, and in the same month of August, there was one patch of reserve forest inside in my constituency by the name of Jalbandha forests. within 15 days the entire reserve forest are not to be seen. After the trees are lost, it is the grass which holds the soil. Because of over-grazing by the cattle, the top soil is either blown away or washed away and only the sand dunes are found in the desert. In my area you will find huge granite rocky boulders without any top soil. So, there is absolutely no chance and there is no capacity on the part of that land to support either trees or lives of any type.

So, I would most respectfully submit this. There should be dynamic and effective steps which should be taken as has been done in the USA, Canada and some other parts of Europe. China has taken a very bold step in this regard. During Mao's regime, it has become the duty of every Chinese citizen to plant trees. Now all those former barren areas have been covered by trees.

I find that a new awareness has recently dawned and recently a seminar was held in Ahmedabad from 20th to 24th February of this year on Social

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Forestry. They made various valuable recommendations. I request that the Government should consider those aspects and try to implement them. They should be given top priority.

Before I conclude, I would like to make some suggestions. All-round anti-soil-erosion measures like contour-bunding soil-conservation, afforestation in the catchment area, of proposed dams, etc. should be taken up. These tree leaves and the other plants produce rich humus. If they are untouched, they form a porous spongy mass which absorbs, retains and regulates the flow of the rain-water. By the time the dam is completed there is little scope for the reservoirs to get silted up. And, secondly, I would suggest that quick-growing trees like eucalyptus, casurine, sisao, teak, babul, rain-tree, etc. should be grown in the various waste lands.

Sir in this regard, I would like to point out that the Arizona Arid Land Research Centre has recently developed a new tree that is, *Ajman's Gogoba*. The life span of the tree is 300 years. The leaves provide nutrition to the animals, the seeds provide a type of vegetable oil. The trees act as wind-brakers in the desert area.

I would like to submit that the Centre cannot take all the responsibility in both their hands. It is a programme for the people and hence of the people. The people should be educated. The usefulness of the tree has to be taught from the very childhood and it should find a place in the school curriculum; it should be publicised through the various publicity media.

I am glad that there has been a new awareness in some sections of our people which has manifested itself in the Chipko movement in Uttarakhand, U.P.

For cutting down of trees, I suggest, there should be drastic penal laws.

Sir, I am glad that the Government of India has made some provision to give an impetus to social forestry. They have provided a subsidy of 75 per cent to the panchayats and 50 per cent to the States for which a provision of Rs. 10 crores has been made in the Fifth Five-year Plan. The State Governments also have made a provision of Rs. 20 crores. So, in all, if these Rs. 30 crores are properly utilised, we would be able to achieve something.

Thirdly, I suggest that an alternate source of energy has to be found out. Now, people have started using petroleum gas for cooking. But it has become very expensive and it is not easily available. So, the gobar gas plant, which has become very popular in Haryana has to be popularised in the other States. We are surplus in coal. People should be habituated to cook in coal.

Solar energy has to be tapped. A colleague of mine in the Second Lok Sabha has invented one solar cooker. But it is very expensive. Some indigenous type of cheap solar cooker may be provided to the people so that they can cook food.

My last suggestion is this. Forestry should be a Central subject. It should find a place in List No. I of the Seventh Schedule of our Constitution. So far as the Central Government is concerned, I am sure, that they will not be interested in the revenue part of it. But, from the ecological point of view and from the point of view of soil conservation, flood control and preservation of wild life, it can be the concern of the nation.

I believe that a new forest policy is going to be re-drafted. I beg to submit that all the suggestions of mine made here may find a place in the new forest policy and, if necessary, I do not mind even if the Constitution is amended. You will get all-out support from us for this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Resolution moved;

"This House notes with concern the large-scale denudation of forest in the country and urges upon the Government to have a more pragmatic national forest policy so that 33.3 per cent area of the country is covered by forest."

Should we adjourn now? I think let everybody get a chance in the next session.

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI K. RAGHU RAMAIAH): I think so.

SHRI B. V. NAIK. Sir, we have still got four minutes. The Resolution has already been moved. We must be allowed to move our amendments.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am sorry. The amendment is timebarred. There are, of course, no reasons whatsoever to allow you to move. I, therefore, cannot allow that.

So, should we adjourn now?

SHRI B. V. NAIK: It is our submission that our amendments should be at least moved in the next time.

MR. CHAIRMAN I cannot do that. You can take a chance. Now, the House stands adjourned to meet again on Monday, the 17th May, 1976.

17.56 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, May 17, 1976, Vaisakha 27, 1998 (Saka)