

Demand to take Effective measures for afforestation in the Country

SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, India is the second most populated and the seventh largest country in the world having a population of one billion with only 1.8 per cent of the world forests. The forests of India are sustaining the needs of 16.7 per cent of the world's human and 18 per cent of livestock population. Forests contribute 1.7 per cent of the GDP of our country. Unfortunately, the desired objective to cover 33 per cent of our geographical area under trees is yet to be achieved. Even though the National Forest Policy of 1952 and the new National Forest Policy of 1988 proposed that 60 per cent of the land in the hills and 20 per cent in the plains should be covered under forest. But the net result is that we are having only 19.27 per cent of forest cover and the per capita forest is 0.08 per cent, comparing to Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Sri Lanka, where 66.8 per cent, 60.6 per cent, 47.1 per cent, 22.7 per cent and 27.8 per cent forest cover are existing. The lack of proper forest cover will have a serious impact on ecological balance in our country. According to our estimates, India will be, at least, 3 degrees Celsius hotter by 2050. Many of the rivers will be dried; cyclones will be more intense, and there will be a severe water and food shortage. The Himalayan glaciers are also slowly melting and there will be a severe ecological imbalance. Hence, if we don't take immediate and urgent steps in this regard, then, we are bound to witness catastrophe. Hence, The Government of India should take it up on a war-footing basis and make it a great national movement.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We shall now take up the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill. Shri P. Chidambaram.

The Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 2008

And

The Finance Bill, 2008

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to authorize payment and appropriation of certain sums from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India for the services of the financial year 2008-09, as passed by Lok Sabha be taken into consideration."

Sir, I also beg to move:

"That the Bill to give effect to the financial proposals of the Central Government for the financial year 2008-09, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

The questions were proposed.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I have a request to make. Of course, we will do whatever you direct us to do and whatever is the decision of the House is. I personally do not think it is fair for the hon. Minister for the participants if this important discussion is to start at quarter to one. I am sure, everything that happens in the House is of great importance. But the Finance Bill, in particular, Sir, is about the last of the budgetary processes, and I do believe that both in