

[3 December, 1999]

RAJYA SABHA

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken against the officials involved?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(c) M/s Gujarat State Forest Development Corporation, Vadodara supplied 15,000 cum of wooden sleepers vide contract dated 02.03.93. Sleepers supplied against this contract to the Northern Railway were found defective.

Out of the total quantity of 15,000 cum, 2200 cum (15,890 sleepers), were supplied to Northern Railway Construction Organisation. From this lot, 8162 Nos. of sleepers were received by Northern Railway in August, 95. At that time, on receipt of a complaint, all the available 6561 Nos. of sleepers were checked and out of these, 6016 sleepers were found defective.

© In this matter, three Railway Officials were considered responsible and disciplinary action under Discipline & Appeal Rules has been taken in consultation with Central Vigilance Commission.

Besides the Railway officials, some other non-railway agencies are also involved. However, in order to determine their criminal involvement, the case has been referred to CBI for detailed investigation. CBI has since registered the case.

Distortions in History and Civics Book

*92. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN:

SHRI JANESHWAR MISRA:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a book entitled a Comprehensive study of History and Civics prescribed for Class VI students in U.R by NCERT, has upset Islamic schools because there is an allegation that it distorts facts;

(b) if so, who is responsible for this state of affairs; and

(c) what steps Government are taking so that this situation is rectified and future such a situation does not recur?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT , MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (c) National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has neither published the book entitled, "A Comprehensive study of History and Civics" for class VI students in Uttar Pradesh nor has it prescribed it for study. As per the report received from the State Government of Uttar Pradesh,

this book has been printed by a private publisher from Saharanpur. This private publisher had printed, as a first edition, 1000 copies of this book for English medium students of class VI for History/Civics. On receipt of a complaint from Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind, the objectionable portions of the book along with the sketch have been deleted. As soon as NCERT noticed a related newsitem in the newspapers, it issued a Press statement, clarifying the position.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India has written to the Government of Uttar Pradesh, suggesting action under the Criminal Procedure Code. The Government of Uttar Pradesh has since reported that action has been taken to confiscate and burn the books.

Ban on the Use of Plastic Bags

*93. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to stop the use of plastic bags completely; if so, when;

(b) whether it is a fact that plastic packing material not only hurts the environment in the cities, but also in the villages; and

(c) whether Government are aware that many cows ate large quantities of plastic bags due to hunger and died because of poison?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI):

(a) There are no immediate plan to stop the use of plastic bags completely. The Ministry of Environment and Forests have issued the Recycled Plastics Manufacture and Usage Rules, 1999 on 2.9.99. These rules prohibit use of carrybags and containers made of recycled plastic for storing, carrying, dispensing or packaging of foodstuffs and do not impose a complete ban on the manufacture and use of plastic carrybags.

(b) Littering of plastic packing material is considered to be harmful to the environment in the cities, as well as in the villages, due to their non-biodegradable nature, their propensity to clog the sewers and cause contamination of soil and groundwater. Certain colourants and pigments used as additives during manufacture of recycled plastic bags can leach out thereby contaminating food items stored and packed in such bags. Consumption of such food items can be harmful to human beings and animals.

(c) The Government does not have any concrete information regarding death of cows due to swallowing of plastic bags. However, a few reports of stray cows ingesting plastic bags with waste food with harmful consequences have come to notice.