

**Mohan Dharia Committee Report on Wasteland Development**

493. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the action taken by Government to implement the Mohan Dharia Committee report regarding wasteland development;

(b) whether Government have considered giving effective role to the panchayati raj institutions for the development of wasteland in the country;

(c) whether it is a fact that the extent of wastelands is as high as 175 million hectares; and

(d) the area of wasteland converted into useful land for agriculture and other purposes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA): (a) The report of the High Level Committee on wastelands development headed by Shri Mohan Dharia involved consultations with various Ministries/Departments viz. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Planning & Programme Implementation, Deptt. of Science & Technology etc. Their views have been obtained and necessary steps initiated to process the same for obtaining the approval of the Government.

(b) The guidelines have already been issued for the involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Project Planning, Implementation & Monitoring of Progress of all area-based programmes like Desert Development Programme (DDP), Drought, Prone Area Programme (DPAP), integrated Wastelands De-

velopment Project (IWDP) and Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS).

(c) As per the estimates arrived at by National Commission on Agriculture (1976), the size of wastelands is about 175 million hectares in the country.

(d) The conversion of wastelands for agriculture is not the mandate of the National Wastelands Development Board.

**Reservation for Muslims in Local Elections in Karnataka**

494. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Karnataka has provided reservation for Muslims separately in Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayat, and Mandal Panchayat elections;

(b) if so, the percentage of reservations provided for Muslims in the local bodies;

(c) the relevant section under which such a provision has been made in the Karnataka Panchayat Act and when was this amendment introduced in the Karnataka Panchayat Act; and

(d) whether Government propose to introduce such provisions in all the other States in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA): (a) to (c) No, Sir. There is no separate provision for reservation of seats for Muslims in Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and the Gram Panchayats in Karnataka. The reserved seats are available to the Muslims under the category of backward classes only under Section 5, 123 and 162 of the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993,