

SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARA-MANGALAM: Mr. Chairman, Sir, actually, in this particular matter on issue, if the hon. Member could see section 3 of the Act regarding setting up of the courts, it is within the competence of the State Government and it is the State Government which has to take the appropriate steps to do so. We have approached the State Government. We have been impressing upon them that it is necessary to set up the courts. And some State Governments have responded positively and have taken steps. Others normally give the excuse of infrastructure for not being able to set up the courts. But we will be impressing upon them even stronger in the days coming to see that the courts are set up as quickly as possible.

SHRI MOHD. KHALEELUR RAHMAN: I want to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any scheme to set up the family courts in the State of Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: Sir, every State will be covered by this. But it is for the State to decide. They have to consult the High Court.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has especially asked you.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: It applies to Andhra Pradesh also. They have not come to the Central Government.

SHRI MOHD. KHALEELUR RAHMAN: How much time it may take?

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: The High Court of Andhra State does not seem to be thinking of it. *(Interruption).*

MR. CHAIRMAN: They have no disputes in Andhra.

SHRI K. VIJAYA BHASKARA REDDY: No. There is no proposal from Andhra Pradesh with the Government of India.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister is from Andhra and he says that there are no disputes there and families are at peace.

SHRI S JAIPAL REDDY: There are disputes only within the Congress-I in Andhra, not in families.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 22.

Black snow in the Himalayan region

*22. SHRI G. G. SWELL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been occurrence of black snow in our Himalayan region;

(b) if so, the extent of the areas where black snow has been found;

(c.) whether the causes thereof have been identified;

(d) whether our ecosystem and river system have been endangered as a result thereof;

(e) whether steps have been taken by Government to avert or minimise these adverse effects; and

(f) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A few isolated lumps of black snow have been observed in Gund Sonamarg areas of Jammu & Kashmir and Manali region of Himachal Pradesh in March, 1991.

(c) Analysis of samples collected from some of the affected areas, could not establish any specific cause for this occurrence.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) and (f) Do not arise.

SHRI G. G. SWELL: Sir, I am surprised and shocked at the cavalier and lackadaisical manner in which the Minister has tackled this question. He has admitted that black snow has been found in some areas of Jammu and Kashmir. But he has not cared to follow up and find out whether black snow has occurred in other areas of the Himalayan region. That is the first example of the cavaliness of his approach to this question. Then he says from the samples of black snow it could not be determined what the origin of this black snow was. Black snow does not come from the ground. It comes from the air. And is it not your duty to find out why this rare phenomenon has taken place? Then he says that there is no danger to the ecosystem and the water system in the country. Does he have to wait until the House is on fire to say that there is fire? These are the questions I would like to ask him. Why has he not made a more comprehensive inquiry whether black snow has occurred in other places? Why has he not made an inquiry as to the origin of black snow? It does not come from the ground. Why does he not think it is necessary to take precautionary measures? This is my first supplementary.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, I think the hon. Member is getting carried away with this black snow. Certainly my Ministry cannot go all over the country fishing for black snow. We can only look at whatever information is available to us, whatever information gets passed on to us. And there were no reports. I shall be grateful to him if he can enlighten the House as to where there was black snow other than the areas which I have mentioned. There was black snow, as reported in the press, only in the areas which I have mentioned. Immediately thereafter, an Inter-departmental Co-ordination Group meeting was called and a certain analysis was made there. The snow and avalanche study establishments of the Defence Ministry were associated. There

were many speculations that this could have happened because of certain fires raging in Asia, that this could have happened because of soot in the atmospheric region. We do know that black snow comes from the air and not from the ground. I thank him for this basic information. But there was nothing as such to cause any concern or cause any alarm in this black snow which fell in Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir.

SHRI G. G. SWELL: My second supplementary is this. I think the Minister's answer confirms the lackadaisicality of his approach to this question. We want him to go and inquire all over the Himalayan region. I brought this to his attention as the Minister for Environment. It is his duty to find out. Now, if the Minister is so ignorant, Sir, let me tell him that, forests in Scandinavia have been destroyed, the river systems have become lifeless and ashless because of the industrial spew from Germany and other European countries. Same is the case in Canada. If he does not know, we know that if there is black snow there, it is because of the burning oil wells in Kuwait which is one of the results of the Gulf-War. And these oil wells will be burning for decades together.

It is from there that the soot is spewed into the sky. It is easy for my friend to say that there was no soot. There was a swing of smoke from these oil wells carrying also hydrocarbon and the wind currents there have carried them to the Himalayan region. It is time that we take necessary action, that we take note of what is happening and we don't approach this question with this kind of lackadaisical concern as the Minister has shown ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kindly put your question.

SHRI G. G. SWELL: Sir, I would like to know whether he is thinking of approaching the United Nations. Don't smile. Mr. Minister. We have

been in the same House together and you are much junior to me. I would like to know whether you are aware of such an organisation under the United Nations for environment, whether you are thinking of talking to Kuwait where the oil wells are burning and the soot is spewing into the air and whether you are thinking of talking to Iraq which has been the main cause for the burning of oil wells in Kuwait which is creating this environmental problem in the entire region.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, I appreciate the Member's concern and I am also convinced ... *(Interruptions)* . . . Sir, he has said that our attitude has been lackadaisical. It is not true. Sir, that is not so. There is no lack of concern. Immediately when these reports were available in the press, the moment we got intimation of this, meeting were held, the Indian Meteorological Department was contacted . . . *(Interruptions)* ... about a study in the Ministry of Defence. As I said, all these were activated. Certain samples were taken of this except in one place where samples could not be taken because the snowline has gone above fifteen thousand feet. These samples were analysed and there was speculation in the press that this could arise because of the fire in the oil wells in the Gulf. It was considered by all concerned and there was no evidence as such to show that this was arising especially at those heights. Technical aspects were gone into. We do recognise the consequences of black snow, that it can lead to forest degradation. We do see that. But this was not occurred because of soot and hydrocarbon coming from the burning Kuwaiti oil wells. At least we have no tangible and concrete evidence to show that. So, Sir, the Ministry has done what ever possible. If there is other evidence which comes out in the future suggesting interaction with other countries, we will do so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants you to approach the United Nations. Will you consider that?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Yes, we shall consider it of other evidence so warrants.

SHRI KHYOMO LOTH: Sir, I want to go from the Himalayas to North-East and from snow to rain. I would like to know whether the Government is aware that the sometime back there was yellow rain Manipur— and the rain was yellow not in the sense that you observe the colour the colour to the rainbow, but it was real drops of rain, yellow rain, in Manipur sometime back—and whether the Government has looked into the matter, what has been the effect of that rain on the people because it not only affects the land and the crops but also the human beings. People drink rain-water also. I would like to know whether the Government is aware of all this.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, I am afraid this question refers to ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is talking about yellow rain.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, I don't have information of yellow rain, but I shall inform the hon. Member separately.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Mr. Chairman. Sir, this question of black snow is an indication of some rather serious thing that could happen. In scientific literature there is talk that the reduction of temperature in the Kuwait region because of the smoke could cause lack of turbulence and the turbulence in the area is one of the important features which develop the Indian monsoon. Now, one can exaggerate this but some scientific literature has reported calculations which seem to indicate that it can happen under certain circumstances and, therefore, the indications of black snow and the possible connection with the formation of our monsoon have to be very carefully watched. I thought I should bring this to the hon'ble Minister's attention.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: This has been a matter of concern. The Indian Meteorological Department... (*Interruptions*) ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have got a scientist's opinion also. So you will consider it.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Yes. The Indian Meteorological Department has already carried out a study on this and has stated that this would not have any effect on the rainfall pattern in the monsoon. If there is any evidence on this ... (*Interruptions*)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You get in touch with Dr. Raja Ramanna. He is an eminent scientist. If you can get any advantage out of it you should do it.

Rationalisation of excise duty structure on Aluminium

*23. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to rationalise the excise duty structure on aluminium;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether the excise duty on aluminium is much higher as compared to other competing materials like wood and steel;

(d) if so, whether Government propose to review its stand on excise duty structure in view of (c) above; and

(e) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) (No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(c) Basic excise duty on aluminium and articles thereof ranges from 25 per cent to 35 per cent *ad valorem*. The incidence of duty on iron and steel which are subjected to specific rates of duty works out to about 10 per cent *ad valorem*. There is no excise duty on wood, but plywood in general attract a duty of 30 per cent *ad valorem*.

(d) Government do not propose to review the excise duty structure on aluminium for the present.

(e) Does not arise in view of (d) above.

श्री हरबेन्द्र सिंह हंसपाल : सर, एं का जवाब नो सर है। डी के जवाब में लिखा है कि Government do not propose to review the excise duty structure on aluminium for the present.

इसलिये गुंजाइश है कि कुछ बात की जा सकती है। सी के जवाब में मैंने पूछा था कि कंपीटिंग मैटीरियल्स लाइक वूड एंड स्टील के मुकाबले एक्ससाइज ड्यूटी बहुत ज्यादा है। लेकिन इंस्टेड आफ अग्रीइंग कि ज्यादा है, दे हैव गिवन दि फिगरर्स। तो मैं मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि देश के अन्दर लकड़ी की बहुत कमी है तथा जंगल बहुत कम है। इसलिये ज्यादा से ज्यादा लकड़ी कंजर्व की जा सके, बचाई जा सके और अल्युमीनियम का यूज किया जाये, यह देश सेवा होगी। क्या इस बात को ध्यान में रखते हुये, आपका अल्युमीनियम के ऊपर 25-35 परसेंट हो, स्टील के ऊपर 10 परसेंट हो और लकड़ी के ऊपर जीरो परसेंट हो, क्या आप इस बारे में ध्यान देंगे?

श्री रामेश्वर ठाकुर : सभापति महोदय, अल्युमिनियम का 40 प्रतिशत हम इलेक्ट्रिकल कंडक्टर में व्यवहार करते हैं, जिसमें मोडरेट की सुविधा उपलब्ध है, इसलिये इसमें उपभोक्ताओं को किसी प्रकार की कठिनाई नहीं होती। खास तौर से अल्युमिनियम के साथ जिन वस्तुओं का संबंध है, जिसमें लोहा और प्लास्टिक है, ये इसके साथ कंपीट करते हैं, इसके