

"Pollution caused by caustic soda units"

1814. SHRI K. VASUDEVA PANICKER: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of caustic soda units in the country;

(b) whether Government have conducted any study to find out whether these units are causing pollution;

(c) if so, what are the details of the study; and

(d) what action Government propose to take against the erring units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN): (a) There are 27 mercury-cell based caustic soda units in the country, out of which 29 units are functional.

(b) Yes, Sir,

(c) 19 units out of the 23 have provided treatment to their mercury bearing wastes. The remaining units have not yet taken any satisfactory steps

(d) The 4 remaining units have been directed to install full fledged treatment facilities before December 31, 1985 failing which they will be prosecuted.

"Spread of Thar Desert"

1815. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have conducted any study to know the rate at which Thar Desert has been spreading during the last decade or so; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and what measures have been taken by Government so far to contain the spread of Thar Desert and the results achieved therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN): (a) and (b) According to the studies of the Central Arid Zone Research Institute, Jodhpur, no conclusive scientific evidence is available to conclude that the Thar Desert is spreading. The studies, however, underline the fact that xeric conditions within the desert have accentuated due to over exploitation of vegetation and land resources.

Desertification control measures are being taken by a number of departments with the primary objective of improving the productivity of land through such measures as sand dune stabilisation, afforestation, pasture development, and improved water harvesting techniques. These schemes are being implemented under Desert Development Programme, Drought Prone Areas Programme, and Integrated Eco Development Programmes. The Indira Gandhi Canal Network aims at bringing vast areas under irrigated agriculture. The Eco Task Force in Bikaner and the Pushkar Lake Eco Development Programmes are also aimed at integrated development of the desert area.

Non-payment of HRA allowance to CSIR employees at Jorhat

1816 SHRI PRITHIBI MAJHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the employees working in the CSIR office at Jorhat are not being paid house rent allowance; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS, SPACE AND OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government of India have sanctioned house rent allowance to employees working in various cities duly classified as 'A' 'B' 'B-2' and 'C' class cities..

Jorhat is not included in the above list consequently the Government of India employees in Jorhat are not eligible for house rent allowance.

CSIR follows Government of India in this regard.

Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat

1817. SHRI PRITHIBI MAJHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the employees of the Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat, are not being paid 25 per cent special duty allowance admissible as per standing orders of the Finance Ministry; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY, ELECTRONICS, SPACE AND OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL):

(a) While some categories of employees who are truly belonging to the common CSIR cadre and who are transferred from time to time between Laboratories/Institutes are eligible for the allowance, other employees working in Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat, are not paid 25 per cent special duty allowance. These eligible common cadres are Administration, Finance and Accounts Stores and Purchase, etc. The practice is as followed in Government of India.

(b) The special duty allowance is given to those categories who are transferred to different institutions and headquarters of CSIR in various parts of the country. Officers who are in this way transferred and are attached to Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat, do not qualify for this allowance. The principles followed are similar to those adopted in Government of India.

Visual Pollution

1818. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to regulate air and sound pollution by vehicles; if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is a fact that apart from air, water and sound pollution, visual pollution also constitutes immense hazard for urban environment and traffic operation;

(c) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to check this; and

(d) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN): (a) Yes Sir. The following steps have been taken:

(i) Inclusion of necessary provisions in the Motor Vehicles Rules for enforcement of inspection and Control measures has been communicated to the State Governments having metropolitan cities.

(ii) Dissemination of information on ways of better maintenance and driving to reduce pollution and for fuel conservation.

(iii) Formulation of emission standards in respect of different categories of vehicles.

(iv) Certificates of fitness for fifteen year old vehicles.

(v) Progressive reduction of lead content in motor spirit.

(vi) Public awareness campaigns to sensitize public opinion.

(vii) In regard to sound pollution by vehicles, enabling provisions in Municipal Acts exist.