

#### **Wetlands under Wetland Conservation Programme**

3279. SHRI MANOHAR JOSHI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of wetlands under Wetland Conservation Programme;
- (b) the details of financial assistance sanctioned;
- (c) the number of wetlands under Ramsar sites in the country; and
- (d) any management action plan for newly identified wetlands?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Under the National Wetland Conservation Programme, 115 wetlands covering 26 States/Union Territories have been identified so far,

(b) Since the inception of the Programme during 1987, so far, an amount of Rs. 86.98 crores has been released to the concerned State Governments/Union Territories for conservation of identified wetlands.

(c) 25 wetlands have been designated as Ramsar sites in India in 16 States.

(d) During the Eleventh Five Years Plan, the management action plans of 26 newly identified wetlands have been sanctioned and an amount of Rs. 855.43 lakhs has been released to the concerned State Governments for conservation of these wetlands.

#### **Athirapally Hydroelectric Project in Kerala**

3280. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the latest position regarding environmental clearance to the Athirapally Hydroelectric Project in Kerala;

(b) whether the following factors have been taken into account by Government while examining the project proposal (i) that there are no virgin forests in the project area, which already has Peringal and Sholayar Reservoirs, and Kambam-Teni-Chalakudi Road, as well as a 110 KV line going through it; (ii) that there is no spectacular bio-diversity or any endangered eco-system in the affected area; and (iii) that there is no danger to the existing Athirapally water fall; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoE&F) had accorded Environmental Clearance to the 163 MW Athirapally Hydroelectric Project in Kerala on 18.7.2007. Due to representation received On the adverse impact on primitive Kadar tribes and bio-diversity, a show cause notice was issued to the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) on 4.1.2010 directing that no work on the project should be initiated till the appraisal and review is over and a decision is taken.

By the time, KSEB submitted its reply to the above show cause notice; a number of representations were also received from individuals and NGOs all of which were placed before the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) for River Valley and Hydro Electric Projects in its meeting held on 22nd March, 2010.

The EAC desired that the KSEB should submit replies to the issues raised in various representations submitted by individuals and NGOs. Accordingly replies to the various issues, as submitted by KSEB, are being placed before the EAC in its next meeting.

#### **Funds for cleaning of Ganga**

†3281. SHRI VEER PAL SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) the funds provided by Government so far, for cleaning of Ganga;
- (b) the details of utilization of said funds;
- (c) whether Government is aware that worms have been found in Ganga water at Varanasi; and
- (d) the measures being taken to stop the mingling of dirty waters directly or indirectly from the nullah of Kanpur, Allahabad, etc. cities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) The Government has been implementing the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) since 1985 for pollution abatement in the identified polluted stretches of the river Ganga. Pollution abatement works relating to interception and diversion of sewage for treatment in sewage treatment plants, low cost sanitation, electric and/or improved wood crematoria, river front development, etc. have been taken up under Ganga Action Plan Phase-I and II. An expenditure of Rs. 837 crore has been incurred till end of December, 2009. Sewage treatment capacity of 1025 million litres per day (mld) has been created under both the phases of GAP.

The water quality monitoring of Ganga done by reputed independent institutions generally shows improvement in river water quality indicators such as Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Dissolved Oxygen (DO) over the pre-GAP period. The level of fecal coliforms are, however, exceeding the maximum permissible limits of 2500 MPN (Most Probable Number) per 100 milliliter at most monitoring stations along the river, including Varanasi, except in the upper reaches of Haridwar. The coliform count has increased particularly at pilgrimage places due to mass bathing by pilgrims. The situation would have been worse without the sewage treatment infrastructure created under GAP.

The Central Government has set up the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) as an empowered planning, financial, monitoring and coordinating authority to ensure effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the river Ganga by adopting a holistic approach with the river basin as the unit of planning. The first meeting of the NGRBA held on

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.