

RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday the 16th August, 1983/25,
Srawana 1905 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,
Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Impact of Import of Cotton, Jute, Rubber etc., on Indigenous Growers

*301. SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: SHRI
SURAJ PRASAD:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be
pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to import large quantities of cotton, jute, raw rubber, cocoa and coconut oil;

(b) whether Government have made any study regarding its impact on the indigenous growers; and

(c) if so, whether Government propose to revise the import policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE
(SHRIMATI RAM DULARI SINHA):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Unfortunately the honourable Minister has thought it better to conceal the state of affairs rather than to reveal in her answer to the question. It can be seen from the report of the Commerce Ministry that some of these items have been imported in large quantities during the last financial year, and as a result ...

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Indradeep Sinha.

श्री रामदेव सिंह: श्रीमान, टैजरी वॉचिंग वाली पड़ी हुई है। पुरी टैजरी वॉचिंग वाली है... (व्यवधान)।

श्री कल्प नाथ राय: विरोधी दलों की तरफ भी देखिये।

श्री सभापति: आपकी पार्टी कांन-सी भरी हुई है... (व्यवधान)। आपकी पार्टी जरा कमजोर हो गई है।

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: As a result of the import of large quantities of artificial fibres, rubber, coconut oil and copra during the last two years, the prices of these commodities slumped and representations were made to the honourable Commerce Minister and the Prime Minister on behalf of various parties in Kerala including those of the ruling coalition, to put a ban on the import of some of these commodities. Part (h) of the question says, "Whether Government have made any study regarding its impact on the indigenous growers?" The honourable Minister says, "Does not arise." I am unable to understand how the question of impact of import of these commodities on indigenous production does not arise...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Because there is no import....

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: They cannot say there has been no import.

MR. CHAIRMAN: But you asked 'large quantities', therefore, they are playing on the words 'large, quantities'.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Let them say what quantity has been imported, what their policy is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When you asked in such a way -whether there has been import of large quantities, they said 'no'...

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: But the final language is not ours, unfortunately the language in which the

question is framed, is always not ours, but we go by the question as it is put.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will check it up.

SHRIMATI RAM DULARI SINHA: There is no question of importing cotton during the current cotton season. The production of cotton is more than the consumption estimate. On the contrary, I would like to inform the honourable Member that we are exporting cotton to Japan, South Korea, Portugal, Romania and Nepal. And the total quantity of export is 7.36 lakh bales. Last year also we had exported a small quantity of cotton. As regards jute it may be stated that

only a small quantity is expected to be imported to overcome the variations in the level of domestic production, from Nepal. As regards objections from Kerala people or the Government there—he has not clarified it—I know it. Government have authorised import of 30000 tonnes of rubber for 1983-84. This cannot be said to be a large quantity. The quantity proposed to be imported during the current financial year is either less than or equivalent to the quantity imported during 1981-82 and 1982-83.

As regards other items like coconut oil, import of coconut oil has been canalised through STC with effect from 1st April, 1980 and STC has not made any import of it. Similarly, import of cocoa was canalised through STC from July 1980 and STC has not made any import of it. Since 1982-83 this item has been in the banned list so as to avoid the possibility of even small imports without the Government's specific and prior clearance. I was dealing with the hon. Member's objection. I can tell him that as regards import of natural rubber, based on the assessment of production and consumption given by the Rubber Board and the Department of Industrial Development, we have decided to import 30000 tonnes of natural rubber in 1983-84. We have re-

ceived some protests from the Kerala Government to the effect that these imports are effected during the peak period of rubber production in the State and this is adversely affecting the indigenous production of rubber. Keeping this in view we have directed the STC to effect import of 20,000 to 22,000 tonnes of rubber and to complete its distribution by 31st August. This was done keeping in view the protest from the Kerala Government. As regards revision of import policy, it will be done, if any, at the end of the year, I think I have satisfied the hon. Member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think he should be quite satisfied.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: NO, sir. I would like to satisfy you....

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am not here to be satisfied.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA:., by reading some figures from the report of the Commerce Ministry which says that the quantity of crude rubber imported including synthetic and reclaimed rubber was 26,000 tonnes in 1980-81, 63,700 tonnes in 1981-82 and 29,900 tonnes between April and September

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have included something in it whereas your question was about raw rubber. You have now included synthetic and reclaimed rubber.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Raw rubber includes both.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your question is about raw rubber.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: I can read the other figures also.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Not just now.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Coming to fibres, the quantity of synthetic fibres imported was 69000 tonnes....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Again you have included synthetic fibre.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: But, Sir, that affects the consumers of cotton because it is a substitute. Synthetic fibre is substitute for cotton.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have asked about cotton. I cannot allow this point.

SHRI SURAJ PRASAD: Why are you so technical?

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: If synthetic fibres are imported, there will be slump in the cotton market.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then ask a question about synthetic fibre.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: The question relates to agricultural commodities. If substitutes are imported, then there will be slump in the cotton market.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You should have framed your question that way.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: As I submitted earlier, the final wording is not ours.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will check it. If it is so. I will have the question repeated later on.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Then hon. Minister said that some of these items have been banned for purposes of import.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Such as cocoa.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: Yes. Even after restrictions and canalisation, according to a statement issued by the Commerce Ministry, which has been published in the *Economic Times* of the 23rd June, 1983 in spite of canalisation of imports of these commodities, some unintended imports of coconut oil copra and cocoa beans and rubber have taken place. If cocoa beans have been put on the banned list, why these other items are.. ..

MR. CHAIRMAN: I did not hear the whole of the statement. It is "subject to clearance by the Government." Would you like it to be read out again?

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: No, Sir. This is a statement by the Commerce Ministry.

IAN: Yes. It says, 'subject to clearance'. If you like I would ask the Minister to read out the last portion.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: I am just putting this question: Just they put cocoa beans on the banned list why has the Government not considered it necessary to place coconut oil, copra, rubber, etc. also on the banned list so that they could import if they consider it necessary and others are not free to import?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all.

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA: asking this because under the export promotion scheme and under the export replenishment scheme, others are free to import even when an item is canalised.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: Sir, the honourable Member has raised first the issue of import of rubber and its effect on the prices. May I inform the honourable Member that the prices prevailing for rubber this year have been higher than in year so far. The price of rubber, of RMA 3.45, in January was Rs. 1390 Rs. 1,435/- in February, Rs. 1 in April, and Rs. 1,875/- in May. The prices of rubber have been going up and these are higher than the figures in any year for the last three or four years and, therefore, the import of 'no effect on prices, no effect of depression of prices or of lowering; thereof. The Rubber Board had estimated a shortage of tonnes to 34,000 tonnes of rubber. The Industry Ministry had estimated shortage of something like 45,000 tonnes. So, the Commerce Ministry had decided to take, on the safer side, 30,000 tonnes of rubber as the shortage and that too 20,000 tonnes to be bought in the lean months up to August and the balance to be bought in the lean months thereafter, in February and

'March. So, this precaution has been taken and the prices have not been depressed. We have to look to the industry also, the interests of the industry also because there also there are workers and their interests are also to be taken into account and the long-term interests of the growers also would be hit if there is resistance by the consumers and I think this will be to the satisfaction of the hon'ble Member. Sir, I hope the hon'ble Member would be pleased to note that rubber is being imported not this year, but since 1960, and these imports were to the tune of something like 45 per cent of our consumption and now this year, it is only 15 per cent of our consumption, that is, only 15 per cent of our Oor»su'mpti>>n is being imported. So, there is a progressive reduction and efforts are made to cope with the consumption. So, if you see the prices, will see that our policy has taken care of all the apprehensions that the honourable Member has.

Then, Sir, about some unintended imports of coconut oil, in 1980-81, there was some Unintended import, and that is because of the interpretation of the policy that non edible grade of oil could come under the OGL. But that was clarified and, in 1981-82, in that year's policy, it was made clear that edible or non-edible none could come now it is a three-year old story and now there is no such possibility. Cocoa beans are already on the banned' list and there is no question of its imports. This is all about rubber, coconut and cocoa beans. About fibres and synthetic fibres, Sir, the position has been explained.

MB. CHAIRMAN: Yes. Mr. Sui'aj Prasad.

श्री सुरज प्रसाद: श्रीमान यह सरकार का जो जवाब है उससे लगता यह है कि इस इम्पोर्ट का किसानों पर जो असर पड़ा है, उस पर सरकार ने ठीक ढंग से विचार नहीं किया है। गवर्नमेन्ट का कहना यह है कि लास्ट इयर, इसी साल नहीं, लास्ट इयर भी रबड़ का इम्पोर्ट हुआ था और उस रबड़ के इम्पोर्ट के चलते गत साल रबड़ की कीमतें 81 में जहाँ 16 या 18 रुपये

दियां थी, गत साल रबड़ की कीमतें घट कर केरल में ग्यारह-दोह रुपये हो गई थी।

जमी के. एम. मनी जो वहाँ के फाइनेंस मंत्री हैं, उन्होंने यह कहा है कि रबड़ की इम्पोर्ट के बारे में सरकार का एक्जिस्टिंग डिमाण्ड है, इतनी जरूरत केरल के अन्दर रबड़ की इम्पोर्ट की नहीं है और इसका बहुत बड़ा असर वहाँ के शोअरज पर पड़ता है। मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या के. एम. मनी जो वहाँ के फाइनेंस मंत्री हैं, उनका स्टेटमेंट क्या उन्होंने कोई देना है या गत साल जो रबड़ इम्पोर्ट करने की वजह से जो किसानों के रबड़ की प्राइस गिरी, क्या उन पर गवर्नमेन्ट का कोई ध्यान गया है?

जहाँ तक काँको का प्रश्न है मेरी इनफॉर्मेशन यह है कि लास्ट इयर का इम्पोर्ट की वजह से काँको की कीमतें जो सालह-सालह रुपये थी, लास्ट इयर घट कर तीन-चार रुपये किलो हो गई थी। कोकोनट आयात इम्पोर्ट की वजह से कोकोनट प्राइस जो आठ से दस रुपये किलो थी, लास्ट इयर घट कर पाँच से छह रुपये हो गई थी।

सरकार ने जूट के बारे में यह कहा—जूट के बारे में हमारे पास यह गवर्नमेन्ट का इम्पोर्ट है। 1982-83 का कि 6.9 लाख बेल्ला की इम्पोर्ट हुई थी। देश के अंदर जूट की आपत-जूट का प्रोडक्शन 80 लाख टन होता है। लास्ट इयर 63 लाख टन हुआ था और लास्ट इयर का कोकोनट 17 लाख टन था। ऐसी अवस्था में देश में जो जूट की आपत है, उसके मुताबिक देश के अन्दर जूट था। फिर भी सरकार ने बाहर से जूट आयात कर किसानों के प्राइस को डिप्रेशन करने की कोशिश किया, इसके बारे में सरकार का शिवाज किया। इसके बारे में सरकार का क्या कहना है?

इसलिए मैं सरकार से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि रबड़ की इम्पोर्ट से, जूट की इम्पोर्ट से काँको की इम्पोर्ट से और कोकोनट आयात की इम्पोर्ट से किसानों की प्राइस में जो डिप्रेशन हुए हैं, क्या सरकार ने

इसके बारे में कोई अध्ययन किया है?
इसके बारे में सरकार का उत्तर क्या है?

SHRI VISHWANATH FKATAP SINGH: I think the hon. Member has 'read his figures in the reverse order. He is saying.

श्री सभापति: आपने अभी तो सुनाई है वह । फिर सुना दीजिए ।

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: Compared to 1981—that is the point made by the hon. Member—I was just quoting these years' figures; now I am quoting them from year to year. In 1981, the rubber price in January was Rs. 13.75; this year it has 'been Rs. 13.90. In 1981 February, it was 13.65; in 1983 it is Rs. 14.35 (Interruptions) I am also reading for 1982 In March 1981 it was 14.10, in 1982 Rs. 15.40 and in 1983 Rs. 14.25. In April 1981, it was Rs. 14.10, in 1982 Rs. 15.70 and in 1983 Rs. 17.50. in May 1981 it was Rs. 15.25, in 1982 Rs. 15.90 and in 1983 Rs. 18.75.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I think you have made your point. (Interruptions)

श्री सुरज प्रसाद: वह आंकड़े भी बोलिये जब किसान पैदा करता है । यह तो उस समय का बोल रहे हैं जब किसान के घरों में कोई चीज नहीं रहती है । यह तो उस समय का प्राइम . . . (इन्टरप्शन)

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: I suppose a visit to Kerala will solve all these problems. The method in which rubber is taken from the growers, how it is so well organised and taken care of—I think it will be wasting the time of the House in explaining all this' in detail. About jute, the hon. Member perhaps has read his data in the reverse order. Jute prices have been highest prevailing, I suppose, in the recent years. The jute price in 1980-81, the year of reference by the hon. Member, was Rs. 211 in July in 1982-83 it was Rs. 242. In many other ways I can quote it as for rubber. As far as cotton prices are concerned. Sir, there are

fluctuations. But the cotton prices are not below the MEP. Everywhere they have gone up now and there was an anxiety also that the cotton prices be stabilised. Cocoa is totally banned. I do not know from what data complaints have come. The conclusions arrived at by the hon. Member are just not supported by facts at all.

श्री सुरज प्रसाद: मलेशिया में रबर की कीमत कम है। मलेशिया से कम कीमत पर जो रबर हिन्दुस्तान में मंगाई जाती है क्या उस की भी प्राइम उतनी ही रखी जायेगी जितनी केरल में रबर की है? क्या सरकार इस पर विचार करने के लिए तैयार है ?

श्री विश्वनाथ प्रताप सिंह: इस सम्बन्ध में केरल सरकार से हम लोगों की बात हुई थी । उन्होंने यह विचार व्यक्त किया था कि 1500 रुपये से ऊपर भाव रखा जायेगा तो उन को आपत्ति नहीं होगी और उस में गैजर को कोई हानि नहीं होगी । उस आधार पर आर. एम. एम. ग्रेड-3 का भाव 1662 रुपये रखा जा रहा है । वह 1500 से कहीं ज्यादा है ।

SHRI M. M. JACOB: Sir, I bring to the notice of the hon. Minister, through you, that the natural rubber import is a threat always hanging in the air and that is adversely affecting the incentive for production of natural rubber. In Kerala, this year there is a bumper crop of 10 per cent more of rubber because of the late arrival of monsoon there. Considering the bumper crop this year, I request the hon. Minister to consider whether it is possible to revise the original assessment of 23,000 tonnes of rubber for import. I do not think that imports are necessary. This period is the peak season when rubber is being produced. Heavy imports of rubber at this peak season will certainly create a glut in the market and there will be steep fall in the price of rubber. The present increase in the rubber price, as the hon. Minister has pointed out, is only

the international price of rubber in Malaysia and all other countries around because there is an international shortage. But, in India, the rubber growers are in a position to cater to the needs of the industry because it is also grown in the non-traditional areas other than Kerala. There is an increase of 10 per cent this year. I am sure that because of the power-cut applied in the industry in several the consumption figure will be less and the production figure will be more. Therefore, it is untimely to import any amount of rubber at the moment. It is the peak season of rubber production. Till the next March, it is going to be the same. Therefore, I request the hon. Minister to reconsider the question of import of raw rubber. *Sir, about cocoa...*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Only one question at a time. Yes. Mr. Minister, they don't want you to import rubber.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH: About the threat to the production of rubber because of imports, I would say that the imports have been taking place right before even 1960. While the production in 1943-49 was 15,000 tonnes, in 1982-83, it has gone up to 1,66,000 tonnes. In spite of imports, the production of rubber has not gone down. The hon. Member is very knowledgeable about the matter. In fact, I am always in touch with him about the issues of rubber. Productivity has gone up from 300 kilograms per hectare to 830 kilogramme per hectare. There is no depression in spite of all the imports. Imports are made only to bridge the gap between production and consumption. While production has gone up at the rate of 6.5 per cent, consumption has gone up more than 10 per cent. So, this has to be bridged. Hence the imports.

about the 10 per cent increase this year and the rubber comes during the peak season, there will be glut. The peak starts from September. We have made it very clear that only

in the lean months, i.e. up to August and then in February and March, the imported rubber will be released.

SHRI M. M. JACOB: My anxiety is about the arrival of rubber now and its release in the market. If it is done, there will be a problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They won't release it.

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : मंत्री जो ने जो जवाब दिया है उस में मैं नहीं जाता चाहता हूँ लेकिन मंत्री जो ने कहा है कि कुछ अखाद्य तेल जो खाने लायक आयल नहीं है उस को भी कुछ लोगों ने मंगाया है मगर गवर्नमेंट ने उन को रोकने की कोशिश की । तो मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूँ और मैं एक नोटिस दिखा रहा हूँ सरकार को जानकारी के लिये कि कल 17 तारीख को गाय के बछड़े और गाय को ले कर कुछ लोग जलूम निकाल रहे हैं । मैं विशेषतः पूछ रहा हूँ और उस के साथ ही कुछ रिकार्ड पढ़ कर सुनाना चाहता हूँ ...

श्री उपसभापति : कौन सा तेल है ?

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : अखाद्य तेल, जो खाने लायक आयल नहीं है ।

श्री सभापति : यह सबल नहीं है यहाँ ।

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : अखाद्य तेल की बात उन्होंने कहा कि कुछ लोगों ने अखाद्य तेल मंगाया । उन्होंने अपने प्रश्न के उत्तर में यह कहा है ...

श्री सभापति : मैंने तो सुना नहीं ।

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : आप रेकार्ड देख लीजियेगा । लेकिन मेरा सवाल है कि ...

श्री सभापति : आप सारे किस्म के तेल जो हैं, मस्टर्ड आयल है और

दूसरे तेल है, उन सब को ले आयेगे क्या ?

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : मैं दुनिया भर के बारे में नहीं पूछूंगा ।

श्री उपसभापति : आप ने दुनिया भर में से एक चुन लिया है लेकिन वह इस में नहीं आता । दूसरा कोई चुनिये ।

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : आप मेरी मदद करें ।

श्री उपसभापति : आप की मदद कर्क तो सारे तेल आ जायेंगे ।

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : देश का बड़ा कल्याण हो जायगा, जो अखाद्य तेल के बारे में उन्होंने कहा तो मैं एकरे-काई पड़ कर सुना रहा हूँ । क्या यह सही नहीं है कि *

MR. CHAIRMAN : No no. This does not arise. This is ruled out. This is not to be recorded.

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : आप ने उस को ब्ल आउट कर दिया । अब मैं सही सवाल पूछता हूँ ।

श्री सभापति : आप बैठ जाइयें ।

श्री श्री० सत्यनारायण रेड्डी : आपने एक सवाल के लिये करीब-करीब 25 मिनट ले लिये हैं । क्या इस तरह से रोज सिर्फ़ दो ही सवाल लिये जायेंगे ?

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : आप ने उस के लिये कह दिया कि खत्म करो, तो मैं उस को खत्म करता हूँ और सरकार से जायदा चाहता हूँ कि कम 12 वार्षिक को और सदन के नेता प्रणव बाबू भी वहाँ बैठे हुए हैं और जिन को सरकार को पताना है वह और जारी रिस्क-सिबिनिंग इस सरकार को है, यहाँ है, तो क्या यह सही नहीं है कि अखाद्य

तेल के सवाल पर 20 कंपनियों का नाम मैं दे रहा हूँ जिन्होंने 5 लाख से 7 लाख टन अखाद्य तेल संग्रह कर जो अखाद्य तेल है उस में मिला कर इस देश में बेचा है । यह बीस कंपनियाँ हैं और उस में हिन्दुस्तान लीवर को पास डेढ़ हजार टन...

श्री सभापति : मिस्टर रामेश्वर सिंह, आप यह जो सवाल पूछ रहे हैं यह इस में नहीं जुड़ता इस लिये इस के जवाब की जरूरत नहीं है । आखिरी क्वेश्चन ।

श्री रामेश्वर सिंह : सर, एक मिनट, मैं आप से प्रोटेशन चाहता हूँ । मैं आप से सहायता चाहता हूँ । मैं चाहता हूँ कि*

MR. CHAIRMAN : All this is not to be recorded at all. I have not permitted Mr. Kameshwar Singh to speak. Therefore, anything that he speaks will not go on the record.

SHRI RAMESHWAR SINGH: *

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I fully appreciate that there are certain circumstances in which we have to import limited quantities of things in which we are largely self-sufficient because there arises the question of meeting the temporary gap between the supply and the demand, the indigenous supply and the requirements of our industry. Sir, my question is this. I find that with respect to most of these items with the possible exception of cocoa, producers are all in our neighbourhood.

They are Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Malaysia. Now, Sir, as a country, we have adopted the national policy of South-South cooperation and recently we have explored the possibility of South-Asian economic co operation. Trade is one of the important aspects of this economic co-operation and trade is a two-way traffic. With most of these countries

which as, I have named, are producers of these items, we have a positive trade balance. Therefore, my question is this: In importing these limited quantities to meet our requirements from time to time, do we give a special preference to imports from our neighbouring countries ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Do you prefer the neighbours or far off countries for your imports ? The question is as short as this.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH : Except palm oil which we import from Malaysia*, there are other items which can be identified by mutual interest in South-South cooperation.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Can they be imported from places which are most convenient and profitable ?

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN : Sir, I did not follow the reply.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Your question I explained to him in short.

उन्होंने कहा जहाँ से ठीक होता है वहाँ से मगाने है ।

Now, Question No. 302.

*302. [The questioners iShri Suresh Kalmadi and Shri Kalraj Mishra) were absent. For answer vide cats infra.]

Adoption of Neorakhola water supply scheme

*303. PROF. SOURENDRA BHAT-TACHARJEE : SHRI ARABINDA GHOSH :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Chief Minister of West Bengal, while forwarding a Resolution of Darjeeling Hill Areas Development Council, recommended the immediate adoption of Neorakhola Water Supply Scheme; and

(b) if so, what action the Central Government have taken thereon ?

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Ara-binda Ghosh.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The resolution has been noted. However, the points in favour of the Neora Valley Scheme have to be weighed against the disadvantages brought out on account of ecological factors. After discussing with the State Government, a Technical Study Group has been constituted to undertake a detailed feasibility study of the Teesta River Scheme. The report of the Study Group is awaited.

SHRI ARABINDA GHOSH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Resolution was adopted in the Hill Areas Development Council of West Bengal on the 28th June, under the Chairmanship of the Chief Minister of West Bengal. The project report was under the consideration of the Defence Ministry earlier. But may I know from the hon. Minister why the said report was rejected by them and why they suggested the alternative of taking a pipeline from the Teesta river, which is a most expensive proposition in my opinion ?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: Sir, the Neora scheme was suggested by the West Bengal Government but the Ecological Department of the Government of India have objected to it and they said that this scheme will cut into the virgin forests and, therefore, should not be approved. We have suggested an alternative scheme, namely, the Teesta scheme and the cost-benefit is being worked out. In fact, it is my suggestion even now to the West Bengal Government that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. They may accept the Teesta scheme and then implement it so that not only the West Bengal Government is benefited but my Army, which requires water, may get it quickly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has got a third scheme.

SHRI ARABINDA GHOSH : Sir, our Chief Minister in the Hill Areas