

Governments and it is really for the State Governments to deal with those issues. But we are always there to provide technical support and we also conduct inspection. If the facilities are really bad, as the Member has pointed out, there are also provisions under the Act for this regulatory body to withdraw even the permission.

SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI: Thank you, Sir. The grant provided by the Central Zoo Authority to Tamil Nadu has been considerably reduced over the years. The Night Safari project launched in 2007 at Arignar Anna Park at Vanadlur has been deferred because of this. Will the Ministry allot required funds to finish the projects?

SHRIMATI JAYANATHI NATARAJAN: Sir, this Arignar Anna Park at Vanadlur is a night safari project. The State Government has sent a master plan which is under scrutiny by the Department and depending upon what emerges from the master plan, Sir, we will certainly take all steps to provide necessary funds, as much as possible under the budget. Under the budget constraints we ensure that the night safari takes place.

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Sir, traditionally zoos of our country are situated in the middle areas of towns, which earlier used to be the outskirts of these towns. I am especially talking about Kolkata zoo. Is there any plan with the Government of shifting these zoos to convenient and spacious places for the scientific management of these zoos as mentioned in the answer, particularly Kolkata and other inconvenient places where these zoos are situated now? What is the plan of the Ministry?

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Sir, this is really a matter which the State Government will have to take a call on because, as I mentioned, the zoos are under the specific jurisdiction of the State Governments and there are also private zoos and circuses. Only one zoo is under the Central Government. So this is really a matter which has to be addressed by the Government of West Bengal.

Impact of huge gold import on Indian economy

*85. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that huge import of gold is creating a dangerous situation by aggravating country's balance of payments problem resulting in the depreciation of the rupee and eating into the not-so-bountiful foreign exchange reserves;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) the details of appropriate action the Ministry is taking to address the concern?

THE MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (c) Gold imports are estimated at US\$ 40.5 billion (11.0 per cent of imports) and silver at US\$ 1.9 billion (0.5 per cent of imports) in 2010-11. During the current fiscal 2011-12 (April-February 2012), import of gold and silver together amounted to US\$ 54.5 billion, which is 12.6 per cent of total imports (Source DGC & S, Ministry of Commerce).

The import of gold of such magnitude strains balance of payments (BoP) and affects exchange rate of rupee through impacting supply-demand balance of foreign exchange. Such imports do not however have a direct bearing on foreign exchange reserves, as the Reserve Bank of India intervenes in the foreign exchange market through purchase/sale operations only to curb excessive volatility and restore orderliness in the market.

To lower the impact of gold imports on BoP, Government in the Union Budget, 2012-13 has proposed to increase basic custom duty on standard gold bars, gold coins of purity exceeding 99.5 per cent and platinum from 2 per cent to 4 per cent and on non-standard gold from 5 per cent to 10 per cent.

SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Sir, the Finance Minister had admitted, while presenting the General Budget on 16th March, 2012, that 50 per cent of the 'current account deficit' is on account of gold imports. For example, 40.5 billion dollars had been spent on importing gold in 2010-11. It is unproductive because it goes into making jewellery, is kept as gold bars and coins or is hoarded in lockers. It is impacting on our economy. Sir, it is said that we have huge reserves of gold deposits, but there is no effort on research and development done to tap this. China, after five years of research and development, increased the gold production to 361 tonnes, this year, from 250 tonnes last year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is the question?

SHRI SANJAY RAUT: May I know from the hon. Minister what effort the Government is making to focus on research and development to tap gold deposits?

श्री विजय कुमार रूपाणी: सर, वहां पिछले चार दिन से स्ट्राइक चल रही है। उसके बारे में सरकार चिंतित नहीं है।... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: आप जरा बैठ जाइए, उनका जवाब सुन लीजिए।

SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA: Sir, the home production is hardly two tonnes per year, and it is up to the Ministry of Mines to locate where the reserves are.

SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Sir, the hon. Minister has admitted that 'the import of gold of such magnitude strains balance of payments and affects exchange rate of rupee through impacting supply-demand balance of foreign exchange'. In

the recent Union Budget the Government has proposed to increase basic customs duty on standard gold bars and gold coins. May I know from the hon. Finance Minister whether the Government would review its policy on import of gold and focus its attention on indigenous development of gold on the lines of China?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, so far as indigenous production is concerned, as my colleague has already pointed out, we have some gold mines and the problem is, gold extraction in the Indian gold bearing ores is only 20-22 grams per tonne. All the experts say that if it is not 45-50 grams per tonne, it is not viable to extract gold because the cost of gold will be much higher. Apart from that, we have Hatty Gold Mines. We have Kolar Gold Mines. Kolar Gold Mine is one of the deepest mines of the world. Therefore, the cost of gold production is high and quality of gold bearing ore in India is extremely poor. In addition to the mining of gold, we get some quantum of gold as by-product from the production of copper and from the production of certain other materials. All taken together, the total indigenous production of gold is two tonnes, while the growth, if the hon. Member goes through the figures, it will be seen that in one year the gold import was almost 900 tonnes.

श्री मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी: सर, अभी जो बात आई, माननीय वित्त मंत्री जी ने अपने जवाब में कहा है कि गोल्ड पर 2 प्रतिशत से 4 प्रतिशत और 5 प्रतिशत से 10 प्रतिशत सीमा शुल्क बढ़ाया गया है। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी के ध्यान में लाना चाहता हूँ कि पूरे देश में पिछले तीन दिनों से सर्राफा बाजारों में हड़ताल चल रही है, सारे सर्राफा बाजार बन्द हैं। सर, सारे सर्राफा बाजार बंद हैं। गोल्ड माइंस की बात तो ठीक है, लेकिन क्या माननीय मंत्री जी बताएंगे कि जब सारे बाजार और छोटी-छोटी दुकानें बंद होंगी तो आम लोगों की समस्या का समाधान कैसे होगा?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

श्री पुरुषोत्तम खोडाभाई रूपाला: सर, एक प्रांत का सवाल नहीं है, पूरे देश में बंद हैं...(व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: बैठ जाइए, प्लीज।

श्री मुख्तार अब्बास नकवी: माननीय मंत्री जी को बताना चाहिए। पूरे देश में यह बहुत बड़ी समस्या है। तीन दिनों से बाजार बंद हैं और आगे भी कितने दिन बंद चलेगा पता नहीं...

श्री पुरुषोत्तम खोडाभाई रूपाला: पूरे देश में बाजार पांच दिनों से बंद हैं...(व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: आप बजट डिबेट में यह सवाल उठाइएगा।

श्री पुरुषोत्तम खोडाभाई रूपाला: पूरे देश में बंद है और यहां कोई जवाब देने वाला नहीं है।

श्री सभापति: आप बजट डिबेट में यह सवाल उठाइएगा।...(व्यवधान)...आप बैठ जाइए।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.
