

REPORT NO.

269



# PARLIAMENT OF INDIA RAJYA SABHA

DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY,  
ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS

TWO HUNDRED SIXTY NINTH REPORT

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES OF HIMACHAL PRADESH IN GENERAL  
AND SHIMLA IN PARTICULAR

(PRESENTED TO THE RAJYA SABHA ON THE 23<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER, 2015)  
(LAID ON THE TABLE OF THE LOK SABHA ON THE 23<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER, 2015)



RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI

DECEMBER, 2015/ AGRAHAYANA, 1937 (SAKA)

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• *To be appended at printing stage*

# COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

(2015-16)

(Constituted on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2015)

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1. **Shri Ashwani Kumar** — *Chairman*

## RAJYA SABHA

2. Shri Anil Madhav Dave
3. Shri Prem Chand Gupta
4. Shri C.P. Narayanan
5. Shri Parimal Nathwani
6. Shri Paul Manoj Pandian
7. Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy
8. Shri Arvind Kumar Singh
9. Shri Bhupinder Singh
10. Shri Ronald Sapa Tlau

## LOK SABHA

11. Shri Badruddin Ajmal
12. Shri Muzaffar Hussain Baig
13. Shrimati Bijoya Chakraborty
14. Shri Prabhatsinh Chauhan
15. Shri Pankaj Chowdhary
16. Kum. Sushmita Dev
17. Shri Ninong Ering
18. Shri Laxman Giluwa
19. Dr. K. Gopal
20. Shri Daddan Mishra
21. Shri Chirag Paswan
22. Shri Shivaji A. Patil
23. Shri Nanabhau Falgunrao Patole
24. Shri Nagendra Kumar Pradhan
25. Shri Harinarayan Rajbhar
26. Shrimati Sandhya Roy
27. Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh
28. Shri Nagendra Singh
29. Shrimati Renuka Sinha
30. Shri Vikram Usendi
31. Shrimati M.Vasanthi

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## SECRETARIAT

Shri M.K. Khan, Joint Secretary

Shri Rohtas, Director

Shri Mohd. Salamuddin, Deputy Director

Shri Rajiv Saxena, Assistant Director

## **INTRODUCTION**

I, the Chairman of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests, having been authorized by the Committee to present the report on its behalf, present this Two Hundred Sixty-ninth Report on "Environmental issues of Himachal Pradesh in General and Shimla in Particular".

2. During its study visit to Shimla from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2015, the Committee heard the views of the officers of the Central Government and State Government of Himachal Pradesh and Experts and Civil Society Organisations/NGOs on "Environmental issues of Himachal Pradesh in General and Shimla in Particular".

3. The Committee expresses its thanks to the officers of the Central Government and State Government of Himachal Pradesh and Experts and Civil Society Organisations/NGOs for rendering their valuable views/replies to clarifications sought by the Committee.

4. In its meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2015, the Committee considered the draft report and adopted the same.

**NEW DELHI:**  
**December 22, 2015**  
**Pausha 1, 1937**

**ASHWANI KUMAR**  
*Chairman,*  
*Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee*  
*on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests*  
*Rajya Sabha*

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## Report

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests undertook a study visit to Shimla from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 *inter alia* to apprise itself of the environmental issues of Himachal Pradesh in general and Shimla in particular. During the visit, the Committee heard the views of NGOs/Civil Society Organisations/Experts as well as the officials of Government of Himachal Pradesh and Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on the environmental issues, problems relating to changing environmental conditions and its effects on the people living in Shimla/Himachal Pradesh.

2. Shimla, the capital city of Himachal Pradesh, lying in the South-Western ranges of the Himalayas was once the summer capital of British India. The lofty, snow-clad mountain ranges surround Shimla with lakes and lush green pastures. It has been blessed with all the natural bounties and scenic beauty. Situated on top of seven hills and in the lower ranges of the Himalayan mountains, the forests in and around Shimla comprises of pine, deodar, oak and rhododendron. The salubrious and pleasant climate of Shimla makes it one of India's most popular hill resorts attracting tourists from not only Delhi, other cities of India but from all over the world and hence its economy is mainly driven by tourism. However, pollution due to rise in number of tourists every year, increasing construction activities, increase in number of vehicles in the city are posing a great threat on the pristine environment of Shimla. Shimla, as a result, is losing its splendor and brilliance.

3. The Committee started its business on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2015 by holding a meeting with NGOs/ Civil Society Organisations, Experts and other stakeholders on environmental issues of Himachal Pradesh in general and Shimla in particular. 4. During the meeting, the members of the NGOs/Civil Society Organisations and experts (A list of NGOs/Experts and their representatives who attended the meeting is at Annexure-I) expressed their views on a number of issues pertaining to the environmental status of Shimla and Himachal Pradesh. Some NGOs/Civil Society Organisations/Expert also submitted written memoranda. Memoranda are at Annexure-II.

Some of the views expressed by the NGOs/Civil Society and experts were, as follows:-

- (i) The Vice President of Apple Growers Association of Himachal Pradesh informed that a number of Hydel Power Projects had come up in the state of Himachal Pradesh and for these projects a number of trees had to be cut. He, therefore, suggested that compensation afforestation must be taken up by planting twenty trees in place of every tree cut. He also suggested that 6% of the total cost of the projects being installed in the state should be allocated for plantation of trees in the catchment areas and in other parts. He

further suggested that small plants or trees with utmost gestation period, should be planted around the installed transmission lines.

- (ii) Representative of Shimla Amateur Garden and Environment Society (SAGES) informed the Committee that as per the census 2011 around 57.5% of rural households in the Himachal Pradesh still used firewood for keeping their pot warm and around 6.8% of the urban people used firewood for cooking purposes, which meant that there was a lot of pressure and burden on the forests. He further stated that around 37,000 square kms (66.52%) area of the state is legally defined as forest land and if the statistics of the State Forest Department is compared with the satellite's data, the figures arrived at on the basis of the satellite, is slightly lesser. He, therefore, suggested that these figures need to be reconciled to ascertain the exact forests cover in the state.

He also expressed concern that wildlife of Himachal Pradesh was being affected by climate change and animals like Jackals, Hyenas and Sparrows, which were frequently seen previously in the state, are disappearing. He added that the Wildlife Department of Himachal Pradesh was doing a commendable job in conserving Western Tregopan (Jujurana) and vultures but much more was needed to be done.

The representative further informed the Committee that out of 93 tonnes of garbage is generated in the city of Shimla and the Shimla Environment, Heritage Conservation and Beautification (SEHB) society which is responsible for the door to door collection of the garbage which, had a capacity of collecting and processing 75 tonnes of garbage. He drew attention to the problem of the 18 tonnes of waste which, due to non-collection and non-disposal, gets littered. He for that suggested that the capacity of the society needs to be enhanced.

He drew the attention of the Committee to the fact that out of 32 herbal plants two major herbs i.e. Barbarea (known as Daru Haridra) and Texas Bekata (known as Dhanur Vriksha) used for cancer treatment are on the verge of extinction. The extinction of these herbs is more in the areas where the Village Pradhans (declared as forest officers under the Forest Minor Produce Act, 2003) are inactive. He suggested funds should be given to the states according to the value of the land and trees lost to the projects.

- (iii) Representative of SERVE Himalayas informed the Committee that in the last 10-15 years, a considerable number of hydro power projects and cement factories had come up and the environmental norms which were agreed to be observed at the approval stage of these projects, were being violated by them. He, therefore, suggested that there should be environmental impact assessment of the projects/units at every 5-7 years and the corporate/companies

related to the project must be made liable for violation of environmental norms. The representative further brought to the notice of the Committee the environmental damage due to the blasting in mining areas of limestone for making tunnels. He requested for making alternative arrangements for the same.

- (iv) The Vice Chairman, Himachal Pradesh Apple Growers Association, Shimla was of the view that environmental degradation and vagaries of nature affect the farmers most. He stated that plans/policies made at the national level on environmental issues are not applicable to all States equally especially hilly states and suggested that most of the funds related to environment should be given to States so that the policies are framed at the level of states according to their specific problems/requirements. He highlighted the problem of monkey menace, the biggest problem faced by the farmers in the state. He stated that in order to get rid of the problem of monkeys and sloth bears, the forest authorities must find solutions and for that funds should be provided to them.

He further stated that Himachal Pradesh being a hilly terrain and a cold region, firewood is needed during snowfall by the farmers for their survival and since green felling is not allowed, they are forced to become thieves and they are forced to chop branches of trees. He further suggested that fuel must be subsidized in the hilly regions and funds must be given for planting fast growing trees to be used as fuel wood. He further apprised the Committee that a disconnect exists between the farmers and the forest authorities and stated that such an impression should be obliterated.

- (v) A Professor from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla drew the attention of the Committee to the rampant fires occurring in and around forested areas of Shimla, specially during summers which is the result of increasing population (both residing as well as floating population). He highlighted that the forest fires result into loss of flora and fauna, and microbial organisms essentially required for regeneration. He further informed the Committee that while earlier the local population of surrounding areas where forest fires occurred, assisted the forest workers in extinguishing the fires, that was no more the case now as people had become indifferent to forest fires.

He also requested for special plans for cold regions like Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur region of Himachal Pradesh where the soil was fragile and land was being degraded. He informed that the region was under snow but due to climate change and man-made intervention (blasting etc.), species like Chilgoza Pine was facing extinction.

- (vi) Director, Himalayan Research Group, Shimla, informed the Committee that despite having L.P.G. connection, people living at 2000 meter and above altitude use fuel wood for keeping themselves warm and the requirement of fuelwood at this height is around 2000 kg per capita per annum. He, therefore, suggested that effective technologies such as solar energy must be used for warming of indoor space and water heating. These technologies would help bring down 40% consumption of fuel wood and this had been experimented at the local level by his organization.

He further informed that despite having 63% of the area under forest cover, Himachal Pradesh had scarce supply of timber which was being imported from Malaysia at a cheaper rate and therefore, the carbon imported from outside got stored in the state. He, therefore, suggested that more trees should be planted which could be used for non-fuel purposes particularly for constructing houses in place of iron or steel which is transported from other states and taken to heights. The transportation of such material generates carbon emission and concrete buildings built with these materials did not keep the space warm and only fuel wood could be used to maintain warm temperature.

The Director also highlighted the problem of fodder requirement and stated that around 43% of the fodder requirement in the state is met out of the forests for rearing cattle and livestock. He further informed that the cumbersome process of collecting fodder from hilly slopes or by lopping the trees had cost the lives of many women and the scarcity of fodder was resulting into import of 5 lac litres of milk on a daily basis from Punjab and Haryana. He also stated that the state of Himachal Pradesh had an edge over other states on the resources of medicinal plants saving people from severe diseases, therefore study and research must be conducted to conserve these resources and the interests of the community harvesting medicinal plants must be secured. He also stated that the mindset of the people must be changed and emphasized upon people's involvement and sense of responsibility towards environmental matters and programmes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan.

- (vii) Representative of SEVAHAR, NGO of Shimla depicted the problems of British time laws related to forest, which were not public friendly, and stressed the need for public oriented laws. He highlighted the problems of solid waste management and leakage/wastage of water that had made Shimla mosquito infected. He suggested that sewage facilities must be provided in Shimla. He further drew attention to the problems of landslides and suggested that trees and plants must be grown on the slopes of mountains and hills to contain such problems.

- (viii) The representative of Gramin Vikas Avam Manav Kalyan Samiti, Shimla suggested that adequate funds must be provided to the state of Himachal Pradesh for agro forestry.
- (ix) Representative, Civil Society Organization, Shimla suggested that easier and convenient walking lanes and paths must be constructed in the forested areas of Shimla connecting them with the roads so that the locals as well as tourists may easily walk down and could enjoy the vegetation. She stated that these lanes would decongest traffic on the roads and threat from steep slopes, which make walking difficult, may be minimised. She further suggested that barren areas on the mountain and hill slopes must be covered under afforestation and plantations like fodder trees, grasses. Medicinal plants should be grown on such barren lands which remain green throughout the year and comes under green cover. This would also help in increasing forest areas.

She further informed the Committee that dead and disease-infected trees must be cut down within a timeframe so that the disease does not spread and infect other trees. She informed that inspite of repeated requests to Forest Department and municipal authorities, cutting down of such dead and disease-infected trees was delayed. She also drew attention to the problems of animal menace.

- (x) Secretary, Himachal Pradesh High Court Bar Association stated that there was no sewage recycling plant in Shimla and there was no fencing around Shimla to prevent littering of solid wastes. He further apprised that no inventory or detailed study had been conducted for small animals and species inspite of their equal importance to the forest and vegetation community. He apprised that 377 species of butterflies existed in 1857, but at present only 90 species could be found.

5. In its next meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2015, the Committee heard the officials of Government of Himachal Pradesh and Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change *inter alia* on the environmental issues affecting Shimla/Himachal Pradesh. A list of officers of Government of Himachal Pradesh who were present in the meeting is at Annexure III.

6. During the meeting, the acting Chairman highlighted the environmental problems related to Climate Change and air pollution in Shimla, Dharmshala and Mandi. He further stated that the Committee would like to be apprised of the steps taken by the State Government in this direction and assessment of pollution levels in Shimla. He also desired to know the steps taken by the State Government to promote ecotourism and contain problems like man and animal conflict and whether assistance was being provided to the state for various Centrally sponsored schemes.

7. The Additional Chief Secretary (Forests), Government of Himachal Pradesh gave an overview of the environmental status of Himachal Pradesh as a

whole. He informed that despite vagaries of nature, landslides in Himachal Pradesh were less compared to other states. He highlighted that man-animal conflict was emerging as a major issue in the state as a whole and Shimla in particular. He stated that the Government was taking steps to sterilize the animals (monkeys and leopards) to control animal menace. The Government had been successful in controlling air quality in the state and in the city within permissible limits. However, dust and suspended matter generated is a matter of grave concern which was mostly caused by vehicular traffic. He also stated that 11,000 hectares of forest land in the state had been lost since the enactment of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 which had been mainly due to construction of roads and Hydel Projects.

8. The Committee desired to know about the Sewage Treatment capacity in Shimla. In response, the Committee was informed that Shimla had a ring of Sewerage Treatment Plants but they were not being used optimally. He further stated in spite of problems, rural sanitation in Himachal Pradesh was the best in the country. He also highlighted that due to scattered habitats, the operation of treatment plants had become difficult.

9. After hearing both the civil society members/NGOs and the officials of Himachal Pradesh Government, on the environmental issues of Himachal Pradesh in general and Shimla in particular, the Committee flags the following points and it makes recommendations.

#### **POLLUTION AND OTHER CIVIC ISSUES IN SHIMLA**

10. The increasing number of tourists, vehicles and the rising population is creating enormous pressure on the ecology of Shimla. **To reduce environmental pollution in and around Shimla, the Committee recommends that:**

- (i) The capacity of the local authorities for garbage collection and its processing/treatment in and around Shimla needs to be increased.**
- (ii) Number of sewage treatment plants be increased and steps be taken to ensure that the existing sewage treatment plants are used optimally.**
- (iii) Steps be taken to prevent leakage and stagnation of water in Shimla to prevent mosquito breeding.**
- (iv) Innovative measures for handling Solid Waste like reusing waste building material for construction activities be encouraged.**
- (v) Out of box thinking for handling/managing increasing vehicular traffic in the city like increasing public transport, encouraging vehicles running on clean fuel like CNG etc., regulating traffic during peak hours, needs to be applied.**
- (vi) To obviate the necessity of transporting construction material from other states to areas of high altitude, the feasibility of constructing houses with locally available material including wood, should be explored/encouraged.**

- (vii) Safe and disabled friendly walking paths and lanes must be constructed in and around city roads of Shimla to encourage tourists and locals to walk on such paths and lanes.**
- (viii) Renewable energy particularly solar energy must be promoted which would not only help the people in room heating and water heating but would and would bring down carbon emissions.**
- (ix) Fencing along roads and walking paths/lanes of the city of Shimla be erected to obviate litter being thrown on hill slopes.**
- (x) Anti pollution measures for cement and other factories must be enforced scrupulously. Regular surprise checks on factories by State Pollution Control Board must be undertaken to prevent violation of environmental norms.**

#### **ANIMAL/MONKEY MENACE**

11. Animal menace, specially monkey menace is emerging the major nuisance for tourists and locals alike. The menace of sloth bears and leopards has become a problem in the city of Shimla mainly for the farmers. The Committee was inform that the Government of Shimla and local authorities are alive to the problem and are devising methods to check this menace. The Committee feels that the cutting down of forests is resulting in loss of animal habitat space and sources of food which is turn in resulting in such animals venturing into city areas. Monkey menace particularly around Jakhoo temple is aggravated as people feed monkeys because of their belief. As a result more monkeys are attracted to this place. The Committee, therefore, recommends the following:-

- (i) A scientific study by the forest and wildlife authorities on the movement of animal/monkey from their natural habitat to the cities or human habitation needs to undertaken and suitable follow up action be taken up. Adequate funds should be made available for the said exercises and follow up action.**
- (ii) Awareness programmes/campaigns to discourage feeding the monkeys should be started.**
- (iii) Steps like sterilization of animals, firing of ultrasonic waves etc. should be explored to keep a check on monkey /animal menace.**
- (iv) Natural habitation and availability of adequate food for monkeys and other animals be restored.**

#### **USE OF FUELWOOD AND PLANTATION OF TREES**

12. The Committee was informed that use of firewood for warming and for cooking purposes by majority of population in rural as well as in urban areas is posing immense burden on the forests and resulting into cutting down of trees. Although there is a ban on felling of trees, branches of trees are chopped during snowfall illegally and is used in extreme cold conditions to keep themselves warm. In this connection, the Committee was informed by the State Government that LPG connections and subsidized the energy is provided to households.

**14. The Committee feels that inspite of the steps taken by the Government of Himachal Pradesh, tree felling continued in Shimla and**

**other areas of Himachal Pradesh. The Committee is of the view that increased availability of electricity even in the remotest and far-flung areas of Himachal Pradesh needs to be provided. The Committee also recommends for harnessing renewable sources of energy to enhance the energy supply and to encourage practice of agro-forestry by farmers for the use of fuel wood.**

#### **HYDEL POWER PLANTS**

15. The Government of Himachal Pradesh informed the Committee that the state of Himachal Pradesh is naturally suited for hydro power and accounts for over 30% of India's total hydropower potential in the northern region. Further, the State Government has been according hydropower the highest priority for its development since that hydropower generation can meet the growing needs of power for industry, agriculture and rural electrification. The abundance of perennial rivers enables Himachal to sell hydropower to other neighbouring states such as Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan etc. on the other hand. Civil Society Organisations/NGOs had informed that a lot of felling of trees is done in and around the catchment areas for such hydel power projects. Also, environmental rules are violated and environmental impact of the projects, is also neglected.

**16. The Committee recommends that the Government of Himachal Pradesh should consider allocating a certain percentage of the total cost of the hydel power projects for planting of trees and afforestation purposes, especially in the catchment areas and around transmission lines. The Committee also recommends that the Government should ensure that all environmental norms are strictly followed after the hydel power projects are set up.**

#### **CONSERVATION OF FORESTS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH IN PARTICULAR AND SHIMLA IN GENERAL**

17. The Government of Himachal Pradesh informed the Committee that total forest and tree cover in the state is around 14,600 square kms. and that altitudinal variation encourages habitats to immense number of species, which demonstrate a high degree of endemism i.e. species only found in these ecosystems. Parts of the region are also classified as global biodiversity hotspots. It also stated that the state has witnessed 14 percent growth in the tourist visits against a national average of 6% with 16 million tourists visiting the state every year.

18. The Committee had also been informed by the representative of an NGO that 600 petrol and 400 diesel vehicles are allowed to go to Rohtang Pass everyday to restrict the increasing movement of vehicular traffic, which restricts the movement of the locals and their daily business. Attention of the Committee was also drawn towards encroachment of reserve forest land in the state. Further, it was informed that the natives and local tribes of Rohtang were not allowed free movement in Rohtang area and in their own villages.

**19. The Committee is of the view that conservation of biodiversity is the major issue in the state. Animals like Jackal, Hyenas, Sparrows and Polar bears and herbs and shrubs including important medicinal herbs are a**

natural heritage of the state of Himachal Pradesh. The Committee feels that the blasting of mining areas of limestone and for making tunnels results into environmental damage and loss of biodiversity. Forest fires have also become so rampant, especially during summers, that people have become indifferent to them. Problem of landslides too engulfs the state though its intensity is less than the other states of India.

20. To reduce burden on forests and natural resources of Himachal Pradesh, the Committee makes the following recommendations with regard to forest conversation:-

- (i) The Forest Department should come out with accurate statistics of the forest area in the state.
- (ii) Studies must be undertaken to find out animals and plants which are disappearing and their conservation programmes/policies should be formulated to conserve and protect the same.
- (iii) Special emphasis of forest department should be on conservation of herbal and medicinal plants, adequate funds must be made available to the forest authorities/department, and other local authorities, for conserving the same. Awareness about such important medicinal herbs should be created among people in the villages so that they too become participants in conserving the medicinal plants, shrubs and herbs.
- (iv) To prevent rampant forest fires, forest authorities must devise plans which should encourage local people to assist them. Locals should also be given incentives for their assistance in such events.
- (v) The barren lands on the hill slopes should be covered by planting fodder trees, grasses, medicinal plants and other plant species and research in this direction should be encouraged which would help in increasing green cover and forest areas.
- (vi) Forest areas should be regularly monitored and dead and disease infected trees should be reserved/replaced and cut down within a time frame. Forest authorities should keep more vigil in this direction.
- (vii) Floriculture and Horticulture should be further promoted in the state to generate employment.
- (viii) Encroachment of reserve forest land should be checked by the concerned authorities.
- (ix) Problems faced by locals due to restriction on vehicles on Rohtang Pass should be looked into and if any legal remedy is to be sought then that too should be sought from appropriate judicial forum.
- (x) The natives and local tribes of Rohtang should be allowed free movement in Rohtang area and their villages as per their constitutional rights.
- (xi) There should be a better coordination and regular interaction between forest authorities, local government and people living in the

**state to conserve the forests and to maintain the pristine beauty of Himachal Pradesh and Shimla for which it is known worldwide.**

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