

## Centre, States to step up checks on plastic bag use

OUR BUREAU



Question of microns: Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar at Parliament House in New Delhi on Wednesday

### **Surveillance squads with power to levy fines soon: Javadekar**

**NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 26:**

The Government will set up surveillance squads with the power to levy spot fines on manufacturers of plastic bags below 40 microns, Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The squads will be set up by the Central Pollution Control Board and State Pollution Control Boards to strengthen and monitor the ban on plastic bags below 40 microns, Javadekar said in reply to supplementaries. As of now, nine States and three Union territories have banned plastic bags but to no avail, he added.

In reply to a question on whether the Centre has any plans to help hundreds of MSMEs affected by the ban, he said: “With a little bit of technological modernisation, it is not difficult to change over from 20 microns to 40 microns.”

With over 700 ongoing development projects getting delayed in the North-East, the Centre is thinking of setting up a committee of MPs to monitor such schemes.

Replying to supplementaries, Minister for Development of North Eastern Region Jitendra Singh said 555 ongoing projects under the Non Lapsable Central Pool of Resources and 153 schemes being carried out by the North Eastern Council were delayed.

### **Monitoring projects**

This was due to procedural problems and hostile climate and terrain, among other reasons. He said the Centre is keen to involve all the 39 MPs from the region to monitor the projects and a meeting in this regard will be held next month.

The Centre has been accused of “dismantling” the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme by “depriving” states of funds meant for it.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, CPI(M) member from Tripura Jitendra Chowdhury said that of the Budget estimate of ₹40,000 crore earmarked for the current fiscal, “only ₹20,428 crore has been released so far, affecting lakhs of rural poor.”

Of the 100 man-days of employment to be generated through the scheme, only 32 have been generated, he added, demanding a full-fledged discussion on MGNREGA in the House.

### **Irani to the rescue**

Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani came to the rescue of Minister of State Upendra Khushwaha, who skirted replying to a question on school admission of children with special needs under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

After the Opposition asked Khushwaha to “do his homework”, Irani got up to reply and informed the House that 25.03 lakh such children have been enrolled in schools across the country this year and 2.06 lakh are being covered through home-based education.

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