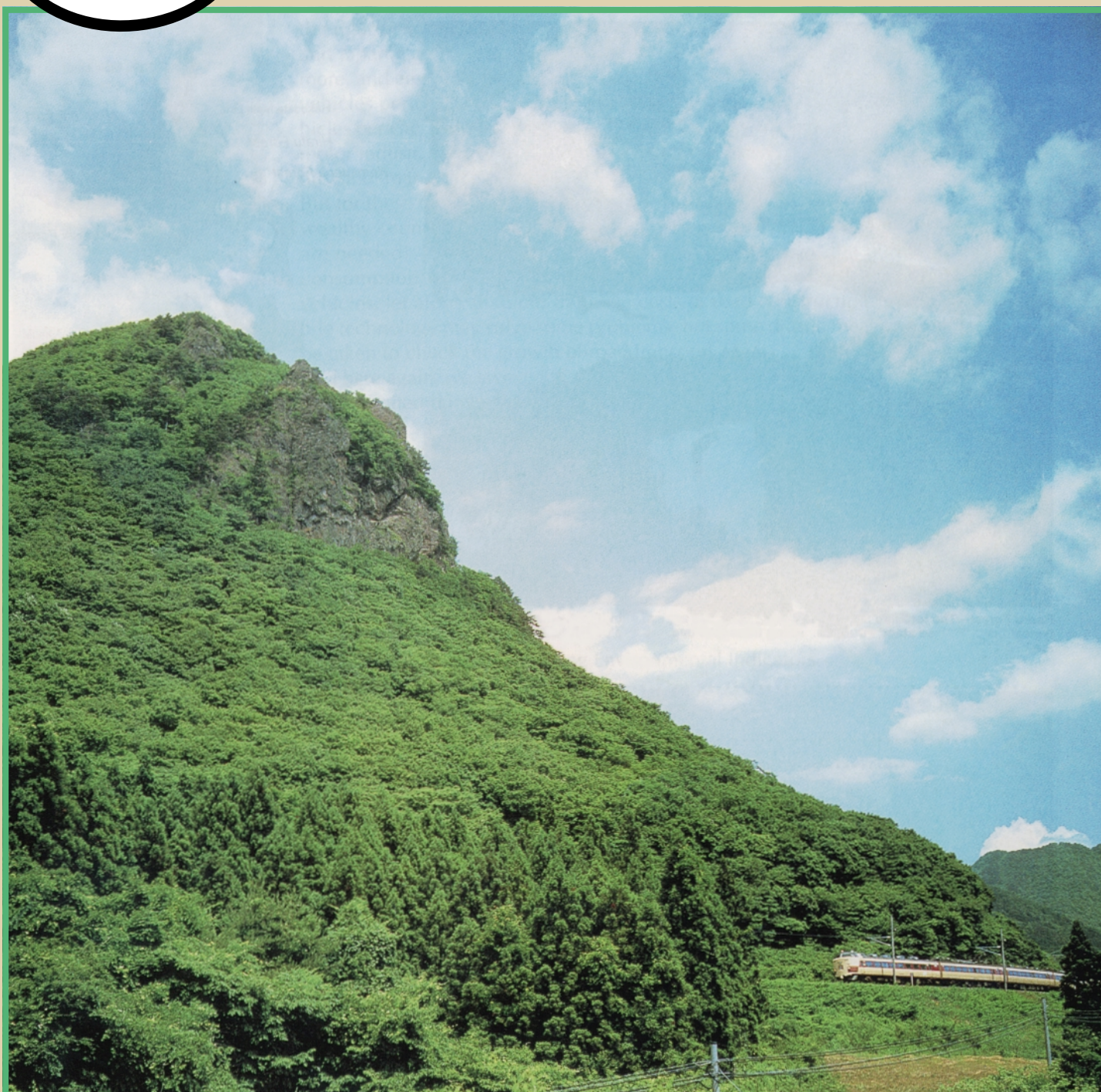


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**FEATURES:** Railways and The Environment  
Railways and Tourism (part 2)

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*Kumagane Forest (see map on p. 51)  
protects the Senzan Line against rockfalls.  
The so-called Gorilla Mountain poses a  
real threat to the railway. (G-1 Studio)*

## Editorial

### A Similar Question

People are worried about the proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia after a series of test explosions. Nuclear proliferation is surely dangerous, but some other threats are as dangerous as a nuclear warhead. The deteriorating environment is one such danger, and the transport sector, especially motor transport, is largely responsible. There were some 246 million motor vehicles in the world in 1970. At the end of 1994, the figure exceeded 633 million. In wealthy countries such as N. America, Europe, and Japan, car ownership (including buses and trucks) has reached 0.5 per capita or more, and growth is levelling off. But China with its 1.2 billion people had only 0.008 vehicles per capita in 1995, and India with 936 million people had about 0.005 vehicles per capita in the same year. Their economies are about to take off and a growing motor industry is seen as a symbol of economic power. Likewise, owning a car is the dream of many ordinary people.

But for these two countries alone to reach the same level of car ownership as today's wealthy countries, more than 1 billion extra vehicles (1.5 times all existing vehicles) are needed! The question is whether the world can bear the burden of the energy consumption, air pollution, and accidents caused by such a huge number of motor vehicles, let alone shoulder the huge costs of road construction. Advanced automobile technology may solve some problems, but some drastic measures will still have to be taken to check the growth of road transport.

And here again, we face a difficult question similar to that of nuclear weapons. Should only a limited number of wealthy countries enjoy the privilege of motor vehicles?

**T. SUGA**

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