

(b) Decision on granting environmental clearance to individual projects will be taken within 90 days of receipt of complete information.

(c) and (d) State Governments have been delegated powers to grant environmental clearance in respect of certain categories of Thermal Power Projects vide Notification S.O. No.319 (E) dated 10.4.97. Further, the State Governments have been authorised to grant clearance to projects which fall in such Coastal Regulation Zone-II areas which have been taken on record by the Ministry of Environment & Forests at the time of granting approval to the Coastal Zone Management Plan submitted by the State/Union Territories Governments.

Depletion in Forests Cover

1728. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that forest cover is constantly depleting because of increase in population and India is facing decline in forest cover due to shortfall in per capita forest area;

(b) whether the ecological balance is getting disturbed vastly because of sharp increase in population;

(c) if so, the measures being taken by Government to check the declining trend in bio-diversity; and

(d) if not, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes Sir,

(b) The forest cover in the country has declined from 19.49% to 19.27% during the period 1981—83 to 1993—95. Though no major ecological disturbance has been noticed, National Forest Policy 1988 envisages for 33% of the geographical area under forest/tree cover in the country as the inadequate cover causes soil erosion, land degradation and instability of the fragile eco-system.

(c) and (d) The measures being taken by Government to check the declining trend of forest cover and bio-diversity are:

- (i) Survey and inventorisation of floral and faunal resources of the country by Botanical Survey of India and Zoological Survey of India respectively.
- (ii) In-situ conservation through Protected Area network consisting of National Parks, Wild life Sanctuaries and Biosphere Reserves.
- (iii) Species specific conservation programmes, such as Project Elephant, Project Tiger and Project Rhino.
- (iv) Ex-situ conservation through Botanic Gardens and Zoological Parks.
- (v) Afforestation programmes are undertaken by State/UT Government from their own resources, with financial assistance from Government of India and through external aid.
- (vi) Guidelines to all State/UT Governments to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.
- (vii) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest lands.
- (viii) Ministry has prepared a National Forestry Action Plan to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through improvement in investment for conservation and development of forest resources.

Conservation of Flora

†1729. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government propose to set up an authority for conservation of flora as well as the protection of traditional rights of the farmers of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the authority is likely to be set up?

†Original Notice of the Question was received in Hindi.