

(b) if so, the details of representations received by Government against the EIA process during the last one year and the action taken thereon;

(c) whether Government proposes to upgrade the quality of EIA process and also to create National Environment Protection Authority for early clearance of various projects; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) Ministry of Environment & Forests has proposed amendments in the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, *vide* S.O. 195(E) dated 19th January, 2009 for obtaining comments / suggestions from all concerned. The proposed amendments, some of which are clarificatory in nature and some seek to make the notification more comprehensive, *inter-alia* include: (i) enhancement of threshold limit for construction projects from 20,000 sq.m. to 50,000 sq.m, (ii) modernization and expansion projects without increase in pollution load to be exempt from the provision of EIA Notification, 2006, (iii) prospecting of minerals to be exempt from EIA Notification, 2006, (iv) biomass based power plants upto 50 MW to be exempt from EIA, (v) category 'B' projects to be exempt from scoping for three years, and (vi) proactive / voluntary disclosure of information relating to grant of environmental clearance for ensuring effective implementation and enforcement of environmental regulation through the creations of societal vigil. The comments / suggestions on the proposed draft amendments have since been received from all concerned including (i) Ministries / Departments of Central Government, (ii) State Governments, (iii) Civil Society and (iv) Industry Associations. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 provides a time limit of 365 days for finalization of the draft Notification from the date of its issue after taking into consideration the comments received.

(c) and (d) A proposal to set up a National Environment Protection Authority to strengthen enforcement and monitoring of compliance of environmental statutes and to improve environmental planning and management is in a conceptual stage.

Environment Protection Laws

2448. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

SHRI DARA SINGH:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has been weak to enforce strictly the 20 Environment Protection Laws, as has been done in the United States;

(b) whether Government proposes to set up a Regulatory Authority on the lines of US's Empowerment Protection Agency; and

(c) if so, by when such a draft legislation is proposed to be brought forward by Government in Parliament as the present Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has proved to be toothless to punish polluters in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) The Ministry of Environment & Forests is making efforts to improve the enforcement and compliance mechanism with respect to environmental laws. Institutional strengthening is an important part of this process. A proposal to strengthen the Central Pollution Control Board and to establish an Environment Protection Authority is in a conceptual stage, and is yet to be formalised.

Smuggling of skin and bone of wild animals

†2449. SHRI BALBIR PUNJ: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number and details of cases of smuggling of-skin and bones of wild animals that came to light during the last five years, State-wise;

(b) whether it is a fact that the total number of lions in our wild life sanctuaries was 40,000 in 1945, which has come down, to just 1600 in 2009;

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government to increase their number; and

(d) the details of the policy of Government for protection of other wild animals besides lion, on the verge of extinction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) State-wise details of cases of smuggling of skins and bones of wild animals are not compiled and collated at Central Government level. However, as per the information available with the Regional Offices of Wildlife Crime Control Bureau located at Delhi, Jabalpur, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, total number of violations involving skins and bones of wildlife, which have come to their notice during the last five years are as under:

Year	Eastern Region Kolkata	Central Region, Jabalpur	Western Region, Mumbai	Northern Region, New Delhi	Southern Region, Chennai	Total
2004	10	Nil	7	2	1	20
2005	4	Nil	4	2	Nil	10
2006	2	Nil	6	Nil	Nil	8
2007	3	Nil	23	1	Nil	27
2008	7	Nil	11	Nil	Nil	18
TOTAL :	26	Nil	51	5	1	83

(b) There are no authentic reports indicating that the total number of lions in wildlife sanctuaries were 40,000 in 1945. Presently, lions are found only in Gir forests in Gujarat and as per the estimation carried out in 2005, the total population of lions in Gir forests is 359 ± 10.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.