

Development of forest infrastructure

*478. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government has announced a plan for developing forest infrastructure across the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the State Governments have been asked to provide assistance in developing forest infrastructure; and

(d) if so by, when the task of providing infrastructure in forests is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAI RAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) There is no specific announcement of any plan for developing forest infrastructure across the country. However, there is an ongoing Central Sponsored Scheme 'Intensification of Forest Management', continuing since 10th Plan period, for providing financial assistance to the State Forest Departments to strengthen their forest protection machinery by way of infrastructure development, use of modern technology, improved mobility by way of deployment of new field vehicles, improved communication and providing arms ammunition to the frontline forestry force. The scheme also provides financial assistance for developing infrastructure for forest fire control and management; survey, demarcation and preparation of Working Plans.

(c) and (d) The Centrally Sponsored 'Intensification of Forest Management' Scheme is a grants-in-aid based on 90:10 (Central: State) funding pattern in respect of all the North Eastern States including Sikkim and Special category States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and 75:25 (Central: State) funding pattern for all other States/UTs.

The Mid-term evaluation report of this scheme during 2007-2008 has strongly recommended for the continuation of the Scheme as it has resulted in bridging the gap in developing forest infrastructure in States/UTs.

Special dispensation to ecologically sensitive areas

*479. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state: