

(a) whether Government has proposed an Eco-tourism policy for the protection and promotion of forests;

(b) if so, by when Government would hold a discussion on this policy in the Parliament;

(c) if not, the reasons for not according priority to this policy for the protection of national natural resources;

(d) whether Eco-tourism is a forestry activity and if so, by when this activity would be notified by Government; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (e) Action has been initiated to formulate guidelines for forest and wildlife eco-tourism within the ambit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Environmental pollution by soft drink factories

†1292. SHRI RAGHUNANDAN SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that hazardous chemicals emanating from soft drink factories are causing health problems in different parts of the country, polluting environment, damaging crops and lowering quality of soil;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(c) whether Government is aware that these factories are continuously extracting limit less ground water and as a result of that dry zone is in making all around;

(d) if so, whether Government has prescribed norms under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for them;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the action taken by Government against these factories, so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) No cases of such adverse effects of soft drink factories have come to the notice of this Ministry.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) The studies carried out by Central Ground Water Board reveal that agriculture is the predominant user of ground water. As per the latest assessment of ground water resources carried out jointly by the Central Ground Water Board and State Ground Water Organizations, the withdrawal of groundwater for domestic and industrial uses together is about 8% of the total ground water extraction while the remaining 92 % of ground water withdrawal is for irrigation.

(d) to (f) Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA), constituted by the Ministry of Water Resources under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 has prepared guidelines for extraction of ground water by industries / projects (including soft drink factories) falling in different category areas in the country. All new industries/ projects and also those under expansion are required to obtain prior approval of CGWA before extraction of ground water. CGWA has notified 43 areas in different parts of the country, where commercial extraction of ground water by new industries/ projects is not permitted. Deputy Commissioners/ District Magistrates of these notified areas have been authorized by the Authority to take suitable action against the violators, if any.

"Go" and "No-Go" areas of mining

1293. SHRIMATI GUNDU SUDHARANI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Ministries of Coal and Mines have expressed their grave concern over Ministry's 'Go' and 'No-Go' areas of mining;
- (b) what are the requests made by both the Ministries; and
- (c) how the Ministry is planning to respond to them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (c) On the request of the Ministry of Coal, the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) through Forest Survey of India (FSI) and the Ministry of Coal through Central Mine Planning & Design Institute Limited (CMPDI) have jointly undertaken an exercise to overlay the forest cover map on the coal blocks boundaries in respect of 9 coalfields in the country and identified various coal blocks as category 'A' (No-Go areas) and Category 'B' (Go areas).

Apparently, there is no difference of opinion between the MoEF and the Ministry of Coal and Mines in respect of category 'A' and category 'B' areas identified in 9 coal fields in the country so far. However, both the Ministries have some difference of opinion on those coal blocks which have fallen