

Reduction in the forest cover area in the country

1564. DR. BHARATKUMAR RAUT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that forest cover in the country is declining very fast;
- (b) what is the percentage of the reduction in the forest cover areas in India for the last three years, year-wise; and
- (c) the measures Government is undertaking or proposes to take to increase the forest cover in the country to safeguard environment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. As per State of Forest Report (SFR) 2005 and India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2009, the forest cover in the country has increased by 728 km² between the two assessment periods.

(c) The Ministry of Environment & Forests is implementing a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Afforestation Programme (NAP) Scheme for regeneration of degraded forests and adjoining areas in the country. The scheme is being implemented through a decentralized mechanism of State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) at State Level, Forest Development Agency (FDA) at Forest Division level and Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMCs) at village level. As on 31.03.2011, 800 FDA projects have been approved in 28 States in the country to treat an area of 17.43 lakh ha. since inception of the scheme in 2002.

Beside NAP, following steps have been taken to increase the forest cover in the country:

- Two new Eco-Task Force (ETF) Battalions have been operationlized by the Ministry for ecorestoration of degraded areas in Assam, in addition to supporting the existing four ETF battalions in the country. An amount of Rs. 31.91 crores has been released during the 2010-11.
- XIIIth Finance Commission has recommended Rs. 5000 crore for five years starting from 2010-11 for conservation and development of forests.
- Additional Central assistance of Rs. 81.66 crores has been released to the States during 2009-10 for restoration and regeneration of forest cover.

- Tree planting is also an approved activity under MGNREGA and other schemes of Central and State Governments.
- The National Mission for a Green India, as one of the eight Mission under the National Action Plan on climate change. The Mission focuses on enhancing ecosystem services and carbon sink through afforestation and eco restoration of 10 million ha. of forest and non forest lands. Rs. 200 crores has been earmarked for Green India Mission for 2011-12.

Cases of irregularities in AWBI

1565. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any provision of Government grant for registered cowsheds in India and whether they are examined regularly;

(b) whether complaints relating to appointment and corruption in Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) have been received;

(c) whether there is a plan to open branches of AWBI in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan or Uttar Pradesh; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): (a) There is no provision of grants particularly for registered cowsheds. AWBI gives grant for establishment and maintenance of shelter houses for uncared animals. The inspection of the concerned organization is done before release of funds for construction of shelter house. Grant for maintenance of Shelter House is based on the number of animals sheltered and number of ownerless animals treated. The certificate of verification in this regard is issued by the State Government Animal Husbandry officials.

(b) Yes, Sir. One (anonymous) complaint was received in the year 2009.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. However, State Animal Welfare Boards have been established in a number of States/UTs, including Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Ministry of Environment and Forests has been writing to the States for strengthening the activities of State Animal Welfare Boards at the State level and Societies for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) at the district level for preventing cruelty to animals.