

Policy for conservation of forests

†1033. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is giving more priority to construction projects related to development rather than conservation of forests in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether any clear-cut policy has been framed by Government to accord priority for conservation of forests or for construction of modern development projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Use of forest land for non-forest purpose, including for execution of development projects, require prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Proposals seeking prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 are examined in accordance with the provisions of this Act and the Rules and Guidelines framed there-under. Approval under this Act for diversion of forest land is accorded only after ascertaining that the requirement of forest land for non-forest purposes is bare minimum and unavoidable.

To mitigate impacts of diversion of forest land on the ecology, environment, biodiversity and overall forest cover in the country, the Central Government while according approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land stipulates appropriate conditions. Important among these conditions are transfer and mutation of equivalent non-forest land in favour of State Forest Department (SFD) for creation of compensatory afforestation from the funds to be provided by the user agency; notification of such non-forest land transferred in favour of the SFD as Reserved Forest/Protected Forest; realization of Net Present Value (NPV) of the diverted forest land from the user agency for execution of various activities for conservation, protection and management of forests and wildlife and realization of funds from the user agencies for preparation and execution of appropriate plans for conservation and development of wildlife in and around the forest land diverted for non-forest purposes.

Apart from the above, Ministry of Environment and Forests also provides financial assistance to State/Union Territory Governments for conservation and development of forests.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.