

Resources Department, Madhya Pradesh for construction of Runjh Medium Irrigation Project in Panna District, Madhya Pradesh has been referred to Forest Advisory Committee for its consideration in next meeting.

Pending projects for forest clearances

492 .DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of projects that are pending in the Ministry for forest clearance and the policy in place in this regard;

(b) the major issues due to which projects are pending in the Ministry for forest clearances; and

(c) the number of industrial and infrastructure projects pending in the last 3 years for forest clearance and the issues pending to be sorted out by the Ministry with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): (a) At present there are 282 proposals, comprising of 117 proposals above 40 ha and 165 below 40 ha category, under consideration in the Ministry for clearance under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The proposals seeking prior approval of the Central Government for use of forest land for non-forestry purposes are examined in accordance with the provisions given under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and Rules and Guidelines framed thereunder. The forest clearance to proposals received in the MoEF under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for forest clearance is a continuing process.

(b) The main reasons for pendency of the proposals are as follows:

(i) Detailed Site Inspection by Regional Offices of the MoEF is required in proposals involving more than 100 ha of forest land.

(ii) Quite often, the proposals received are not complete in all respects and the Central Government has to seek further details/documents from the concerned State Governments.

(c) At present there are 128 proposals pertaining to infrastructure, comprising of 44 proposal above 40 ha and 84 below 40 ha category, under

consideration in the Ministry. Presently, there are no pending issues to be sorted out by the Ministry of Environment and Forests with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Forest encroachment across the country

493. DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that forest encroachment is increasing in the country rampantly, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is a fact that Forest regions are disappearing due to heavy industrialisation in the country, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to safeguard the forest regions in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): (a) Encroachment on forest land is not increasing rampantly in the country. However, there are encroachments on forest land by individuals including local tribes for the purpose of agriculture. State-wise extent of encroachment of forest land as reported by State/UTs is given in the Statement (*See* below).

(b) Heavy industrialization may have impact on the forest cover but due to sustainable forest management efforts, the forest cover of the country has registered an increase from 20.60% to 21.05% of the geographical area as per State of Forest Report (SFR) pertaining to the year 2005 and 2011 respectively.

(c) Ministry of Environment & Forests provides Grants-in-aid to State Governments under Intensification of Forest Management Scheme. The aim of the Scheme is to supplement the efforts of the States for forest protection. Funds under the Scheme are utilized for patrolling of the forests, establishment of camps, building fire watch towers, creation and maintenance of fire line, forest fire control, survey and demarcation of forest areas and strengthening of forest infrastructure etc. Funds are also allotted under CAMPA to State/UTs for forest protection. In addition funds are given under National Afforestation Programme and 13th Finance Commission for afforestation and improvement of degraded forest land with the purpose of increasing forest and tree cover and providing livelihood support to forest dependent communities. As per the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 no