

Environmental clearance to Posco Steel Plant Project

*336. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry has given environmental clearance to the Posco Steel Plant Project;

(b) whether Government is aware of the prolonged popular resistance and also the opposition of the National Green Tribunal under the Forest Conservation Act against this project; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and reasons for giving clearance rejecting all oppositions to the project?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI M. VEERAPPA MOILY): (a) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) accorded environmental clearance to M/s. POSCO India Private Limited on 19.07.2007 for setting up of an Integrated Iron and Steel Plant of 4 MTPA capacity with a Captive Power Plant (4×100MW) at Kujang, near Paradip, Jagatsinghpur in Odisha, subject to various environmental safeguards. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has extended the validity of the environmental clearance up to 18.07.2017 on 07.01.2014.

(b) and (c) Before according the environmental clearance, consultation on the project was done through a Public Hearing conducted by the Odisha State Pollution Control Board on 15.04.2007. The Ministry of Environment and Forests received representations regarding Palli Sabha Resolution from the POSCO Parthirodha Sangram Samiti on the transfer of forest land *vis-a-vis* the forest rights of the tribal and forest dwellers under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Based on the comments of the State Government of Odisha on the said Palli Sabha Resolution and the provisions of the Orissa Gram Panchayat Act, 1964, the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and the Forest Rights Rules, 2007, the Ministry of Environment and Forests accorded final approval on 04.05.2011 under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land subject to compliance of various conditions. In addition, the MOEF also imposed additional environmental conditions *vide* letter dated 31.01.2011 based on report of a four-member committee constituted to address concerns raised by various stakeholders.

An appeal (No. 8/2011) was filed in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) challenging the environmental clearance granted on 19.07.2007 along with additional conditions imposed by the Ministry on 31.01.2011. The Ministry, in pursuance of

the directions given by the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal on 30.3.2012, constituted an Expert Committee with relevant expertise. The recommendations of this Committee headed by Shri K. Roy Paul and the plan of action of M/s. POSCO thereto were considered by the Expert Appraisal Committee (Industry) [EAC(I)] of the Ministry. The EAC(I) recommended extending the validity of the environmental clearance dated 19.07.2007, subject to environmental safeguards such as land optimisation, water storage including rainwater harvesting particularly during lean period, water usage including recycling and treatment and earmarking of 5% of the total cost of the project towards 'Enterprise Social Commitment' based on local needs. Based on the recommendations of the EAC(I), MoEF has revalidated the Environment Clearance accorded to M/s Posco India Private Limited on 7th January 2014 subject to various environmental safeguards.

In case titled "Prafulla Samantra *versus* Union of India & Ors." (Original Application No. 123 of 2013) before NGT, the applicant had prayed that prohibitory orders be issued against POSCO to stop work, including tree felling in the forestland until the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 are complied with and appropriate Order in that regard is issued by the State Government. The NGT, *vide* its order dated 24.01.2014, has disposed of this application. The Order *inter-alia* states that the project proponent is at liberty to approach the State Government for appropriate orders in accordance with law and that till such order is passed by the Competent Authority, the project proponent would not carry on cutting/felling in the forest area.

Forcible conversion of Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh

*337. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn towards the recent reports of forcible conversion of Hindus and increase in assault cases in Pakistan and Bangladesh; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHID): (a) and (b) Government has from time to time come across reports of problems being faced by members of minority communities in foreign countries including, in Pakistan and Bangladesh, of Hindu minorities.

It is the primary responsibility of the respective foreign Governments to discharge their obligations towards all their citizens including those that belong to