

Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB). These reviews have found that Indian nuclear power plants are safe and have margins and features in design to withstand extreme natural events. Recommendations were made in these reviews to take the safety to a higher level, which have mostly been implemented.

Talks between India and Japan

*398. DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether India and Japan have met on enhancing the security and defence ties between the two countries, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the details of the areas and issues that have come up for discussion and mutual agreement?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHID) : (a) and (b) Defence Minister of Japan Mr. Itsunori Onodera visited India and held talks with Raksha Mantri on 6 January 2014. The two Ministers exchanged views on bilateral defence cooperation and exchanges as well as regional and global security challenges. They also shared ideas on issues relating to peace, stability and prosperity of the region. The two Ministers appreciated the progress on bilateral defence cooperation achieved in various fields and at various levels, including the holding of the third Defence Policy Dialogue and the second 2+2 dialogue in October 2012 and the second bilateral exercise between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force in December 2013. The two Ministers also shared views on conducting regular high-level and working-level consultations and deepening Services exchanges in order to further enhance mutual trust and mutual understanding.

Degradation and loss of forest cover

*399. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether degradation and loss of forest cover and water and air pollution are the major causes of deficit of rain water causing drought, cyclone and

natural calamities in coastal areas like Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat; and

(b) whether any detailed study and research has been done on the subject, if so, the details thereof and action taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI M. VEERAPPA MOILY) : (a) and (b) There are no reports establishing that degradation and loss of forest cover and water and air pollution are the major causes of deficit rain causing drought, cyclone and natural calamities in coastal areas like Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. However, forests and trees in general aid in water conservation and recharge of aquifers thereby improving water availability.

Projects under UIDSSMT

*400. SHRIMATI RAJANI PATIL : Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has sanctioned many projects for various municipal corporations in many States across the country under the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) during the last three years, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that many proposals received under the said scheme are still pending with Government, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAMAL NATH) : (a) Yes, Sir. Details of projects sanctioned during the last three years is given in Statement (*See below*).

(b) The Mission has completed its normal tenure of 7 years on 31.03.2012. The Government has extended the period for 2 years *i.e.* upto 31.03.2014 for completion of ongoing projects and reforms. The Government further in January, 2013 approved for sanctioning of new projects under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) for 1 year *i.e.* upto 31.03.2014 as a transition phase. The projects under JnNURM are sanctioned subject to their technical appraisal being in conformity with the guidelines of the Scheme, State Level Sanctioning Committee (SLSC) approval and availability of funds.