Power to the regional office to give permission

†3101. SHRI LAL SINH VADODIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in accordance of the provisions of Forest Conservation Laws, the proposals of 5 to 40 hectares of land are sent to the Ministry by the regional offices in consultation with SAG for concurrence of the Ministry ;

(b) if so, the details of the procedure and whether the existing procedure takes a lot of time for permission of the proposal resulting into delay in developmental work; and

(c) whether Government proposes to give the powers to the regional offices to permit the proposals upto 40 hectares, if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): (a) to (c) Regional Offices of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change are competent to finally dispose of all proposals involving diversion/de-reservation for forest land up to 5 hectare, except in respect of proposals for regularization of encroachments and mining (including renewal of mining leases).

In respect of proposals involving diversion of forest land above 5 hectares and up to 40 hectares and all proposals for regularization of encroachments and mining up to 40 hectares, the proposals are examined by the Regional Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests/ Chief Conservator of Forests in consultation with an Advisory Group consisting of representatives of the State Government from Revenue Department, Forest Department, Planning and/or Finance Department and concerned Department whose proposal is being examined. The views of the Advisory Group are recorded by the Regional Addl. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and along with the same, the proposals are sent to the Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change for consideration and final decision. The Central Government after considering the views of the Advisory Group and after such further enquiry as it may consider necessary, grant approval to the proposal with or without conditions or reject the same.

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has not taken any decision to give the powers to the regional offices to permit the proposals upto 40 hectares.

Environmental clearance request from Maharashtra

†3102. SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any request for environmental clearance from Maharashtra Government regarding Inland Passenger Water Transport on West Coast, Mumbai, if so, the details thereof as on date; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) the current status of this proposal and by when this proposal is planned to be finalised and the reasons of its delay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): (a) and (b) CRZ clearance was issued to Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) for the development of Passenger Water Transport Project along West Coast of Mumbai City on 6th December, 2005 and is 15th May, 2006. Since the validity of the above clearances expired in the year 2011, MSRDC submitted a fresh proposal in August, 2012. Terms of References for carrying out Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study were granted as required under the EIA Notification, 2006. MSRDC submitted final ElA, along with Public Hearing Minutes, in December, 2012. The project was examined by the Expert Appraisal Committee in its meeting held in January, 2013 and the EAC recommended the project for grant of environment and CRZ clearance. Accordingly, the environment and CRZ clearance to the project was granted on 8th March, 2013.

Foreign help to increase forest cover

†3103. SHRI NARAYAN LAL PANCHARIYA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the forest cover of the country is shrinking every year and if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the oxygen level is decreasing due to shrinking forest cover and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government is taking any foreign help to increase forest cover and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): (a) As per India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2013, there is a net increase of 5,871 square kilometers in the forest cover of the country, as compared to previous assessment *i.e.* India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2011.

(b) There is no report that oxygen level is decreasing due to shrinking forest cover.

(c) A number of forestry projects with external finance assistance are in operation in various States as per the details given in Statement (*See* below). Afforestation is one of the components under some of these projects. The various activities under these projects help to improve/increase forest cover.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.