

(Area in hectares)

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Approved Area	4182	2341	5453	0	1605

Besides implementation of the National Afforestation Programme, following steps have been taken to increase the forest cover in the country:

- Under XIIIth Finance Commission, ₹ 268.64 crore has been allocated for Andhra Pradesh for five years starting from 2010-11 for conservation and development of forests;
- Additional Central Assistance of ₹ 4.10 crore has been released to the State of Andhra Pradesh during 2009-10 for Restoration and Regeneration of Forest Cover.
- Tree Planting is also an approved activity under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and other schemes of Central and State Governments.

MFN status to India

944. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the numbers of countries, including the SAARC nations who have given MFN status to India;

(b) whether we have given MFN status to any of the foreign countries, including that of SAARC nations, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the direct benefits of the MFN status obtained and/or accorded by India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) and (b) As per the obligation under the World Trade Organization (WTO), the member countries of WTO shall extend Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to each other automatically, unless otherwise specified in the agreement or schedule notified to the WTO by the member country. Pursuant to this Provision, in case of goods, India has extended MFN status to member countries

of WTO. As regards SAARC countries, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are members of WTO and except the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, these countries have extended MFN status to India. India has extended MFN status to all these SAARC countries including Pakistan. So far as exception to MFN status, if any, in services is concerned, each member country has indicated the same in the schedule of commitments in services notified to WTO.

(c) It leads to equal treatment amongst countries and ensures a more stable, predictable, reliable and competitive international trade.

Problem of fishermen from West Bengal

945. SHRI VIVEK GUPTA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that a lot of fishermen from West Bengal are regularly facing problems on international marine borders near West Bengal;

(b) if so, the effort made by the Central Government to help these fishermen and the details thereof; and

(c) whether any foreign policy initiative Government is mulling to adopt in spite of frequent problems faced by Indian Fishermen along the international marine borders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (GENERAL (RETD.) V.K. SINGH): (a) to (c) From time to time, there are reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen inside Bangladesh waters.

As soon as reports of apprehension of Indian fishermen are received, Government takes up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh through diplomatic channels. As a result of these consistent efforts and with the active cooperation and legal assistance of local authorities, expeditious release of all Indian fishermen from the custody of Bangladesh has been secured. As of date, there are no Indian fishermen in Bangladesh custody.

Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. In this context, the Government is actively engaged in bilateral dialogue process with the concerned countries at all levels.