

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO): (a) to (d) Government of India accords prior approval for different developmental activities including roads, in forest areas under the provisions of Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA), 1980 after due diligence of the proposals received in this regard.

With a view to facilitate development of critical public utility infrastructure which involve forest areas, the Central Government has accorded General Approval under FCA, 1980 for allowing non-forest use of forest land for 15 categories of projects, including construction/widening of roads involving forest area up to 1 ha.

Upgradation of roads, constructed in forest areas prior to 25th October 1980, from 'kutcha to pucca' is permissible without attracting the provisions of FCA, 1980. Black topping and bituminous work of forest roads (management works) which have been brought under Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana is also permitted without attracting the provisions of the FCA.

Further, with a view to speed up the process of decision making, the power to accord prior approval for all linear proposals like construction of road, transmission lines, railway lines, etc. has been delegated to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's Regional Offices irrespective of the area.

Amending National Forest Policy, 1988

2430. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that there is no clear definition of forest that is accepted nationally and States are left to determine their own definition of forests;
- (b) whether it is also a fact that forests are currently governed by the National Forest Policy, 1988;
- (c) whether Government has any plan to update this policy; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO): (a) In so far as the application of

Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is concerned, the term 'forest' is understood according to its dictionary meaning. This description covers all statutorily recognized forests, whether designated as reserved, protected or otherwise for the purpose of Section 2(i) of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The term "forest land", occurring in Section 2, not only includes "forest" as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any area recorded as forest in the Government record irrespective of the ownership.

(b) The National Forest Policy, 1988 is the main policy document containing guiding principles for conservation, protection and management of forests in the country.

(c) and (d) After wide consultations with all major stakeholders and incorporating their feedbacks, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has prepared a draft to update the existing National Forest Policy, 1988, and amongst other objectives, to give added focus on improving livelihoods of people based on sustainable management of forests for ecosystem services, increasing productivity of forests, forest management for water and ecological security, addressing Climate Change issues, etc.

Environmental clearance to road projects in Punjab

2431. SARDAR BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDER: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of proposals received from various State Governments particularly from Punjab Government for getting the environmental clearance for various road projects during the last three years;

(b) the number of projects out of them, cleared so far; and

(c) the time by which the remaining proposals are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO): (a) The Ministry has received five(5) road projects from the State Governments of Haryana (1 No.) and Maharashtra (4 Nos.) during last three years No proposal has been received from the Punjab Government for seeking environmental clearance for any road project during this period.