

Measures against Earthquakes

*399. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that scientists are of the opinion that the Centre point of earthquakes is moving towards Mumbai and Delhi;
- (b) whether the frequency of the earthquakes is increasing; and
- (c) if so, what precautionary measures Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Sir, earthquakes are found to be occurring at random in space and time over the globe. There is no evidence with us for the centre point (epicenter) to be moving towards Mumbai and Delhi.

(b) Statistical analysis of long-term seismicity data reveals that globally the frequency of earthquake occurrence has not shown any appreciable increase in the frequency of the earthquakes.

(c) Despite the fact that there is no evidence for any appreciable increase in the frequency of the earthquakes, India Meteorological Department is continuously monitoring earthquake activity in the country through its state-of-the-art seismological network. The Ministry of Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation through BMTPC (Building Materials & Technology Promotion Council) is taking various initiatives to create awareness about, disseminate information on, and promote disaster resistant construction technologies (as per the guidelines of Bureau of India Standards) amongst the practicing architects, design engineers, builders, etc.

Deforestation

* 400. SHRI K.A.RA. SUBBIAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) the amount of deforestation taking place in the country;

(b) whether environment is affected due to deforestation; if so, whether Government have taken any precautionary measures to counter deforestation;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) Forest Survey of India has been assessing forest cover of the country biennially since 1987. The forest cover of the country has declined from 19.49% to 19.27% in the period from 1981—83 to 1993—1995. The forest cover of the country has marginally increased to 19.39% in the period from 1996-1998.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The important measures undertaken by the Government to check deforestation are:

(i) Afforestation programmes are undertaken by State Governments/UT Administration from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India.

(ii) Externally aided projects are being implemented for development and preservation of forests.

(iii) Guidelines have been issued to all States/UTs to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.

(iv) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest land for non forestry purposes.

(v) A net work of protected areas has been established.

(vi) Ministry of Environment and Forests has prepared a National Forestry Action Programme to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through increased investments in conservation and development of forest resources.

(d) Does not arise.