

India's Relations with Foreign Countries

257. SHRI B.V. DESAI :

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) Whether the Prime Minister's visit to various countries during the month of June, 1985 has further improved India's relations with those countries; and

(b) if so, what are the agreements reached between the various countries that were visited by the Prime Minister ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN) .

(a) Yes, Sir,

(b) During Prime Minister's visit to France, two accords were signed; (a) for the establishment of Indo-French Centre for the promotion of Advanced Research in New Delhi; and (b) for French assistance for the conversion of urban wastes into energy and depollution of the Ganga.

During the visit to the United States, an agreement was signed to extend the Science and Technology Initiative, begun in October 1982, for a further period of three years, effective October 1985. Besides this certain ideas were agreed to in principle which will be explored further. These relate to initiation of the programme to develop and produce new and improved vaccines, and initiation of a long-term research and technology development programme covering activities in agriculture and forestry, health and nutrition, family welfare and bio-medicine and industrial research and development.

Land Covered by Forests in The Country

258. SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) What area of land is covered by forests in the country at present State-wise ;

(b) the steps Government have taken to stop dangerous and fast deforestation creating environmental imbalance;

(c) the present gap between fuelwood production and demand and the gap of industrial wood production and demand; and

(d) the measures Government propose to take to meet the challenge of growing gap between demand and production ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI VIR SEN): (a) The area officially registered as forests in the country at present is 74.7216 million hectares. Statewise area is given in the statement below.

(b) The main steps taken by the Government to save the forests and given below:

1. Enforcement of the Indian Forest Act 1927 and of various other enactments to prevent unauthorised felling of trees.
2. Enactment and enforcement of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
3. Elimination of the agency of contractors in the working of forests in most of the States.
4. Creation of fuelwood reserves by undertaking massive tree plantations within and outside the forest areas.
5. Taking up of intensive studies of the problems of grazing, encroachment and shifting cultivation with a view to find long-term solutions.
6. Pulp and wood chips have been exempted from import duty and import duty on wood in certain specified forms has been reduced to 10% ad valorem.
7. Steps to use substitutes for wood wherever feasible will be identified and implemented.
8. A National Wasteland Development Board has been set up with the object of bringing 5 million hectares every year under fuelwood and fodder plantation.

(c) The present annual demand for fuelwood in the country is estimated at 133 million tonnes (i.e. 0.19t/capita) as com-