

ing up all over Rajasthan. In fact, the State is one of the major suppliers of cement in the country. Does the Union Government propose to issue any special directions to the State Governments to control tuberculosis in areas where cement units are located and does it intend to provide any special grant for the purpose?

SHRI M.L. FOTEDAR: I have no information to the effect that cement units cause tuberculosis. The Environment Minister is present in the House and I would request him to check pollution in areas, where these units are located.

Survey on Forest Reserve

*87. SHRI SURESHANAND SWAMI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have conducted any survey with regard to the decline in forest reserve during the last three years; and

(b) if so, the outcome thereof?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b). The Forest Survey of India, Dehra Dun has been assessing the forest cover of the country based on visual interpretation of Satellite imageries of forests on a two years cycle basis, and the report is published as "The State of the Forest Report". The third and the latest assessment of forest cover relating to the period 1987-89 has just been completed and the report is being finalised. As per the assessment there has been an increase in the actual forest cover of the country at an annual rate of 28000 ha. for the period 1987-89.

[Translation]

SHRI SURESHANAND SWAMI: In

your reply, you have mentioned that forest cover of the country is assessed on a two years cycle basis. By when do you propose to finalise the report relating to the period 1987-89? Have you fixed any deadline for it?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: As I have already informed, the assessment has already been completed. It is known as 'The State of the Forest Report', and it has been completed. I hope that we would be able to present it in its final shape within the next two months. If the hon. Member is interested, I am prepared to present the figures, obtained from the assessment.

SHRI SURESHANAND SWAMI: In your answer, you have said that there has been an increase in the actual forest cover of the country at an annual rate of 28,000 hectares. Has this increase taken place in Uttar Pradesh also? If so, where all has it been noticed?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: According to the the information we have received from the interpretation of satellite imageries, the forest cover in Uttar Pradesh has decreased. Uttar Pradesh is among the States where the forest cover has considerably declined. There has been a decrease of 18 sq. km. in comparison to the 1985-87 figures.

[English]

SHRI HARISH NARAYAN PRABHU ZANTYE: Sir, I would like to know whether the total survey and inventory of all the forests is done and whether the same is being recorded by the Government of India. Secondly, as they give awards in Customs Department to persons who inform them about smuggling, if illegal cutting of trees is going on, will the Government think of giving awards to persons who inform about such illegal cutting.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: According to the Indian Forest Report, 1987, the forest area of the country for the year 1985-86 was

75.22 million hectares which is 22.8 per cent of the total geographical area of the country. The per capita forest area in the country is only 0.1 hectare whereas the world average is one hectare. Andaman and Nicobar Islands have 86.2 per cent area as recorded forests, whereas the State of Haryana is the lowest and has only 3.2 per cent of its area under forests. Various steps have been taken by the Government to stop the cutting of forests which I have explained in my earlier answer. We are continuing to step up our efforts both for stopping the illegal cutting of forests and for more vigorous afforestation programme.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether recently the Government had taken a decision to empower the regional Chief Conservators of Forests with the power to clear proposals for diversion of land upto five hectares by themselves and to clear proposals for diversion of land from five to 20 hectares in consultation with the State Advisory Committee. I also want to know as to what is the composition of this Advisory Committee; whether its capacity is purely advisory. If this is so, whether, instead of decentralisation, there would not be more concentration of power in the hands of one Central Government official and whether this would not lead to misuse of power and further decline in our forest reserve as a result of indiscriminate felling of trees.

SHRI KAMAL NATH: Sir, recently I announced in the Forest Ministers' Conference, certain decentralisation as distinct from liberalisation. The hon. Member is concerned that it may lead to unwanted destruction of forests, but there is no liberalisation, it is only to streamline the process of clearance. Until recently, only upto one hectare was permitted to be sanctioned at the regional level by the regional Chief Conservators of Forests. From the last fortnight, after the meeting of the State Forest Ministers, in consultation with them and on the basis of extensive consulta-

tions I have had with the Forest Secretaries, Principal Chief Conservators of Forests and Forest Ministers, I decided that this power, which could be done at the State Headquarters level, should be vested with the regional Chief Conservators of Forests and this power of one hectare has been made as five hectares. The hon. Member is right on that point. This relates to development projects like small water tanks etc., and where the question of five hectares to 20 hectares is concerned, the intention is that the project authorities, the State Government authorities or whatever would deal with the regional Chief Conservators of Forests who would provide input of the State Government's views on the basis of the view of an Advisory Committee which would consist of the revenue authorities, forest authorities and the project authorities. This was done because there was a complaint that it leads to a lot of time in dealing with the Central Government. This State Advisory Committee has been defined to consist of them, so that when a decision is taken, there can be no allegation of it having been taken in isolation or devoid of other aspects.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: Is it purely of advisory capacity?

SHRI KAMAL NATH: This is to provide an input from the revenue, project authorities which otherwise could have been devoid of.

This committee would send its recommendations to the Central Advisory Committee for five hectares to twenty hectares. Up to five hectares, it is going to be done at the regional level.

MR. SPEAKER: Long, long speeches are infectious!

New Railway Lines in Vidharbha Region

*91. **SHRI MUKUL BALKRISHNA WASNIK:** Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state: