

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6035
ANSWERED ON:05.05.2003
REVIEW OF FOREST POLICY
DUKHA BHAGAT;MANSUKHBHAI D. VASAVA

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government propose to review or have reviewed the forest policy;
- (b) if so, the details alongwith background thereof;
- (c) whether the Wildlife (Protection) Act and the Environment (Protection) Act are proposed to be updated under this review;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the said review and update is likely to benefit the common man and ensure the availability of additional Central financial assistance for the proper and speedy implementation of environmental projects; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JU DEV)

- (a) Yes, Sir. The Government of India has set up the National Forest Commission to review the working of the forest and wildlife sector.
- (b) to (f) The details of the constitution of National Forest Commission along with the background are annexed. The Commission shall review the forests and wildlife sector with the five terms of reference mentioned in the Annexure. The recommendations of the Commission are likely to benefit the forestry and wildlife sector as well as local communities including tribals.

Annexure

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (b) TO (f) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 6035 FOR AN: ON 5-5-2003 REGARDING REVIEW OF FOREST POLICY

The Government of India has constituted the National Forest Commission on 7th February, 2003 to review the working of the forests and wildlife sector with the following terms of reference:

- i. Review and assess the existing policy and legal framework and their impact in a holistic manner from the ecological, scientific, economic, social and cultural viewpoint.
- ii. Examine the current status of forest administration and the forestry institutions both on all India and State level to meet the emerging needs of the civil society.
- iii. Make recommendations indicating policy options for achieving sustainable forest and wildlife management and development, bio-diversity conservation and ecological security.
- iv. Suggest ways and means to make forest administration more effective with a view to help to achieve the above policy options.
- v. Establish meaningful partnership and interface between forestry management and local communities including tribals.

The composition of the Commission is as follows:

Shri Justice B.N.Kirpal,
Ex-Chief Justice of India

Chairman
(Part time)

Director General of Forests and
Special Secretary in the
Ministry of Environment & Forests

Member-ex-officio

Prof. J.S.Singh
Banaras Hindu University

Member-Part-time

Shri Chandi Prasad Bhatt

Member-Part-time

Dr. M.K.Ranjitsinh

Member-Part-time

Shri A.P.Muthuswami

Member-Part-time

Additional Director General of Forests,
Ministry of Environment & Forests

Member-Secretary
(ex-officio)

The time prescribed for the Commission to complete its assigned task is two years.

Background

The forests are vital natural resources for the sustenance of life on the planet the livelihood issues of around 70 million tribals and more than 200 million non-tribal rural population are indirectly linked with the forests. The forests have a direct play in poverty irradiation and sustainable development with the bearing of economic and social development, protection of environment and conservation of biological resources.

The burgeoning human and cattle population has increasingly stressed the nature and functioning of the forest ecosystems. In the circumstances, sound and efficient management of the forests is imperative and has critical implications for the availability of water and food and for ecological security.

It is also necessary that the demand for wood for commercial and industrial purposes is met through the agro-forestry and plantations. Further the increasing demand for medicinal plants makes it necessary to evolve an appropriate strategy and knowledge base for in-situ conservation and ex-situ propagation.

The knowledge relating to the structure, function and management of forest ecosystem has globally assumed special significance in the context of climate change, desertification and conservation of biodiversity. As a result following the Stockholm Conference (1972) and Rio Conference (1992), there has been a paradigm shift in the tenets of forest management from timber primacy to ecological and stakeholders oriented forestry.

The Indian Forest Act, 1927 and State Forest Acts provide legal framework for the protection and conservations of forests. The Wildlife (Protection) Act came into being in 1972 and after which the subject of forests and wildlife found a place in the concurrent list of the Indian Constitution since 1976. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 was brought into being to regulate diversion of forests lands for non-forest purposes. However, in spite of above forest and wildlife continued to be subjected to the activities of the encroachers and poachers.

The fringe areas of national parks and sanctuaries harbour more than 4 crores of people in about the 1.73 lakh villages and whose participation and involvement in the management of such areas is proving to be indispensable. It is also recognized that the growing demand of the wood requirements for bonafide consumption for rural households namely for fuel, fodder and timber is catered through joint forest management. The community/people`s participation with gender equity is vital for sustenance and conservation of other protected areas including reserved forests. Thus community based activities in the forest and wildlife sectors need to be further strengthened and emphasized.

It is also to be recalled that the Central Government while drawing up the Approach Paper to the 10th Five Year Plan has desired an increase in the forest and tree cover to 25% by 2007 and 33% by 2012. The attainment of this target calls for special steps.

The Indian Board of Wildlife under the Chairmanship of Hon`ble Prime Minister at its XXI Meeting held on 21st January, 2002 recommended that Forest Commission should be set to look into restructuring, reform and strengthening the entire forest set up and affiliated institutions in the country.

It is, in fulfillment of the said recommendation, the National Forest Commission has been constituted.