

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:98
ANSWERED ON:24.02.2003
SETTING UP OF NATIONAL FOREST COMMISSION
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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government have decided to set up the National Forest Commission to reform the entire forest administration and provide a framework which can guarantee the country's long-term food security;
- (b) if so, the details indicating the terms and reference of the said Commission along with the other works assigned to it;
- (c) the time by which the said Commission is likely to submit its report;
- (d) the existing national forest area in India;
- (e) whether the Government have set a target to bring 33 percent of the country's geographical area under forest cover; and
- (f) if so, the steps taken by the Government in that direction so far?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU):

- (a) Yes, Sir. The Government has constituted National Forest Commission for restructuring, reforming and strengthening the entire forest set up and affiliated institutions in the country.
- (b) The terms of reference of the National Forest Commission are:
 - (i) Review and assess the existing policy and legal framework and their impact in a holistic manner from the ecological, economic, scientific, economic, social and cultural viewpoint.
 - (ii) Examine the current status of forest administration and the forestry institutions both at all India and State level to meet the emerging needs of the civil society.
 - (iii) Make recommendations indicating specific policy options for achieving sustainable forest and wildlife management and development, biodiversity 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 below:

- (i) Justice B.N. Kripal Chairman Ex. Chief Justice of India
 - (ii) Director General of Forests and Member Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Govt. of India
 - (iii) Prof. J.S. Singh, Member
 - (iv) Shri Chandhi Prasad Bhatt, Member
 - (v) Sri M.K. Ranjitsinh, Member
 - (vi) Shri A.P. Muthuswamy, Member
 - (vii) Additional Director General of Member Forests, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India Secretary.
- (c) The tenure of the Commission is two years, National Forest Commission will submit its report within two years i.e. tenure of the Commission.

(d) The existing forest cover of the country is 637, 293 sq. kms as per the last State of Forest Report, 1999 published by Forest Survey of India.

(e) Yes, Sir.

(f) The Ministry of Environment & Forests has formulated National Forestry Action Programme (NFAP) to bring one-third area of the country under forest/tree cover and to arrest de-forestation for achieving sustainable development of forests. The X Five Year Plan envisages to increase forest/tree cover to 25% by 2007 and to 33% by 2012.