

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:397
ANSWERED ON:21.08.2000
FOREST COVER
VISHNU DATT

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

- (a) whether forest cover in the country is shrinking at fast rate;
- (b) if so, the facts thereof;
- (c) the present status of the forest cover of the country especially in Jammu and Kashmir;
- (d) the details of action taken to protect forest;
- (e) whether the Union Government have issued directions to State Governments to stop deforestation/encroachment of the forests land; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the State Governments in the matter?

Answer

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

(a) to (f) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO PARTS (a) TO (f) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 397 DUE FOR REPLY ON 21.8.2000 REGARDING FOREST COVER

(a) & (b) Forest Survey of India is assessing forest cover of the country biennially. So far seven assessments have been done. As per the first six assessments of the period 1981-1995, forest cover of the country had marginally declined from 19.49% to 19.27%. However, in the seventh assessment of the period 1995-98, forest cover of the country has increased from 19.27% to 19.39%.

(c) As per the seventh assessment of forest cover of the period 1995 to 1998, forest cover in Jammu & Kashmir is 9.2% of the geographical area.

(d) Various important actions taken by Government for protection of forest wealth are:

- i) The subject 'forest' was transferred from the State to the Concurrent List by the Constitution '46th Amendment' Act, 1976.
- ii) The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 was enacted to regulate the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes.
- iii) The National Forest Policy, 1952 was revised in 1988 to lay stress on management of forest for ensuring ecological security and meeting the essential and local needs.
- iv) The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 was enacted to protect the wildlife and bio-diversity of the country and the areas of protected areas increased.
- v) Guidelines have been issued to all State/UT Governments to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.
- vi) The Ministry of Environment and Forests has prepared a National Forestry Action Plan to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through improvement in investments for conservation and development of forest resources.
- vii) Afforestation programs are undertaken by State/UT Governments from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India.
- viii) Externally aided projects are implemented for development and preservation of forests.

(e) & (f) Detailed guidelines in respect of encroachment on forest land have been issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests dated 18.9.1990. As per the guidelines, encroachments on forest land after 25.10.1980 are not eligible for regularisation and shall be evicted by the State Governments. Actions have been taken by the State Governments for implementation of the guidelines. As per Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, no non-forest activity on forest land is allowed without the prior approval of Central Government.