

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1064
ANSWERED ON:28.11.2011
RELAXATION IN CLEARANCE NORMS
Mandal Shri Mangani Lal;Wankhede Shri Subhash Bapurao

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

- (a) whether road construction, solar and other energy conservation projects have come to a stand still in tribal and forest areas of country after the enforcement of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980;
- (b) if so, whether the Government proposes to provide any special relaxation in clearance norms to start developmental works under the Government Schemes;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) If not, the reasons therefor;
- (e) whether the Government has received any proposal from State Governments in this regard during the last three years and current year; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and action taken/being by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a) to (d) To meet urgent development needs, Ministry of Environment and Forests, as on 31.10.2011, accorded 22,448 approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of 11,33,469 hectares of forest land. The approvals accorded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests include 5,977 proposals involving diversion of 43,202 hectares of forest land for road construction projects and 64 proposals involving diversion of 3,648 hectares of forest land for Wind Energy Projects.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests accorded general approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of 1.00 hectare of forest land, in each case, required for execution of public utility projects of 11 specified categories by Government Departments. To facilitate expeditious creation of public utility infrastructure in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts, the Ministry of Environment and Forests on 3rd November 2010 accorded general approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for a period of five years i.e. up to 31.12.2015, for diversion of forest land upto 2.00 ha., in each case, for execution of public utility infrastructure of 13 specified categories. The Ministry of Environment and Forests on 13th May 2011 further relaxed the said general approval to the diversion of not more than 5.00 ha. of forest land in each case, for execution of public utility infrastructure of the aforementioned 13 categories by Government Departments in 60 LWE affected districts selected by the Planning Commission and Ministry of Home Affairs for implementation of Integrated Action Plan (IAP). The Ministry of Environment and Forests on 16th June 2011 further clarified that compensatory afforestation in lieu of the forest land diverted in accordance with the above said general approval dated 13th May 2011 shall not be insisted upon Implementation of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has successfully reduced the average annual rate of diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes from 1.65 lakh hectares per annum during the 25 years period from 1951-52 to 1975-76 prior to enactment of the Act during which 4.135 million hectares of forest land was diverted for non-forest purposes without any mitigative measures, to 36,548 hectares per annum during 31 years of the existence of the Act, during which the Central Government accorded approvals under the Act for diversion of 1.133 million hectares of forest land for non-forest purpose with adequate mitigative measures, such as creation and maintenance of compensatory afforestation, realization of Net Present Value (NPV), preparation and implementation of wildlife conservation plan etc. The Central Government therefore, does not propose to provide any further relaxation in clearance norms to start developmental works under the Government Schemes.

(e) & (f) The Ministry of Environment and Forests has not received any specific proposal from State Governments to provide relaxation in clearance norms to start developmental works under the Government Schemes.