

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

NATIONAL AFFORESTATION PROGRAMME

[Action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in Thirty Sixth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Estimates]

**COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
(2014-2015)**

THIRD REPORT

(FIFTEENTH LOK SABHA)



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

THIRD REPORT

**COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
(2014-15)**

SIXTEENTH LOK SABHA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

[Action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in Thirty Sixth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Estimates]

Presented to Lok Sabha on 28 April, 2015



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COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES
(2014-15)

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* Elected vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part-II No. 987 dated 03.012.2014 consequent upon vacancy caused by the appointment of Shri Hari Bhai Chaudhary, Member of Lok Sabha in the Council of Ministers w.e.f. 09.11.2014.

^ Elected vide Lok Sabha Bulletin Part-II No. 987 dated 03.012.2014 consequent upon vacancy caused by the appointment of Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, Member of Lok Sabha in the Council of Ministers w.e.f. 09.11.2014.

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Committee on Estimates, having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Third Report on action taken by Government on the observations/recommendations contained in the Thirty Sixth Report of Estimates Committee (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) on the subject 'National Afforestation Programme' pertaining to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

2. The Thirty Sixth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) was presented to Lok Sabha on 18th February, 2014. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change furnished their replies indicating action taken on the recommendations contained in the said Report on 21st August, 2014. The Draft Report was considered and adopted by the Committee on Estimates (2014-2015) at their sitting held on 15th April, 2015.

3. An analysis of action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Thirty Sixth Report of the Committee on Estimates (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix II.

NEW DELHI;
24 April, 2015
Vaisakha 4, 1937 (saka)

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI
Chairperson,
Committee on Estimates.

CHAPTER - I

REPORT

This Report of the Committee deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Thirty sixth Report (Fifteenth Lok Sabha) on 'National Afforestation Programme' pertaining to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

1.2 The Thirty sixth Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 18 February 2014. It contained 10 Observations/Recommendations. Action Taken Notes on all these Observations/Recommendations were received from the Ministry of Environment and Forests on 21 August 2014.

1.3 Replies to the Observations and Recommendations contained in the Report have broadly been categorized as under:-

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:
Sl. Nos. 1, 6, 9 and 10

- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's reply:
Sl. No. 7

- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which Government's replies have not been accepted by the Committee:
Sl. Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 8

- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which final reply of Government is still awaited:
Sl. No. 5

1.4 The Committee hope and trust that the Observations/Recommendations accepted by the Government would be implemented expeditiously. The Committee desire that further Action Taken notes on the Observations/Recommendations contained in Chapter-I and Final Action Taken Replies to the Recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this Report be furnished to them at an early date.

1.5 The Committee will now deal with the action taken by the Government on some of their Recommendations.

**India State of Forest Report 2011
(Recommendation Para No.1)**

1.6 Dismayed to note that though the National Afforestation Programme (NAP), launched in the year 2002 is aimed at increasing and improving the forest and tree cover through sustainable development of forest resources, the forest cover of the country has decreased by 367 sq. Km. during the period 2009 to 2011 alone with significant decrease in 14 States/Union Territories. The Committee desired to know as to how after having taken up a total area of 1.94 million ha under NAP at a cost of Rs.3, 044 crore since inception in the year 2002, the outcome of afforestation had been negative. They had also desired to know as to how much of 1.94 million ha was for increase in forest cover, how much for improvement in existing forests and reasons for dismal performance in increasing forest cover as targeted.

1.7 The Government in its Action Note has submitted that afforestation and tree plantation activities are undertaken as a **cross-sectoral and multi departmental activity** in the country under various centrally sponsored schemes of different ministries such as National Afforestation Programme (NAP), Green India Mission (GIM) of Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF & CC), National Bamboo Mission (Ministry of Agriculture), Integrated Watershed Mgt. Programme and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (Ministry of rural Development) etc. and a number of State Plan and Non Plan Schemes. The collective targets of afforestation for the state(s) are fixed under 20 Point Programme and achievement there-under is to be monitored by the Chief Secretary. Plantation undertaken through **NAP contributes to about 17-18% of** the total afforestation efforts in the country. Most of the afforestation and

eco-restoration work under NAP is taken up in the forest areas for improvement and restocking of existing forests. The major benefits accrued are successful afforestation activities in degraded forest land, soil and moisture conservation works, significant impact in improvement of livelihoods, asset creation in villages etc. Therefore, it is submitted that the outcome of afforestation in the country cannot be called negative.

1.8 As far as the improvement in the forest cover due to afforestation is concerned, the 13th India State of Forest Report (ISFR) of Forest Survey of India (FSI) reveals that a total increase of 5871 sq. km. in the forest cover in the country has been registered during 2011-2013 as compared to the previous assessment of 2011 for 2009-2011. In fact, the forest cover of the country has not generally decreased since past quarter a century; rather it has either increased or shown an average stabilizing trend despite heavy pressure on forests such as shifting cultivation, forest fires, inadequate pasturelands, low investments, conflicting demands for forest products and services and diversion of forestlands for non-forestry purposes. The forest cover as recorded in 1989 at 19.43% has increased to 21.23% in 2013. This remarkable achievement can be attributed to consistent afforestation/tree plantation drive under various schemes especially Centrally Sponsored Scheme like National Afforestation Programme and to partnership in forest conservation and management involving the forest department and the local communities through Joint Forest Management (JFM) mechanism.

1.9 The Committee while taking note of the action taken by the Government on their instant recommendation desire that information on the specific instance of reduction in forest cover cited by the Committee on the basis of India State of Forest Report, 2011 and on the break-up of the projected afforestation target of 1.94 million ha on account of increase in forest cover and on account of improvement in existing forests may be furnished to them within three month of the presentation of this Report to Lok Sabha.

Relook of National Forest Policy, 1988

(Recommendation Para Nos. 2, 3 & 4)

1.10 Having noted that inspite of the National Forest Policy being declared way back in 1988 not much headway had been made towards achieving a forest cover of 33% (108.2 million ha) and having further noted that the Government had started implementation of Green India Mission (GIM) during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Five Year Plans at a cost of Rs. 46000 crore with a target of increasing forest/tree cover on 5 million ha and improving quality of forest cover on another 5 million ha, the Committee had desired a relook at the Policy, realistic projection of forestation cover, implementation of GIM as planned and a synergy between afforestation and development so that projects related to industrial and infrastructural development, agricultural expansion and urbanization are not adversely affected.

1.11 The Ministry in their action taken reply has stated that the target of 33% Forest Tree Cover (FTC) as set by National Forest Policy, 1988 may be over ambitious and far-fetched considering the competing demands for land and the constraint in availability of additional 30 million ha. required for bridging the gap between existing and the targeted FTC. As regards achieving of the same, it has been stated that continuous efforts are being undertaken to achieve the same and the forest cover of the country has not declined since 1989, registering an increase from 19.43% in 1989 to 21.23% in 2013. Further, the Committee were apprised that Green India Mission was launched with an outlay of Rs. 13,000 crores for the 12th Plan and spill over of one year which includes convergence worth Rs. 6,000 crore with Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority - CAMPA, Rs. 4,000 crore with MGNREGA and Rs. 600 crore with National Afforestation Program alongwith the Planning Commission's outlay for the scheme of Rs. 2,000 crore and Rs. 400 crore from forest grants under 13th Finance Commission to cover an area of 2.8 million ha as proposed under the Mission during this period to improve the quality and increase the forest cover.

1.12 The Committee take a serious view of the usage of the words 'over ambitious' and 'far-fetched' in the context of National Forest Policy, 1988 in the reply of the Government. Such expressions in the context of a Policy placed in the Parliament

and assigned to the Executive for its implementation in letter and spirit are totally uncalled for, self-contradictory and in direct conflict with the stated policy of the Government. The Committee further note that out of Rs. 46000 crore earmarked for Green India Mission (GIM) for the Twelfth and Thirteenth Five Year Plans, a sum of Rs. 13000 crore only has been approved as outlay by the CCEA for the Twelfth Plan and spillover of one year. As regards physical targets, the Committee note that against the proposed increase in forest/tree cover on 5 million ha and improvement in quality of forest cover on another 5 million ha during these two Plans, the target for Twelfth Plan has been pegged at 2.8 million ha. The Committee deprecate this massive downsizing in the financial allocation and physical target of the Green India Mission as this would only lead to further staggering and delay in attainment of 33% of the forest cover as envisaged in the National Forest Policy, 1988. Having regard to the great and multiple benefits of forests and the looming threat of climate change, the Committee hardly need to emphasize the need for intense afforestation by actively engaging the community, schools and colleges and by organising 'Vanmahotsavas' periodically. The Government need to identify suitable patches of lands district-wise for afforestation. Similarly, certain portion of the surplus or unused land of Defence, the Railways, schools, colleges, public institutions should also be used for afforestation. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that GIM be implemented as planned and afforestation targets be achieved without fail at the earliest.

Guidelines for Scientific Forest Management

(Recommendation Para No. 5)

1.13 Having felt that a total ban on felling of trees on the pretext of environmental protection is neither desirable nor justified as reports of loss of lives and property due to

sudden fall of trees are not uncommon not only during rainy and windy seasons but also in normal weather. The Committee had recommended that trees are part of national wealth and should not be wasted and there should be appropriate guidelines for felling of aged trees in and around habitations/forests with a view to preventing loss of life and property due to unregulated ban on felling of trees and there should be stipulation for compensatory afforestation.

1.14 The Government in their Action Taken Notes has stated that India has a long history of **scientific forest management** and tradition of planning in the form of “**Working Plans**”. The National Forest Policy (1988) provides conceptual guidelines for forestry work and the prescriptions of the working plans are framed with the intention of translating such policies into action. For Protected areas (National Parks and Wild life Sanctuaries), where the specific objective of management is to conserve wild life and biodiversity, planning is carried out separately through preparation of “**Management Plans**”. **Felling of trees is allowed as per approved working plan** to achieve the objectives of the plan. However, unregulated felling of trees is undesirable because it raises concerns about integrity of the resource and negatively impacts the environment. This Ministry is working towards issuing guidelines for easing regulations for harvesting of trees from non-forest areas to promote farming and plantations of trees.

1.15 The Committee note the averment of the Ministry that they implement scientific management of forests through working plans suitably devised for the purpose. Admittedly, the selective felling of aged trees is permitted in terms of these work plans. The Committee further note that the Ministry is working towards issuing guidelines for harvesting of trees from non-forest areas to promote farming and plantation of trees. The Committee desire that their concerns be suitably coopted in the proposed guidelines which need to be finalized and issued with a sense of urgency and promptitude.

JFMCs as organs of Gram Sabha

(Recommendation Para No. 8)

1.16 The Committee having been informed that Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change had advised Chief Ministers of the States in October 2010 to recognise Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) as organs of the Gram Sabha under the relevant State Acts relating to Panchyati Raj Institutions and that some States have made enabling provisions in their relevant Acts in this regard had recommended that remaining States / UTs should be pursued to take necessary steps in this regard to reap the benefits available as a result of such steps.

1.17 The Ministry in their action taken reply have stated that Forest Development Agency (FDA) at the district level and JFMC at the village level have the linkages with Gram Panchayat (GP) by having 3 and 2 elected members of GP respectively. However, the action taken on the advisory of MoEF &CC for making JFMC as an organ of GP is to be taken by the States by amending their respective Panchayat Acts and States are constitutionally free to take their decision.

1.18 The Committee are aware that the FDA at the district level and the JFMC at the village level have the linkages with Gram Panchayat. They are also aware of the Constitutional scheme of demarcation of legislative and administrative powers between the Union and the States. The thrust of the recommendation was that since JFMC is the central and integral part of projects under the NAP, its recognition as an organ of the Gram Sabha would yield higher dividends to the States/UTs. Given the Union Government's eminent place in our federal polity and the healthy shift towards a more robust cooperative federalism, the MoE&F need to employ its persuasive powers so that the remainder States/UTs may also opt for this beneficial mechanism. The Committee, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that remaining States/UTs should be pursued to take necessary steps in this regard.

Mandays under NAP

(Recommendation Para No. 10)

1.19 Observing that mandays generated under NAP had declined from 287 lakh mandays in 2010-11 to 237 lakh mandays in 2011-12 and further declined to 177 lakh mandays in 2012-13. With the decline being sharp in Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Assam and Mizoram, the Committee desired MoEF to look into the reasons for the sharp decline in the number of mandays generated under NAP and take such remedial measures as may be necessary to reverse the decline.

1.20 The reasons for the successive decline in the number of mandays generated under NAP can be attributed to the reducing allocation of budget for investment from 2010-11 to 2012-13. Despite cent-percent fund utilization performance, Ministry's efforts and demand from the states, the budget allocation under NAP has either remained static or rather decreased as during 2012-13 and 2013-14 also, the budget has been cut to Rs. 218.15 crore and Rs. 257.62 crore respectively in the RE against the initial BE of Rs. 318.15 crore during each of these years.

1.21 The Committee note that the continued decline in the number of mandays generated under NAP is due to sufficient funds not being allocated for the Programme. In the considered opinion of the Committee, employment generation is also a very important aspect of NAP. The Programme, therefore, should not suffer for crunch of funds as apart from affecting afforestation efforts it would also affect the livelihoods of the marginalized sections adversely. The Committee reiterate resolution of the shortage of funds for NAP with a sense of urgency given the twin objectives of accelerating afforestation and employment generation.

CHAPTER - II

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 1)

The Committee are dismayed to note that though the National Afforestation Programme (NAP), launched in the year 2002 is aimed at increasing and improving the forest and tree cover through sustainable development of forest resources, the forest cover of the country has decreased by 367 sq. Km. during the period 2009 to 2011 alone. According to the India State of Forest Report, 2011 green areas decreased in 14 States/Union Territory which among others include Andhra Pradesh (decline of 281 sq. Km.), Manipur (190 sq. Km.), Nagaland (146 sq. Km.), Arunachal Pradesh (74 sq.K.), Mizoram (66 sq Km.) and Meghalaya (46 sq.Km.). The decline is mainly attributed to harvesting of short rotation tree crops, shifting cultivation in some North Eastern States and to some extent illicit felling. The Committee are at a loss to understand how, having taken up a total area of 1.94 million ha under NAP at a cost of Rs.3, 044 crore since inception in the year 2002, the outcome of afforestation has been negative. The Committee would await an explanation in this regard and would also like to know how much of 1.94 million ha was for increase in forest cover, how much for improvement in existing forests and reasons for dismal performance in increasing forest cover as targeted.

Reply by the Government

It is submitted that afforestation and tree plantation activities are undertaken as a cross-sectoral and multi departmental activity in the country under various centrally sponsored schemes of different ministries such as National Afforestation Programme (NAP), Green India Mission (GIM) of Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF & CC), National Bamboo Mission (Ministry of Agriculture), Integrated Watershed Mgt. Programme and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

(Ministry of rural Development) etc. and a number of State Plan and Non Plan Schemes. The collective targets of afforestation for the state(s) are fixed under 20 Point Programme and achievement there-under is to be monitored by the Chief Secretary. Plantation undertaken through NAP contributes to about 17-18% of the total afforestation efforts in the country. Most of the afforestation and eco-restoration work under NAP is taken up in the forest areas for improvement and restocking of existing forests. The major benefits accrued are successful afforestation activities in degraded forest land, soil and moisture conservation works, significant impact in improvement of livelihoods, asset creation in villages etc. Therefore, it is submitted that the outcome of afforestation in the country cannot be called negative.

As far as the improvement in the forest cover due to afforestation is concerned, the 13th India State of Forest Report (ISFR) of Forest Survey of India (FSI) reveals that a total increase of 5871 sq. km. in the forest cover in the country has been registered during 2011-2013 as compared to the previous assessment of 2011 for 2009-2011. In fact, the forest cover of the country has not generally decreased since past quarter a century; rather it has either increased or shown an average stabilizing trend despite heavy pressure on forests such as shifting cultivation, forest fires, inadequate pasturelands, low investments, conflicting demands for forest products and services and diversion of forestlands for non-forestry purposes. The forest cover as recorded in 1989 at 19.43% has increased to 21.23% in 2013. This remarkable achievement can be attributed to consistent afforestation/tree plantation drive under various schemes especially Centrally Sponsored Scheme like National Afforestation Programme and to partnership in forest conservation and management involving the forest department and the local communities through Joint Forest Management (JFM) mechanism.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.9 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 6)

The Committee have been informed that NAP is a demand driven programme, where no allocation of fund or area of afforestation is earmarked to the States. The Committee in this connection note that the forest cover in hill districts declined by 548 sq.Km and in North Eastern States by 549 sq.Km even while rehabilitation of jhum lands had reportedly been taken up with the sanction of 36 jhum projects in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Odisha during Tenth and Eleventh Five Year Plans, covering an area of 50,000 hectares till 2012-13. It is has been stated that proposals for 3 out of the 36 Jhum projects viz. Sadar FDA, Tripura and TeliamuraJhum FDA and Kiphire WL FDA in Nagaland have not been received. The Committee fail to understand as to why NAP has been made as a demand driven programme considering the need for urgent measures to arrest forest degradation and increasing forest cover. Ideally, the MoEF should take proactive steps to ensure implementation of NAP instead of leaving it to the States to take the initiative. The Committee would, therefore, suggest MoEF to reorient the NAP with a view to making it effective and result oriented.

Reply by the Government

It is to state that proposals to this Ministry are submitted by the States as per their requirement of afforestation and funds under NAP, which may tag NAP as a demand driven Scheme but fact remains that the availability of fund allocation of about Rs. 300 crore hardly matches the demand of the states which is about two times of this allocation. Yet, the proposals received from the State Forest Development Agencies for funding under NAP are scrutinised for sanction of afforestation area on the basis of the potential degraded forest land available for ecorestoration, additional forest and tree cover needed to reach the target stipulated in the National Forest Policy (1988), past performance of the states, availability of budget etc. It is also pertinent to mention that about 25% of the NAP budget is dedicated to the North-eastern States. As far as forest and forestry subject is concerned,

States are the main players and Centre has supportive role and does the best. The State Forest Departments and other line departments of the States also do take up afforestation through various other State plan and non-plan schemes, both outside and inside forest areas.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 9)

With a view to contributing to poverty alleviation of forest fringe dwellers and ameliorating soil conditions besides improving/increasing forest cover, a total area of 9,615 hectares have reportedly been taken up for treatment under bamboo/cane plantation and 15,548 hectares under medicinal plantation models in the last three years. The Committee would like to know the results of these initiatives and the extent of area having similar soil conditions requiring amelioration and also the plans to cover these areas under these plantations.

Reply by the Government

Governmental efforts are on to promote cultivation of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFPs) along with scientific harvesting techniques to ensure sustainability of NTFPs in the area. The central government has set up National Medicinal Plant Board (NMPB) under Dept. of Aayush for the plantation and promotion of medicinal plants for conservation and livelihood for the local people. Sizable funding is being provided by NMPB to State Medicinal Plant Boards towards this cause. There is also a thrust on bamboo development for supporting the livelihoods of the rural poor. The National Bamboo Mission under Ministry of Agriculture is supporting the states for bamboo plantations and cultivation projects.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 10)

Incidentally, the Committee observe that mandays generated under NAP has declined from 287 lakh mandays in 2010-11 to 237 lakh mandays in 2011-12 and further declined to 177 lakh mandays in 2012-13. The decline was sharp in Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Assam and Mizoram. It is not clear as to what led to this decline. The Committee hope that MoEF will look into the reasons for the sharp decline in the number of mandays generated under NAP and take such remedial measures as may be necessary to reverse the decline under intimation to the Committee.

Reply by the Government

The reasons for the successive decline in the number of mandays generated under NAP can be attributed to the reducing allocation of budget for investment from 2010-11 to 2012-13. Despite cent-percent fund utilization performance, Ministry's efforts and demand from the states, the budget allocation under NAP has either remained static or rather decreased as during 2012-13 and 2013-14 also, the budget has been cut to Rs. 218.15 crore and Rs. 257.62 crore respectively in the RE against the initial BE of Rs. 318.15 crore during each of these years.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.21 of Chapter - I)

CHAPTER - III

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 7)

The Committee noted that at present there is no formal linkage of NAP with the Integrated Wasteland Programme (IWP) of the Ministry of Rural Development. Nevertheless, MoEF has stated that functional dovetailing takes place in many areas at the field level while implementing NAP. It is not clear as to what is the co-ordination and monitoring mechanism at the Ministerial level and at State level to ensure linkage of NAP with IWP and functional convergence at district level with the schemes of IWP and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA). The Committee desire that lacuna, if any, in this regard should be identified and addressed immediately under intimation to the Committee.

Reply by the Government

Ministry of Rural Development is keen for no deviation on non-negotiables under MNREGS and stand for convergence at the district level only. NAP has functional ties with MNREGS and IWMP. As replied in above paras, the newly launched National Mission for Green India also has the convergence approach with other ongoing land based greening/restoration programs and schemes of different agencies which include Integrated Wasteland Management Program; MNREGS under MoRD; Bamboo Mission, Horticultural Mission, Schemes of Animal Husbandry Deptt, Program on renewable energy of Ministry of New and Renewable Energy etc.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

CHAPTER - IV

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 2, 3 & 4)

As against 320 million ha of total geographic area of the country, the National Forest Policy, 1988 envisages a forest cover of 33 per cent (108.2 million ha.). The committee are disappointed to learn that two and half decades after declaration of the policy, the current forest and tree cover is merely 78.2 million ha which falls short of the target by as much as 30 million ha. What is shocking is that even after declaration of the policy in the year 1988, the country had to witness diversion of forest land to the extent of 1.2 million ha. This reveals abysmally poor implementation of the National Forest Policy by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). This Committee have been informed that Green India Mission (GIM) covering a period of 10 years is being implemented during Twelfth and Thirteenth Five Year Plan periods at a cost of Rs.46,000crores to increase forest/tree cover on 5 million ha and to improve quality of forest cover on another 5 million ha land. The committees urge that GIM should be implemented as planned and it should be ensured that the targets of afforestation are achieved without fail.

In order to reach the target of 33 per cent forest-cum-tree cover of total geographical area in the country as set by the National Forest Policy 1988, about 30 million ha outside forest area needs to be brought under the forest and tree cover. What is envisaged in Twelfth and Thirteenth Five Year Plan periods is addition of only 5 million ha. forest cover. 25 million ha more needs to be added, if the target set by the National Forest Policy, 1988 is to be achieved. Considering the competing demands for land, the Committee feel that there should be a realistic projection of addition to forest cover area and there should be a fresh look at the policy and the targets for forest cover. The Committee should like to be apprised of the outcome of these steps.

The major constraints in the achievement of increasing forest and tree cover are availability of non-forest land for afforestation due to competing and use for development and habitation needs. The Committee are of the view that care should be exercised to ensure that projects related to industrial and infrastructural development, agriculture expansion or urbanization are not adversely affected in the endeavour to increase forest cover and there should be synergy between afforestation and development.

Reply by the Government

The target of 33 per cent Forest-Tree Cover (FTC) of total geographical area in the country as set by the National Forest Policy 1988 may be an over ambitious and farfetched, considering the competing demands for land and the constraint in availability of additional 30 million hect required for bridging the gap between existing and the targeted FTC. Yet, this target all through aspires for continuous and vigorous efforts to achieve it. Accordingly, the forest cover of the country since 1989 has not generally declined and has rather increased or shown an average stabilizing trend despite heavy pressure on forests. The forest cover as recorded in 1989 at 19.43% has increased to 21.23% in 2013. The recently launched Green India Mission, targeting at improving the quality and increase in forest cover, as approved by the CCEA has an outlay of Rs. 13,000 crore for the 12th Plan and spill over of one year. This includes convergence worth Rs.6000 crore with CAMPA, Rs.4000 crore with MGNREGA and Rs.600 crore with National Afforestation Program. The Planning Commission's outlay for the scheme is Rs.2000 crore and Rs.400 crore from forest grants under 13th Finance Commission. An area of 2.8 million ha is proposed to be covered under the Mission during this period.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.12 of Chapter - I)

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 8)

Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) is the central and integral part of the projects under the NAP and is the implementing agency at the village level. The Committee have been informed that the MoEF advised the Chief Ministers of all States in October 2010 that JFMCs may be recognized as organs of the Gram Sabha under the relevant State Acts relating to Panchayati Raj Institutions. Some States have reportedly made enabling provision for JFMCs in this regard and have involved JFMCs in implementing the activities under MGNREGA. The Committee desire that the remaining States/UTs should be pursued to take necessary steps in this regard to reap the benefits available as result of such steps.

Reply by the Government

It is submitted that Forest Development Agency (FDA) at the district level and JFMC at the village level have the linkages with the Gram Panchayat (GP) by having 3 and 2 elected members of GP respectively. However, the action on the advisory of MoEF & CC for making JFMC as an organ of GP is to be taken by the States by amending their respective Panchayat Acts and States are constitutionally free to take their decision.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.18 of Chapter - I)

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS/OBSERVATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH FINAL REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT ARE STILL AWAITED

Observation/Recommendation (Sl. No. 5)

The Committee feel that total ban on felling of trees on the pretext of environmental protection is neither desirable nor justified. All varieties of trees have life expectancy. Unless trees which have outlived their life are felled, they may pose danger to life and property when they fall abruptly on their own. Reports of loss of lives and properties due to sudden fall of trees are not uncommon not only during rainy and windy seasons but also in normal weather. In Committee's view, trees are part of national wealth and should not be wasted and there should be appropriate guidelines for felling of aged trees in and around habitations/forests with a view to preventing loss of life and property due to unregulated ban on felling of trees and there should be stipulation for compensatory afforestation. The committee would like to be apprised of the action taken in this regard.

Reply by the Government

India has a long history of scientific forest management and tradition of planning in the form of "Working Plans". The National Forest Policy (1988) provides conceptual guidelines for forestry work and the prescriptions of the working plans are framed with the intention of translating such policies into action. For Protected areas (National Parks and Wild life Sanctuaries), where the specific objective of management is to conserve wild life and biodiversity, planning is carried out separately through preparation of "Management Plans".

Felling of trees is allowed as per approved working plan to achieve the objectives of the plan. However, unregulated felling of trees is undesirable because it raises concerns about integrity of the resource and negatively impacts the environment. This Ministry is

working towards issuing guidelines for easing regulations for harvesting of trees from non-forest areas to promote farming and plantations of trees.

(Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change O.M. No.38-14/2013-B-II-NAEB dated 21-08-2014), Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003.

Comments of the Committee

(Please see Para No. 1.15 of Chapter - I)

**NEW DELHI;
24 April, 2015
Vaisakha 4, 1937 (saka)**

**DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI
Chairperson,
Committee on Estimates.**

APPENDIX II

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE THIRTY SIXTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES (FIFTEENTH LOK SABHA)

(i)	Total number of recommendations/observations	10
(ii)	Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by the Government (Sl. Nos. 1, 6, 9 and 10)	04
	Percentage of total recommendations	40%
(iii)	Recommendation/Observation which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's reply Percentage of total recommendations (Sl. No. 7)	01
	Percentage of total recommendations	10%
(iv)	Recommendations/Observations in respect of which Government's replies have not been accepted by the Committee (Sl. Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 8)	04
	Percentage of total recommendations	40%
(v)	Recommendation/Observation in respect of which final replies of Government is still awaited. (Sl. No. 5)	01
	Percentage of total recommendations	10%