

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:543

ANSWERED ON:05.05.2015

CLEARANCE FOR ROAD PROJECTS IN FOREST BORDER AREAS

Phoole Sushree Sadhvi Savitri Bai

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

- (a) the existing guidelines for grant of clearance to construction of roads, passages, bridges and culverts in forest and border areas of the country;
- (b) whether the Government has taken note of inconvenience caused to the tribals and other locals inhabiting the forest areas for want of such small projects/works;
- (c) whether the Government has received proposals for grant of environment/ forest clearance from various States including Uttar Pradesh for construction of roads in forest and border areas as well as bridges and culverts over rivers;
- (d) if so, the details thereof during each of the last three years, project and State-wise; and
- (e) the present status of the said proposals along with the steps being taken to expedite clearance of the pending projects?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 543 BY SADHVI SAVITRI BAI PHULE REGARDING 'CLEARANCE FOR ROAD PROJECTS IN FOREST /BORDER AREAS' DUE FOR REPLY ON 05.05.2015

(a) to (b) Use of forest land for construction of roads, passages, bridges and culverts requires prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. However, with a view to expedite construction of small road projects for the benefit of tribals and other local inhabitants of forest areas, and also to create suitable road network to facilitate the security forces to effectively deal with external and internal threats in certain vulnerable areas, Central Government has accorded general approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, as per details given below, subject to conditions stipulated therein, for:

(i) construction and widening of two lane roads by the Border Roads Organisation/other agencies and widening of link roads, between Border Roads and National Highways/State Highways/Other State Roads in the area falling within 100 kilometers aerial distance from the line of actual control (LAC)

(ii) construction of two lane roads by Government Departments in 117 Left Wing Extremism affected districts;

(iii) construction of Border Roads within five kilometers aerial distance from the International Border by paramilitary organizations of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), such as Border Security Force and Sashastra Seema Bal from funds provided by the MHA.

(iv) construction and widening of roads, including approach roads to road side establishments, involving not more than one hectare of forest land in each case, by Government Departments/ Undertakings/ Boards/ Corporation etc. in the entire country;

(v) upgradation/ strengthening/ widening of existing bridges, involving not more than one hectare of forest land in each case, by the Border Roads Organization and other Government Undertakings/ Boards/ Corporation etc. in the entire country.

Similarly, the Central Government considers the projects for grant of Environment Clearance as per provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006 as amended from time to time. However, the Central Government vide Notification S. O. No. 382(E) dated 03.02.2015 exempted all highway projects in border States from scoping requirement and exempted all linear projects in border States from the requirement of public hearing subject to suitable conditions prescribed by the Ministry.

(c) to (e) State/Union territory-wise details of proposals for grant of environmental and forest clearance for construction of roads, bridges and culverts over rivers in forest and border areas received by the Central Government during each of the last three years and the current status of these proposals is annexed.

Central Government initiated several measures to ensure processing of proposals seeking Forest clearance in a transparent, expeditious and predictable manner. Notable among them are (i) stipulated time lines for processing of forest clearance proposals at each level in the State/Union territory and the Central Government; (ii) launched a web portal for online submission and monitoring of status of forest clearance proposals; (iii) operationalized first version of a geographical information system (GIS) based decision support system (DSS); (iv) delegated the power to Regional Empowered Committee constituted at each Regional Office of the Ministry to finally dispose of proposals seeking diversion of 5 hectares to 40 hectares of forest land except those relating to mining, regularisation of encroachments and hydel projects; (v) delegated power to Regional Empowered Committee constituted at each Regional Office of the Ministry to finally dispose of proposals seeking forest clearance to linear projects, irrespective of the area of forest land involved; and (vi) authorised the competent authority in the State Governments to issue permission for tree felling and commencement of work on linear projects without waiting for final approval, once the compensatory levies stipulated in the in-principle forest clearance are realised and the land for compensatory afforestation, wherever required is transferred and mutated in favour of the State Forest Department.

Similarly, for facilitating an early decision on proposals seeking Environmental Clearance various steps have been initiated which include: (i) continuous monitoring of the status of the pending project; (ii) regular and longer duration of Expert Appraisal Committee Meetings for consideration of the larger number of projects; (iii) streamlining of the procedure; (iv) finalization of thirty nine sector specific manuals along with the model Terms of References (TORs), which have been uploaded on Ministry's website for the benefit of all stakeholders; and (v) constitution of State / Union territory level Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs) for 28 States/ UTs to deal with the Environmental clearance for Category "B" projects.