

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2344

ANSWERED ON:04.08.2015

Habitat Loss

Kumar Shri P.

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

- (a) whether the forest land are being diverted for non-forest purposes;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether the Government has fixed any criteria for diversion of such land;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the other corrective steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

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

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) to (e) The Government of India grants prior approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to use forest land for the purpose for various development projects. During last three years including current year, the Central Government has accorded approvals over 1,24,133 ha of forest land for such development activities. Forest areas for such activities are approved by the Central Government under Section 2 (ii) of the Forest (conservation) Act, 1980 with adequate environmental safeguards and afforestation measures in lieu of forest land proposed to be utilized for developmental activities. During the last two years and current year an area of about 78,301 ha has been prescribed for compensatory afforestation as part of environmental safeguards.

Section -2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 inter-alia provides that notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force in a State, no State Government or other authority shall make, except with the prior approval of the Central Government, any order directing that any forest land or any portion thereof may be used for any non-forest purpose. Use of forest land for non-forest purposes therefore, requires prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. While considering the proposal under the Act, the Central Government inter-alia looks into the following:

- i. whether the forests land proposed to be used for non-forest purpose forms part of a nature reserve, national park, wildlife sanctuary, biosphere reserve or forms part of the habitat of any endangered or threatened species of flora and fauna or of an area lying severely eroded catchment;
- ii. whether the use of any forest land is for agricultural purposes or for the rehabilitation of persons displaced from their residences by reason of any river valley or hydro-electric project;
- iii. whether the State Government or the Union territory Administration, as the case may be, has certified that it has considered all other alternatives and that no other alternatives in the circumstances are feasible and that the required area is the minimum needed for the purpose;
- iv. whether the State Government or the Union territory Administration, as the case may be, undertakes to provide at its cost for the acquisition of land of an equivalent area and afforestation thereof;
- v. whether the per unit requirement of forest land is significantly higher than the national average for similar projects; and
- vi. whether the State Government or the Union territory Administration, as the case may be, before making their recommendation has considered all issues having direct and indirect impact of the diversion of forest land on forest, wildlife and environment.

For all purposes, on the request of the State Government, the Central Government considers the proposal for non-forest use of forest land and accords prior approval as per the Rules and Guidelines framed under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 stipulating mitigative measures in the form of general, standard and specific conditions. General/standard conditions inter-alia include raising of Compensatory Afforestation (CA), imposition of Net Present Value (NPV) to reduce the adverse impact, minimum tree felling, arrangement of alternate fuels, afforestation measures in the blanks within the forest area, phase wise mining operations, management of safety zone, reclamation of quarry, conservation of topsoil, preparation and implementation of Catchment Area Treatment Plan, Muck Disposal Plan, maintenance of prescribed Right of Way (RoW), plantation of dwarf species. In addition to aforementioned general and standard conditions, specific conditions are also stipulated in the approval based on the recommendation made by the Forest Advisory Committee.
