

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:52

ANSWERED ON:26.11.2014

PENDING PROJECTS

Dhruvanarayana Shri Rangaswamy;Tadas Shri Ramdas Chandrabhanji

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

- (a) whether a large number of industrial, infrastructure, mining, power and hydro-power projects are pending for want of clearance;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; sector and State-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has launched a Geographic Information System (GIS) for quick green clearance;
- (d) if so, the details in this regard; and
- (e) the other steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to streamline and simplify green clearance process to boost the economic development in the country?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS 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. 52 BY SHRI RAMDAS C. TADAS AND SHRI R. DHRUVARAYANA REGARDING 'PENDING PROJECTS' DUE FOR REPLY ON 26.11.2014.

(a) & (b) No Sir. The State-wise and sector-wise details of proposals seeking Environment, Forest and Wildlife Clearances presently pending before the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change are annexed at Annexure-I & Annexure-II.

(c) & (d) On 11th November 2014 the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change launched first version of a Geographical Information System (GIS) based Decision Support System (DSS) to facilitate objective and informed and predictable decisions on applications seeking prior approval of Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land for non-forest purpose.

The DSS developed by the Forest Survey of India contains geo-referenced layers of Forest Cover as per the latest State of Forest Report prepared by the Forest Survey of India, Forest Types, Biological Richness, Landscape Integrity, Protected Areas, Tiger Reserves, Tiger Corridor and 1 Km x 1 Km India grid.

(e) The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has taken several measures to streamline the process for grant of Environment and Forest Clearances for development projects. Notable among them are:

A. Environment Clearance:

(i) On-line submission of applications for Terms of reference (TORs) and Environment Clearance (EC) mandated w.e.f. 01.07.2014, with a view to increasing transparency and facilitating expeditious decision making process.

(ii) Notification S.O. No.1599 (E) dated 25.06.2014 has been issued, wherein following amendments have been made in the EIA Notification, 2006:

(a) The "General Condition" in the EIA Notification has been amended to provide inter-alia that only those category 'B' projects will be appraised at the Central level as category 'A' projects which are located in whole or in part within 5 km from the boundary of critically polluted areas as identified by the Central Pollution Control Board. This implies that category 'B' projects located between 5 km and 10 km from the boundary of the critically polluted areas could now be dealt with by the concerned SEIAs subject to stipulations stated in the aforesaid amendment notification.

(b) Irrigation projects with culturable command area up to 2000 ha have been exempted from EC requirement.

(c) All biomass based Thermal Power Projects with capacity equal or more than 15 MW will be Category 'B'. Such projects of capacity less than 15 MW will not require EC.

- (d) For mineral beneficiation projects, the upper limit for Category 'B' projects has been raised from 0.1 MTPA to 0.5 MTPA.
- (e) For non- molasses based distilleries, the upper limit for category 'B' projects has been raised from 30 KLD to 60 KLD.
- (iii) With a view to facilitate increase in coal production, decision taken in September 2013 to re-impose moratorium in Singrauli and Jharsuguda critically polluted areas (CPA) has been kept in abeyance vide Office Memorandum dated 10.06.2014 and CPCB asked to comprehensively re-assess CEPI score.
- (iv) MoEF&CC vide Office Memorandum dated 01.09.2014 kept the moratorium in abeyance for coal mining expansion projects in Chandrapur CPA.
- (v) Draft Notifications, amending the EIA Notification, 2006, to provide for the following have been published:
- (a) The provisions under Item 8(a) of EIA Notification, 2006 may apply to only residential buildings, commercial buildings, hotels, hospitals, hostels, office blocks and information technology / software development unit/Parks. This would take out industrial sheds from the provision of requiring EC for construction over 20,000 sq. meter.
- (b) To exempt all highway projects in border States from scoping requirement (so that they make EIA reports on the basis of standard ToRs) and exempt all linear projects in border States from the requirement of public hearing subject to suitable conditions prescribed by the Ministry.
- (vi) Guidelines for exemption from public hearing in respect of coal mining expansion projects upto 5 MTPA where the expanded production is transported through railways / conveyor, have been further relaxed to facilitate increase in coal production. Also it has been agreed to have standard ToRs for coal washery projects.
- (vii) An OM dated 11.08.2014 was issued to bring in clarity on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) related issues which considering project proposals for environment clearance;
- (viii) An OM dated 07.10.2014 was issued clarifying that the projects granted clearance under CRZ Notification, 1991 commenced the construction or operation within the validity period of five years would not require fresh clearance under CRZ Notification, 2011;
- (ix) An OM dated 07.10.2014 was issued clarifying individual projects or activities in a port viz. dredging, various construction activities etc. would not require separate EC and CRZ clearance if the port has prepared a master plan indicating all such projects or activities, including time-phasing for their implementation, prepared comprehensive EIA and EMP report and has obtained EC and CRZ clearance for whole project after following the procedure;
- (x) An OM dated 07.10.2014 was issued clarifying the requirement of documents relating to acquisition of land w.r.t. the project site;
- (xi) OM dated 22.08.2014, 08.10.2014 and 07.11.2014 were issued clarifying an outer limit of 5years for the validity period of TORs for River Valley and HEP projects and 4 years for other category of projects and also issues on appraisal;
- (xii) A Circular dated 07.10.2014 was issued clarifying categorization of environment clearance conditions for different phases of implementation, namely pre-construction, construction, post construction and life of project; and
- (xiii) A Circular 07.10.2014 was issued advising EACs/SEACs to consider the proposal comprehensively at the scoping stage and seek information in one go from the proponent instead of revisiting the issues at the time of appraisal of the project.

B. Forest Clearance:

1. Launched a web portal for online submission and monitoring of the Forest Clearance proposals;
2. Accorded General approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of forest land required for construction and widening of two lane roads by the Border Roads Organization and other agencies whom the Ministry of Defence entrusts the job, in the area falling within 100 kilometers aerial distance from the line of actual control (LAC) and widening of link roads, between Border roads in the area within 100 kilometer aerial distance from the LAC and National Highways/State Highways/Other State Roads.
3. Extended the general approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for diversion of upto 5 hecatres of forest land for construction of all categories of public roads by Government Departments in 117 LWE affected districts to projects involving diversion of forest land, not located within the protected areas, for construction of two lane public roads by Government Departments in these 117 LWE affected districts irrespective of the area of forest land involved in such projects.
4. Extended the general approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for underground laying of optical fibre cables, telephone lines and drinking water supply pipelines along the roads within existing right of way not falling in National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, without felling of trees, where the maximum size of the trench is not more than 2.00 meter depth and 1.00 meter width to the underground laying of CNG/ PNG pipelines also.
5. Notified the Forest (Conservation) Second Amendment Rules, 2014 to provide for inter-alia constitution of Regional Empowered Committee (REC) at each of its Regional Offices and delegation of power to these RECs to finally dispose of proposals, other than those related to mining, regularization of encroachment and hydel projects, involving diversion of upto 40 hectares of forest land, and all proposals related to linear projects such as roads, railway lines etc. irrespective of the area of forest land.

6. With a view to ensure, speedy laying of transmission line projects, the general dispensation available for undertaking compensatory afforestation over degraded forest lands so far available to the transmission lines upto 220 KV has been extended to all kinds of transmission lines.

7. Amended the guidelines to provide that in case of linear projects in-principle approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 may be deemed as the working permission for tree cutting and commencement of work, if the required funds for compensatory afforestation, NPV, wildlife conservation plan, plantation of dwarf species of medicinal plants, and all such other compensatory levies specified in the in-principle approval are realised from the user agency, and non-forest land for creation of compensatory afforestation, wherever required to be provided by the project proponent, has been transferred and mutated in favour of the State Forest Department.

8. Issued guidelines to the effect that in case of proposals seeking forest clearance for prospecting in forest land forest land which experience permanent change in the land use due to prospecting activity shall only be considered for the purpose of the compensatory afforestation and the Net Present Value. Such proposals have been exempted from the requirement of the submitting requisite certificates under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. It has also been clarified that site inspection from Regional Office in case of these proposals is insisted only if the actual area of the forest land proposed to be utilized for construction of new roads/ paths and for drilling of bore holes/sample collection pits etc. is more than 100 hectares.

9. Advised the States/ UTs to not to impose additional conditions over and above the conditions stipulated in the Forest Clearance accorded by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.

10. Rationalized the guidelines for diversion of forest land for entry/ exit of patrol pumps/ fuel stations to make in compatible with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, keeping in view the passenger safety.

11. Advised States and Union Territories to identify in advance compact/ sizeable blocks of non-forest land or revenue forest land free from encumbrance/ encroachments which are suitable for creation of compensatory afforestation and also from management point of view. It has also been stated in the said letter that land available in the land bank may be made available to user agencies seeking prior approval of Central Government under the afore-mentioned Act on realization of appropriate fee/ land cost.

12. Advised the States and union Territories that investigations and surveys carried out in connection with development projects such as transmission lines, hydro-electric projects, seismic surveys, exploration for oil drilling, mining etc. in wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and sample plots demarcated by the Forest Department also will not attract the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 as long as these surveys do not involve any clearing of forest or cutting of trees, and operations are restricted to clearing of bushes and lopping of tree branches for purpose of sighting.