

(b) the approximate area of land encroached by desert every year ;

(c) the main causes thereof ; and

(d) the steps being taken to check the advancement of desert ?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BHAJAN LAL) :

(a) to (c) It can not be stated with certainty that a large area of land is turning into a desert every year. However, the resources within the desert areas are showing indications of deterioration due to over exploitation and opportunistic land use tendencies on account of increase in human and animal population.

(d) The Government of India have started the Desert Development Programme (DDP) in the Central sector for controlling desertification and restoration of ecological balance, in addition to other afforestation Programmes.

Establishment of Biosphere Reserves

***672. PROF. P. J. KURIEN :** Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of Biosphere Reserves set up in the country so far ; and

(b) what extent the science of genetics is being used in the conservation of biological as well as genetic diversity ?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BHAJAN LAL) :

(a) One Biosphere Reserve, viz. Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve has been set up so far.

(b) One of the important aims of Biosphere Reserves is to preserve biological/genetic diversity. In view of this, research on biological/genetic diversity will be given priority in the research activities undertaken in the Biosphere Reserves. Genetic science/engineering as such is not a Component of the research programmes to be undertaken in Biosphere Reserves.

Monitoring of Projects

***673. SHRI ANANTA PRASAD SETHI :** Will the Minister of PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state :

(a) the Central Projects monitors by his Ministry so far ;

(b) which of these projects are behind schedule ;

(c) the reasons for the slippages ; and

(d) the corrective measures initiated by his Ministry in this regard ?

THE MINISTER FOR PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI A.B.A. GHANI KHAN CHOUDHURY) : (a) and (b) Ministry of Programme Implementation monitors Central Projects costing Rs. 20 crores and more. As on 30.11.1986 there were 290 Central projects under implementation out of which 158 projects were behind schedule

(c) The main reason for delay include, interalia, problems concerning land acquisition including forest clearance, delay in supply of critical equipment, change in scope of work, non-availability of cement, steel and law and order problem etc.

(d) The corrective measures in this regard include effective monitoring through Monthly Flash Report and Quarterly Status Report System, simplification of procedures for dereservation of forest land, greater delegation of power to project authorities and constant pressure on them for expeditious completion.

National Level Apex Organisation for Tribal Areas

***674. SHRI RADHAKANTA DIGAL :** Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to create a National Level Apex Organisation for the development of co-operative structure in tribal areas of the country ; and