

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
RAJYA SABHA
QUESTION NO 21.12.2009
ANSWERED ON
LOGGING OF TREES BY EVEREST POWER PRIVATE LTD. .

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Smt. Viplove Thakur

Will the Minister of COAL AND ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :-

- (a) whether Government is aware that the Everest Power Private Limited (EPPL) axed 364 trees and destroyed 115 bighas of forest area in the lush green Malana valley without obtaining prior permission from his Ministry;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the company has also dumped muck and road debris along the Malana riverside, burying alive thousands of smaller species of plants and local herbs;
- (d) if so, whether Government has conducted any inquiry in this regard; and
- (e) if so, the action Government has taken against the company and other responsible authorities?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS

(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a)&(b)Yes Sir. As reported by Forest Department, Government of Himachal Pradesh that Everest Power Private Limited (EPPL) has damaged (not axed) 365 trees, out of which 2 trees were felled illicitly during the construction of Malana-II Hydro Electric Project. The damage started with the construction of road leading to dam site in 2006 to 2007. The area damaged due to rolling down of muck is only 15 Bighas and not 115 Bighas. Damage bills were issued to the user agency from time to time and same were realized during 11/2006, 01/2007, 05/2007 and 10/2007.

(c) In most of the road construction work the muck has been dumped on the designated dumping sites duly approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. However, in certain areas, due to topography and rock formation, some muck has rolled down on the lower side. The area where such incident occurred is almost a vertical rocky cliff, where it is not possible to hold all the muck. Since it is a rocky cliff, there is hardly any vegetation except for some grasses and shrubs growing on the natural crevices. The trees damaged and area affected by the rolling muck has been accounted for by issuing damage bills.

(d) Yes, the inquiry was conducted and the company has been penalised for all the work done in contravention to permission accorded by Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

(e) Damage bill as per prevailing market rates of trees and muck dumping along with 100% penalty amounting Rs.1,18,46,866/- has been raised against the user agency i.e. M/s Everest Power Private Limited and the user agency has released the payments.