

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 701
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.02.2026

Diversion of forest land

701. SHRI ASHOK SINGH:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that over 78,000 hectares of forest land have been diverted for non-forestry purposes between 2021 and 2025, with Madhya Pradesh alone accounting for over 17,000 hectares;
- (b) the scientific basis for the Ministry's claim that the average time for granting EC has been reduced to less than 75 days and whether such reduction has been achieved by dispensing away the detailed "Terms of Reference" stage for certain categories of projects; and
- (c) the number of project proposals rejected by the Expert Appraisal Committees (EAC) at the Central level during the last three years, along with the number of applications received?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) During the period from 2021-22 to 2024-25, The Central Government has granted approval under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhinyam, 1980 for diversion of forest land involving 74,518.50 hectare of forest land for non-forestry use across the States and UTs. During the period, 17,776.10 hectares of forest lands have been accorded approval for use of forest land for non-forestry use in the State of Madhya Pradesh.

(b) & (c) As per the provisions of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, as amended, prior approval of Terms of Reference (ToR) is mandatory for all Category 'A' Environmental Clearance (EC) proposals. The reduction in timelines observed in the processing of EC proposals is attributable to comprehensive regulatory reforms undertaken by the Ministry, supported by technology-driven interventions such as GIS layers, Decision Support System. These include upgradation of the PARIVESH portal as a Single-Window, end-to-end online system for processing Environmental Clearance proposals, as well as amendments to the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006 and Office Memorandum issued time to time.

Key reforms undertaken by the Ministry include delegation of appraisal powers to the State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs) for sectors such as mining, irrigation, and power projects, thereby decentralising decision-making and expediting appraisal at the appropriate level. Further, the frequency of meetings of the Expert Appraisal Committees (EACs) has been increased to not less than two meetings per month to ensure timely consideration of proposals. Necessary directions have also been issued for seeking relevant and project-specific additional information at the appraisal stage. The aforesaid measures, particularly the adoption of paperless and technology-enabled governance through the

PARIVESH portal, including the integration of decision support systems for informed based decision-making by the Expert Appraisal Committees and the Ministry, have strengthened the environmental appraisal framework. These reforms have ensured adherence to statutory environmental safeguards while significantly reducing processing timelines and enhancing efficiency and transparency in Environmental Clearance process, thereby contributing to the objectives of sustainable development.

In accordance with the provisions of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, as amended, proposals for Environmental Clearance are appraised by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) through a comprehensive evaluation of all environmental implications of the proposed project, including the issues raised during the Public Consultation process, if applicable. The recommendations of the EAC are thereafter placed before the Ministry for consideration. While the EAC may recommend or not recommend a proposal, the Ministry in accordance with the applicable statutory framework takes the final decision with regard to grant or rejection of Environmental Clearance (EC). Further, 2,244 Environmental Clearance (EC) proposals were received at the Central level for consideration of EC during the last three years from 2023 to 2025.
