

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4007
TO BE ANSWERED ON: 28.03.2022

Ecological Impact of Oil Palm Plantation

4007. SHRI PRADYUT BORDOLOI:

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

- (a) whether the Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE) in 2020 recommended avoiding oil palm in biodiversity-rich areas without detailed studies on its ecological impact, if so, the reasons therefor;
- (b) the reasons for the Government merging the ICFRE's proposed study with Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in January 2021;
- (c) the details of the ICAR-IIOPR feasibility report that support the proposal for oil palm plantations in rich biodiverse areas of the North East and Andaman and Nicobar Islands;
- (d) whether the Government intends to exempt oil palm plantations from the definition of "non-forest purpose" and thereby from forest clearance through amendments to the Forest Conservation Act 1980, if so, the reasons therefor;
- (e) whether the Government is aware that shifting cultivation landscapes (jhum lands) are extremely rich in biodiversity; and
- (f) if so, whether the Government has assessed the ecological effects of diverting jhum lands in the North Eastern Region for oil palm plantations and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

- (a) On the direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, Dehradun (ICFRE) had submitted a report on 4th January, 2020, which suggested the need to conduct multi – disciplinary studies to comprehend invasiveness of Red Oil Palm, ecological impacts, development of inter-cropping models with suitable indigenous species.
- (b) Further more, ICFRE with inputs from Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Indian Institute of Oil Palm Research (IIOPR) filed a detailed report 'Replanting of the Existing Red Oil Palm Plantation in Little Andaman' on 19th June, 2021.
- (c) As per information received from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the Reassessment Committee of Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Indian Institute of Oil Palm Research (ICAR-IIOPR) has conducted a study in the year 2020 to

assess the potential area in 22 States/UTs and identified 27.99 lakh ha potential area for Oil Palm cultivation in India including North-Eastern States and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- (d) Oil Palm Plantation is considered as non-forestry activity. All activities on forest land require forest clearance under Forest Conservation Act 1980.
- (e) Shifting Cultivations (Jhum Cultivation) is a traditional and primitive farming of small ethnic groups of the country.
- (f) The Reassessment Committee of ICAR-IIOPR, 2020 identified land suitable for oil palm cultivation under irrigated and rainfed condition taking into account various parameters.
