



Tuesday, February 12, 2008

Ministry of Environment and Forests

SUSTENANCE AND LIVLIHOOD NEEDS OF THE FOREST DEPARTMENT COUMMUNITIES – PRINCIPAL AIM OF NATIONAL FOREST POLICY

15:43 IST

Sustainability of Forest Eco System is an essential component of the environment conservation and any degradation of forests will have an adverse impact on various life support systems. Inaugurating a two-day Conference of Forest Secretaries, Principal Chief Conservators of Forest and Chief Wildlife Wardens today, Thiru S. Regupathy, Minister of State for Environment and Forest said that the support systems like water resources, agriculture, bio-diversity, environment, climate change and human health will be affected. Shri Regupathy said inadequate public awareness about multiple function of forests, undervaluation of the contribution of forests to gross domestic products, technological weakness etc. are the issues unique to forestry sector. Explaining the principal aim of the National Forest Policy the Minister said that it is to provide environment stability and ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium. This policy gives priority to the sustenance and livelihood needs of the forest dependent communities, particularly tribals. Shri Regutpathy informed that at present more than 22 million hectare forests have been assigned to communities under joint forest management in the country.

Regarding Forest and Tree cover Shri Regupathy said we have set a target of 30 per cent by 2012. It is most crucial to achieve this target as besides other requirements it will help to solve the problem of global warming. The National Forest Commission has suggested 360 recommendations to achieve mandate of National Forest Policy. The Ministry is in general agreement with the recommendations except few. The Ministry has set apart around 4.8 per cent of the geographical area for inclusive conservation of its biodiversity in the form of protected areas. Currently there are 659 protected areas in the country. He

urged States to submit requirements for tiger results, tiger conservation, constitution committees and creation conservation fund.

Earlier, Secretary Miss Meena Gupta said forests can act as source as well as sink of Carbon dioxide. She said the forestation and forest degradation contributes nearly 20 per cent of the total green house gases emissions at global level. This is an area of concern for entire global community. The Bali Action Plan has addressed this issue and put forests on the center stage. In our country the forests and tree cover is more or less stabilize at around 24 per cent of total land marks. However, the decline in good quality forests cover should be our area of concern.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forests Dwellers (Recognition of Forests Rights) Act, 2006 recognizes and vests the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest tribes and other traditional forest dwellers. The Forest Department will have to check number of proactive actions to ensure effective implementation of this Act in true spirit. She cautioned to protect forests against unlawful claims of occupation. Regarding the allocation of forests and wildlife sector she said the next Plan period that double allocation i.e. Rs.5039 crores.

The Conference will deliberate on a unique proposal to develop plantation banks to facilitate the compensatory afforestation through Green Credit Scheme. Besides this, implementation of scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, Tiger Conservation, Man-Animal Conflicts, better facilities for front-line staff, recommendations of National Forests Commission and Forest Protection including wildlife conservation will be discussed.

KP/Hb