

FOREST AREA IN THE COUNTRY

12th March, 2015

RSQ 1637

SHRI C.P. NARAYANAN

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

- (a) the area under forests in the country at present, percentage-wise;
- (b) how much area under forests were denuded for mining and various other development activities during last three years;
- (c) the number of traditional dwellers of forests who were thrown out of their dwellings in the process; and
- (d) whether Government would consider a policy of maintaining remaining forests intact and adopt a form of exploiting minerals, fuel etc. underneath by underground mining them instead of open mining?

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) As per India State of Forest Report 2013, the total forests area of the country is 7,71,821 square kilometers which is 23.48 percent of the total geographical area of the country.

(b) & (c) The Central Government during last three years i.e. 2012-2014 has accorded approval for diversion of 1,02,803 hectares of forest land under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 for various categories including mining projects. The data pertaining to traditional dwellers, displaced from their dwelling in the forests is not being maintained by this Ministry.

(d) Use of forest land for mining requires prior approval of Central government under Section-2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. As of now, there is no proposal in the Ministry to completely ban opencast mining in forest areas and permit only underground mining in the forest area.