

Copy of D.O.No. C-11021/6/76- Fry (FD) dt. 20-12-1976 from Sri. S. K. Seth. Inspector General of Forests & Ex- officio Addl. Secretary Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation (Department of Agriculture) Krishi Bhavan New Delhi to Sri. K. K Nair, Chief Conservator of Forests, Trivandrum.

Sub:- Prime Minister's directive on conversion of forests for other purposes

In view of the grave concern expressed by the Prime Minister over instances of diversion of forest areas for non- forestry purposes two D.O letters of even number were issued from this office regarding assessment of proposals for removal of forest cover, Despite the clarification furnished there are still some doubts as to the necessity of referring such proposals to the Inspector General of Forests for assessment. This letter is being issued in order to clarify the position and obviate the necessity of any further reference in this connection.

2. Instance have come to the Prime Minister's notice where State Governments have ordered conversion of valuable forest areas for agricultural or commercial uses. She has expressed grave concern over such ill considered removal of forest cover which has increasingly resulted in soil erosion, floods and drought in various parts of the country. It has also caused other harmful side- effects such as the extinction of habitation which wild life can survive.

3. The prime minister has accordingly desired that any proposals for removal of forest cover should be invariably assed by a competent independent authority like the Inspector General of Forests in the Department of Agriculture before any such conversion of forest area for other purposes is ordered so that irreversible environmental damage is not done.

4. A reference to the Inspector General of forests for conversion of forests is necessary even where.

- a) Small isolated areas are involved.
- b) Under existing executive or legal provisions, safe guards have already been provided for decisions by the state Government or its legislature or high- level execution committees
- c) appropriate provisions has been proposed in the National Forest Policy.
- d) Forests other than reserved or protected forests constituted under the Indian or State Act, Unclassed , undemarcated, civil, revenue or community forests are concerned.
- e) Any other safeguards are provided by the State Governments.

5. Since instances of destruction of forests have continued to come to the notice of the Prime Minister, it is in this context, therefore, that she has desired that all cases where forest cover on any type of land is sought to be removed, the priority authority with full justification of the Inspector General of Forests will be necessary. This would

included all cases covered in para 4 above, only subject to para 6 below. In those cases, however, where original mixed forest are only sought to be monoculture, it would be necessary to provided for sizeable stretches of natural forests in order to break the continuity of mono culture and to assist in maintaining the bio-ecological balance. The only exception to this would be in area where shifting cultivation of “jhumming” is traditionally practiced but is hoped that the State Government concerned will vigorously tackle this destructive practice.

6. However, State Governments/Union Territories may, subject to their own safe guards, divert forest area for other purpose Upton a maximum limit of 10 hectares when this is required for a public purposes inside or on the periphery of a much large area of forest, provided no other alternative after close examination is feasible, even though such an alternative may not be the most economical one. In this case a certificate to this effect will have to be duly recorded after due verification by the Chief Conservator of Forests, a copy of which will be required to be sent to the Inspector General for Forests for his information and recorded.

These instructions, designed in the large interest to save the country from the rapid irreversible environmental damage being caused in many areas, may kindly to observed scrupulously, in accordance with the wishes of the Prime Minister.

Yours Sincerely.

Sd/-
(S.K.Seth)

Endt. on P1-53907/76 dt . 23-12-1976

Copy communicated to the Addl. Chief Conservator of Forests, all conservators of Forests, Divl. Forest officers for information and strict compliance.

Copy to all Branch officers and section heads for information and strict compliance.

Sd/- for Chief Conservator of Forests
(Development)

Endt. on Fs- 20155/76 dt. 14-3-1977

Copy to TR, CH, ML, MR and KT sections

Copy to Senior Superintendent and Administrative Assistant and stock file

For Conservator of Forests,
Trichur