

CHAPTER 18

POINT 17 :PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENT

18.1 Ensuring environmental sustainability of the development process through social mobilisation and participation of people at all levels has been the main focus of our development strategy. Strict environment laws, efficient regulatory agencies and proper enforcement are vital for protection of environment. Public participation is particularly important for environmental sustainability. In this area, mass media has a very big role to play. The following two items are *qualitatively* monitored under this point:

i) Appraisal of Development Projects, and

ii) Popular Support, Awareness and Involvement.

18.2 **National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC):-** The NEAC has been launched with the cooperation and active participation of various NGOs, institutions, State Government Departments, academic institutions, etc. throughout the country during the period. The theme of the Campaign for the period under review was "Sustainable Development". Twenty eight organisations from various parts of the country were designated/re-appointed as Regional Resource Agencies for assisting the Ministry of Environment and Forest in conducting awareness campaign throughout the country. NEAC is an on going programme under the Environment Awareness and Training Scheme since 1986. Under this programme 6 Regional Committee meetings were organized for considering the proposals received by 29 Regional Resource Agencies (RRAs) from all over India for this year 14,052 proposals were considered out of which 7515 were recommended for the total financial assistance of Rs. 4,26,437/-. The number of organizations supported under NEAC has steadily been increasing from about 115 organisations in 1986 to more than 7000 in 2003. Almost States/ Union Territories of the country are being covered under this campaign. Awareness activities followed by action oriented activities in different parts of the country. Awareness activities include seminars, workshops, training programmes, camps, padyatras, rallies, public meetings, exhibitions, essay/debate/painting/poster competitions, folk dances and songs, street theater, puppet shows, preparation and distribution of environmental education resource material etc. The action-oriented activity includes tree plantation, vermi-composting, waste paper recycling, water testing in neighbouring areas, demonstration of roof water harvesting and cleaning of water bodies etc.

18.2.1 In order to encourage participation of school children in various activities aimed related to ecological conservation and preservation of the environment, the Ministry has evolved a non-formal pro-active system of imparting environmental education to school children by involving them through "*Eco-clubs*". These clubs are established in Government recognised schools and each club has 20-50 members taken from the students of Class VI to IX. A group of 20-50 Eco clubs in one or more geographical contiguous districts is serviced by a coordinating agency, which could be a well-established educational institution or a non-governmental organisation or a professional body. It was proposed to set up 70,000 Eco Clubs-150 Eco Clubs in each district of the country. The programme is being implemented through a nodal agency in each State/UT. The Nodal Agency is selected by the State/UT administration. Funds to the extent of Rs. 2.49 crore were released to 12 States/UTs. Nodal agencies for implementing the programme in their respective State/UT during the period.

18.3 **Environmental appraisal of the development projects:-** At the beginning of the 1st October, 2003, 234 projects were pending with the Ministry for Environmental clearance. Between 1st October 2003 to 30th March 2004, 198 projects were received for approval. Out of the pending projects at the beginning of the period and those received 153 projects were accorded environmental clearance, 15 projects were rejected/closed for non- submission of requisite data, 11 projects were exempted and 5 projects were withdrawn/transferred/kept in abeyance and 248 projects were pending at the end of year for environmental clearance. The information in a tabular form is enclosed at *Annexure 18.1*. A project has been sponsored during the period is: (i) Project on development of a Point of Use (POU) clean technology in the form of a domestic unit employing a complexing resin for removing As(v) from water by Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRI), Bhavnagar, Gujarat.

Hospital Waste – A danger to environment:- The hospital wastes, i.e., needles, syringes, surgical gloves, cotton bandages, medicines, blood and body fluid, human tissues and organs, radioactive substances and chemicals etc. are just thrown away by clinics, nursing homes and small private hospitals. This causes environmental pollution and infections like AIDS, Hepatitis, Gastronnetric respiratory, Ocular, Genital and Skin infections Anthrax, Meningitis, Haeomorrhagic, Fever, Septicemia and many more. These private hospitals and nursing homes should have arrangement of incinerators and autoclaves for disposal of these wastes. In hospitals, sisters and ward-boys are supposed to segregate waste into different categories. Red bags for syringes, yellow bags for infectious wastes and black for non-infectious wastes. If all the waste is put into one bag and disposed of at City Corporation Sanitary Landfields, this will spoil the environment and rag pickers will catch infections.