

## CHAPTER – III

## REFORM MEASURES AND POLICY INITIATIVES

The Ministry of Environment & Forest has taken a number of reform measures and policy initiatives in order to improve upon the intermediate output and final outcomes in areas such public private partnership, alternate delivery mechanism, social and gender empowerment process, greater decentralization and transparency. The Ministry is currently implementing 22 thematic plan Schemes with an approved plan outlay of Rs. 1880.00 crores for the Annual Plan 2009-10.

**3.1. POLICY DEVELOPMENTS****3.1.1 National Action Plan on Climate Change**

Climate change is a serious global challenge. Recognizing the need to address it on an urgent basis, India's National Action Plan on Climate Change was unveiled by the Prime Minister on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The Action Plan outlines our strategy to adapt to climate change and enhance the ecological sustainability of our development path. Eight National Missions, which form the core of the National Action Plan, representing a multi-pronged, long term and integrated approach, are under formulation. The Ministry will play a coordinating and implementing role after the Missions are finalized.

**3.1.2. National Biodiversity Action Plan**

Biodiversity is the variability among living organisms and ecological complexes of which they are part, including diversity within and between species and ecosystems. It has direct consumptive value in food, agriculture, medicine and industry. Towards its conservation, a National Biodiversity Action Plan, consistent with the National Environment Policy 2006 has been released in November 2008. The Plan identifies major threats and constraints facing biodiversity and lists out action points for addressing/conserving the same.

**3.1.3. Legislation for implementing 186<sup>th</sup> Report of the Law Commission of India**

The Law Commission in its 186<sup>th</sup> Report has, *inter-alia*, recommended establishment of 'Environment Court' in each State, consisting of Judicial and Scientific experts in the field of environment for dealing with environmental disputes besides having appellate jurisdiction in respect of appeals under the various Pollution Control Laws. The Commission has also recommended repeal of the National Environment Tribunal Act, 1995 and the National Environment Appellate Authority Act, 1997. After examining the Report and discussing the modalities in several consultation meetings, the Ministry has decided to implement the recommendations of Law Commission with some modifications. This Ministry examined the report and decided in principle to accept the recommendations of the LCI. A draft National Green Tribunal (NGT) Bill was formulated and examined in consultation with the Ministry of Law and Justice. The NGT shall have the original jurisdiction as well as appellate jurisdiction to adjudicate the environmental disputes of civil nature relating to protection of environment. The appeal against the order of NGT shall lie with the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The draft Cabinet Note along with a copy of NGT Bill 2009 has been circulated on 19.6.2009 to concerned Ministries for their views/comments.

**3.1.4. Coastal Zone Management**

The coastal environment plays a vital role in the Nation's economy. The Indian coastline harbours productive habitats and rich biodiversity all along the 7500 km stretch including the oceanic islands of A&N and Lakshadweep.

For the purpose of protecting the Coastal Areas, the Ministry had issued the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification in 1991. This Notification was reviewed by Professor M.S. Swaminathan in June 2004. The Report of the Committee, which was submitted to the Ministry, was accepted in April 2005.

On the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee, a draft Coastal Management Zone (CMZ) Notification has been issued on 1st May, 2008 with a subsequent amendment of 9th May, 2008. This notification proposes an integrated coastal management approach rather than a regulatory frame work presently under implementation.

The proposed notification provides for categorization of coastal zone areas into four types, management methodology through delineation of set back line, indicative list of ecologically sensitive areas, areas of particular concern and permissible developmental activities on seaward side of set back line etc. Ministry has received more than 8000 comments/suggestions on the CMZ Notification from various stake holders, and the same are being examined.

### **3.1.5 Amendment to EIA 2006 Notification**

The re-engineered Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification was issued in September, 2006 for mandating prior environmental clearance of certain categories of projects and activities. The Notification covers various stages of environmental appraisal, public consultation, and categorization of projects into 'A' and 'B' for their appraisal at Central and State level respectively.

Based on the experience gained in implementation of the EIA Notification, 2006 and to further streamlining the process, a draft amendment to this Notification has been issued on 19th January, 2009 for seeking comments/suggestions from various stake holders within sixty days. The salient features of the draft Notification include:

- ❖ Enhancement of threshold limits for construction projects from 20,000 sq.mt. to 50,000 sq. mt.,
- ❖ Exemption of modernization and expansion projects with no increase in pollution load,
- ❖ Category 'B' projects to be exempted from scoping for three years
- ❖ Proactive/voluntary disclosure of information relating to grant of environmental clearance for ensuring effective enforcement of environmental regulation through creations of societal vigil.

Comments/suggestions received on the draft notification are being examined by the Ministry.

### **3.1.6 Notification of Hazardous Waste (Management, Handling & Trans boundary Movement) Rules 2008**

Final Notification on Hazardous Waste (Management, Handling and Trans- boundary movement) Rules 2008 was issued in 2008 repealing earlier rules with a view to ensuring effective implementation of hazardous waste management based on past experience. Revised environmental standards were also notified for petroleum oil refinery and for sulphuric acid plants. First time standards were drawn and notified for incinerator for pesticide industry, common hazardous waste incinerator, coffee industry and sponge iron plants.

### **3.1.7. Amendment in Bio-Medical Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1998**

It is proposed to issue amendments to the Bio-Medical Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1998 (BMW Rules), with following salient features of the proposed amendments:

- (i) Inclusion of a provision in the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for charging of authorization fee etc., from Health Care Establishments (HCEs).
- (ii) Inclusion of a provision in the BMW Rules for levying penalty on violators.

- (iii) Inclusion of a provision in the BMW Rules for mandatory training to hospital staff for proper management of bio-medical waste.
- (iv) Deep burial option as a mode of bio-medical waste disposal to be banned in the Common Bio-medical Waste Treatment and Disposal Facilities (CBMWTDFs).

### **3.1.8 Amendment to the Municipal Solid Wastes (Management & Handling) Rules, 2000 (MSW Rules)**

It is proposed to issue amendments to the Municipal Solid Wastes (Management & Handling) Rules, 2000, with following proposed amendments:

- (i) Revision of deadlines for compliance of various activities.
- (ii) Each local body to submit a time-bound action plan for compliance with MSW Rules and preparation of action plan.
- (iii) Each local body to undertake Quantification and Characterization of waste for their town.
- (iv) Provision of appropriate disposal of Compact Fluorescent Lamps/ Fluorescent Tube lights.

### **3.1.9. Revamped River Conservation Strategy – Setting up of The National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)**

The Central Government has given Ganga the status of a ‘National River’ and has constituted a ‘National Ganga River Basin Authority’ (NGRBA) through issue of a Notification under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 on 20.02.2009. The NGRBA is an empowered planning, financing, monitoring and coordinating authority for the Ganga River. The Authority is chaired by the Prime Minister and has as its members, the Union Ministers concerned, the Chief Ministers of the States through which Ganga flows, viz., Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, among others. The Authority has both regulatory and developmental functions and will take measures for effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the river Ganga, adopting river basin as the unit of planning. Under the provisions of the Authority, a Corpus Fund is to be provided by the Central Government to the Authority to implement its work programme.

### **3.1.10 Constitution of an Environment Protection Authority (EPA)**

In parallel to the National Environmental Tribunal Bill, an exercise may be undertaken to conceptualize and constitute an Environment Protection Authority in the country. This initiative recognizes the thinness of the current environmental management system and corresponding weaknesses in implementation. The current field level organizational framework under the Central and State Pollution Control Boards is inadequate for handling the environmental challenges posed by the growth in industry, infrastructure and transportation sectors.

### **3.1.11. Creation of State level Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authorities (CAMPAs)**

The Supreme Court, vide its order dated 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2002 in I.A. No 566 in Writ Petition Civil No. 202/1995, had directed creation of a Compensatory Afforestation Fund in which all monies received from user agencies towards compensatory afforestation, penal compensatory afforestation, Net Present Value, Catchment Treatment Plan, etc. shall be deposited. The Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) was approved by the Union Cabinet in March, 2008 with a proviso to frame legislation constituting a Compensatory Afforestation Fund. A Compensatory Afforestation Fund Bill, 2008, introduced in Lok Sabha on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2008, was passed by the Lok Sabha and referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament on Science & Technology & Forests. The Standing Committee, however, recommended that the Bill be withdrawn. The Bill finally could not be passed by the Rajya Sabha and stands lapsed with the constitution of new Lok Sabha.

To resolve the deadlock of CAMPA, it has been decided to create State Level CAMPAs. Intensive consultations have been held with the Chief Secretaries on the issue and model guidelines for the State level CAMPAs have also been prepared and conveyed to the State Governments for adoption. The State CAMPAs would provide an integrated framework for utilization of multiple sources of funding and activities relating to afforestation and would work through JFMCs. Implementation of State CAMPAs would be expedited in consultation with the State Governments in 2009-10.

### 3.1.12. CITES Legislation

In order to regulate the import and export of wild plants and animals so as to ensure that international trade does not result in the extinction of any species of wildlife and also to give effect in India to the provisions contained in CITES, it is proposed to introduce a new Chapter V B in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The draft Bill & the Note for the Cabinet have been vetted by the Ministry of Law & Justice. The Note for the Cabinet has been forwarded for approval of the Cabinet Committee.

## 3.2. SECTORAL REFORM MEASURES

### 3.2.1 Pollution Abatement

The World Bank Aided Project on *Capacity Building for Industrial Pollution Management* aims at providing comprehensive framework for investments in remediation of legacy sites which pose significant hazard to communities and meet the criteria of a public good. The project has the three components: (i) Strengthening of Environmental Institutions: Building capacity for addressing pollution remediation at State level.; (ii) Investments in Priority Remediation and Environmental Improvements; and (iii) Project Management. Based on feasibility studies completed, the process of negotiations with the World Bank for agreement for funding for remediation and rehabilitation works for identified sites in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal on pilot basis is under progress. The project is proposed to be implemented in two States namely Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal on pilot basis in 2009-10.

The National Disaster Management Authority, in consultation with this Ministry, has brought out Guidelines at the National level, pursuant to which an Action Plan needs to be developed evolving programmes and activities for holistic and coordinated management of chemical disasters. The process of developing such an *Action Plan on Chemical (Industrial) Disaster Management* has been initiated by the Ministry, and the same is expected to be ready by March 2010.

A Committee has been constituted to evolve a roadmap for proper *management of wastes* in the country. The Committee will address issues such as Municipal solid waste, plastic waste, e-waste, Bio-Medical wastes etc. An action plan will be developed thereafter which is expected to be completed in 2009-10.

To increase the coverage of common treatment facilities for Bio-Medical Waste, a new scheme has been initiated for providing financial assistance for setting up of more *Common Bio-Medical Waste Treatment and Disposal Facilities* (CBMWTFs) on Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode. This scheme will become operational during the current financial year and proposals for the same will be requested from various stakeholders.

Given the stipulation in National Environment Policy, 2006, Ministry intends to take the initiative to set up a mechanism to network technology research institutions in the country, public and private, for cooperation in technology research & development and adaptation, information, and evaluation of *clean technologies*. It will create a database of such technologies, and promote dissemination of new technologies developed in India and Abroad.

The eighth National Missions under the National Action Plan on *Climate Change* would be finalized. Early implementation of this Plan will strengthen India's standing in the UN multilateral negotiations because this will be demonstrative of India's resolve to respond to a serious global

environmental issue. A note for the Cabinet is being prepared regarding India's approach in the negotiations in the run-up to the Copenhagen Conference in December, 2009. The Ministry, with the support of UNDESA, CII, FICCI and other organizations, also proposes to organize an international conference on technology development and transfer for adaptation and mitigation of climate change in order to draw attention of the world community to these issues.

### 3.2.2 Environmental Conservation

The National Environmental Policy (NEP) 2006 while defining the basic principles of environmental conservation and management emphasizes need for priority allocation of societal resources for conservation of Entities of Incomparable Value (EIVs). The Entities of Incomparable Values (EIVs) are sites containing unique natural or man-made entities, (living and/or non-living), that provide critical life support environmental services and/or are essential for the well-being, broadly conceived, of a large number of people of present and future generations.

The country has taken several measures to protect and conserve some of the such ecologically rich and sensitive areas, which are currently covered through the Protected Areas (PA) network and deriving power under diverse legal instruments, but the provisions of extant legal instruments do not fully cover certain EIVs such as Natural Heritage Sites, areas surrounding Core Zones of Biosphere Reserves, National Parks and Sanctuaries, man-made monuments, coral reefs, mangroves, sacred groves and other ecologically or environmentally sensitive areas, etc. It has, therefore, become necessary to set up a harmonized system for *management of the diverse EIVs* under the Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986.

A site may be considered as an EIV, if it meets the criteria proposed in the draft notification. The proposed Notification is the result of in depth discussions with experts in the field. The EIVs inside National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Coastal Regulatory Zones will continue to be regulated under the provisions of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and site-specific notifications promulgated under the Environment Protection Act, while those falling outside these categories will be regulated both by the relevant Acts operating in that area and the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA) 1986. In case of Natural/Man-made Heritage Sites, both EPA and Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 shall apply. If an EIV falls under the ambit of more than one legislation, the Act whose penalty provisions are more stringent shall apply.

Ministry has identified a number of wetlands for conservation and management under its conservation programme and provides financial and technical assistance for various conservation activities through approval of the Management Action Plans. The National Environment Policy, 2006 recognizing the numerous ecological services provided by wetlands, has emphasized on the need for setting up of a *legally enforceable regulatory mechanism for the identified wetlands* and development of a national inventory of such wetlands.

The Ministry initiated the process of developing such a regulatory framework through consultations with concerned stakeholders, resulting in development of a draft regulatory framework. The draft was put on the website of the Ministry and forwarded to the state governments for their comments. The comments received were discussed in the Ministry internally and the suggestions have been incorporated suitably. The final draft regulatory framework is ready for further processing and obtaining necessary approvals by the Ministry.

The problem of pollution in major rivers has constantly engaged the attention of the Government. An overview of the present status of the institutional efforts indicates that concerted and focused efforts are required to achieve the goal of restoration of the water quality of rivers to acceptable standards. This task requires involvement of all stakeholders including Central and State Governments and general public at large. Government is working on a *revamped strategy for river conservation* evolving a strategy towards a holistic approach in this regard, involving infrastructure development and redesigning of institutional arrangements.

### 3.2.3 Environment Education and Awareness

The flagship programmes under environmental education and awareness include the *National Environment Awareness Campaign* (NEAC) and the *National Green Corps* (NGC) Programme which are implemented all over the country in a decentralized mode. The NEAC is launched all over the country every year on an agreed environmental theme in which more than 10,000 organisations including central and state govt. departments, education institutions, NGOs and other voluntary agencies participate. National Green Corps Programme is a knowledge-based programme in which knowledge empowered teacher-in-charge of Eco-clubs transmit awareness to children through various activities. The NGC Programme involves more than 1,00,000 Eco-Clubs across the country to carry out its mandate.

Recognising the vital importance training of these green teachers plays in making the programme successful, the second round of two tier training programme has now been launched for the purpose. Initially, at the apex level, Master Trainers will be trained at the State capitals and they in turn would train teachers-in-charge at district level.

Considering the vast coverage of the radio as a mode of mass communication towards reaching out to largest number of target groups with information and messages concerning their lives and environment, the Ministry has taken the initiatives of producing and broadcasting, two sponsored weekly radio programmes of half an hour and 15 minute duration over CBS stations and FM stations respectively of All India Radio.

*State of Environment* (SoE) *Reporting* Process would be extended to metro city level and district level in phased manner. The preparation of SOE Report at the metro city level has been initiated with taking up the work for Hyderabad – Secunderabad metro cities of Andhra Pradesh. The SoE Reports and other SOE Products, including State of Environment Atlas, Video CD and photo catalogue would be prepared and released to all the States/Union Territories twice in Five Year period coinciding with beginning and Mid Term Review of a Five Year Plan. A National State of the Environment Report will also be released in 2009-10.

The *National Museum of Natural History*, which imparts non-formal environmental education, plans to set up two new regional museums of natural history in the Western and North Eastern regions during the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. Construction of the building for the Regional Museum of Natural History at Sawai Madhopur (Rajsthan), which would focus on the theme of hot desert ecosystems, has already commenced. For the Regional Museum of Natural History at Gangtok (Sikkim), land has already been identified by the state Government. This museum will showcase the rich biodiversity of the country's North Eastern Region.

### 3.2.4. Forestry

The *National Forest Policy* 1988 stipulates that 33% of the geographical area of the country should be under tree/forest cover. According to the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan of the Planning Commission, a target of 25% by 2007 and 33% by 2012 was stipulated. Efforts are being made to bring more area under tree/forest cover by taking afforestation on degraded wastelands. Efforts are being made to enhance community participation through a new scheme of *Afforestation through PRIs* (Panchayat Van Yojana) to undertake afforestation on various categories of vacant public land involving PRIs. The objective of the scheme would be to bring all unutilized /underutilized non-forest village lands under tree cover with village institutions having full decision making authority on its management, use of products for value addition or otherwise, and rights over the benefits generated. The scheme would be dovetailed with other rural development schemes intended to conserve, develop, and optimally utilize land and water resources.

The guidelines of Ministry's flagship scheme on afforestation, National Afforestation Programme, would be modified to further strengthen its implementation. The Ministry has already issued guidelines to state/UT Governments for rationalizing felling and transit regulations for tree grown on private land.

Ministry has prepared and presented to the PM's Council for Climate Change a draft document for the *National Mission on "Green India"*. The Green India project will be the world's largest afforestation project covering six million hectares of degraded forestland. When approved, it will utilise the resources identified for National Afforestation Programmes (NAP), Compensatory Afforestation, and other related programmes. Ministry has also sought and achieved convergence of the proposed Mission/programme with the national programme of NREGA, implemented by the MoRD. The convergence of the two programmes will enhance the impact of the programmes on sustainable livelihood options for the communities and help achieve the objectives of adaptation in the context of climate change.

The *Integrated Forest Management* scheme aims at providing a holistic approach to protection of existing forests by assisting states for building capacity and basic infrastructure for forest management. Following an evaluation of the scheme at, the scope of the scheme has been enhanced to include the following components, with the scheme being re-designated as Intensification of Forest Management:

- ❖ Conservation and restoration of unique vegetation & Ecosystems
- ❖ Protection and conservation of Sacred Groves
- ❖ Control and eradication of forest invasive species
- ❖ Preparedness for meeting challenges of Bamboo flowering and improving management of bamboo forests

The new components will become operational from 2009-10 onwards.

*Forest Certification* has emerged as a market-driven mechanism in support of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). Certification initiatives rely on consumers exercising purchasing choice in favour of products labelled as originating from forests certified as being sustainably managed. Certification and Eco-labelling are the new mantras to enhance the product positioning for a premium price on one hand and ensuring better forest management practices on the other hand.

The Ministry has constituted a National Working Group/Governing Body to frame the policy guidelines for forest certification for timber and Non-timber forest products. Further, three Committees were constituted to prepare a road map and the necessary criteria and processes for the development of National Certification mechanism in the country. These committees were merged into single committee namely the 'National Forest Certification Committee' for the development of Certification Criteria, Certification Process and Accreditation Criteria & Process towards Forest Certification of timber, Non-timber Forest Products. It has also been proposed to constitute an independent autonomous Forest Certification Council.

The *State of Forest Report* is the most important outcome of Forest Survey of India which is being published since 1987 in a cycle of two years. The two major components of this report are assessment of forest cover using remote sensing technology and estimation of growing stock in forests and trees outside forests through a sampling based field inventory. The report is basically a barometer to assess the impact of various programmes and policies implemented in the country for the development of forestry resources. The SFR 2007 will be released in 2009-10.

### **3.2.5 Andaman & Nicobar Islands Forest & Plantation Development Corporation Ltd. (ANIFPDCL)**

Andaman & Nicobar Islands Forest & Plantation Development Corporation Ltd. (ANIFPDCL) is the only Public Sector Undertaking under this Ministry created in 1977 with a broad objective of development and managing forestry plantations on the Islands. It is a loss making undertaking mainly due to the fact that its main activity, i.e. logging has been curtailed by the Hon'ble Supreme Court Order banning the felling of trees. Due to this, even the obligatory expenses of the Corporation like the payment of salaries, wages etc. are possible only due to the sanction of interest bearing loans every year from the Government of India. A restructuring of the Corporation in order to make it financially viable has, therefore, become necessary.

The Committee on Public Undertakings examined the working of the Corporation recently and recommended resolving of the issue at the earliest in its report on the functioning of the Corporation submitted to the Parliament on 25th February 2009. A proposal has been submitted by the Managing Director, ANIFDCL regarding restructuring of the Corporation by offering VRS to its employees and closure of loss making units. The proposal has been sent to the PCCF, Andaman & Nicobar Forest Department for their comments. A draft Cabinet Note will be prepared and submitted to the Union cabinet thereafter.

### 3.2.6 Wildlife Management

*National Wildlife Action Plan* (2002-2016), envisages time bound completion of various Action Points. Given the need to effectively implement the action plan, a Monitoring Committee has been constituted for overseeing the progress in its implementation. The Action Plan envisages the following important issues of wildlife conservation:

- Recovery of critically endangered species
- Relocation of villages from Protected Areas.
- Creation of more Protected Areas.
- Improvement of degraded habitats.
- Recruitment and position of frontline staff

As per Section 2 (b) of the Scheduled Tribes & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, 'Critical Wildlife Habitat' means such areas of National Parks and Sanctuaries that are required to be kept as inviolate for the purposes of wildlife conservation as determined and notified by the Ministry of Environment & Forests after open process of consultation by an Expert Committee. *Delineation of Critical Wildlife Habitats* is to done by states on a case to case basis, based on scientific and objective criteria.

So far Sixteen States, viz, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Maharashtra, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal, and two Union Territories, viz Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Dadra & Nagar Haveli have constituted State Level Committees. The Union Territory of Chandigarh and Lakshadweep have mentioned that there was no need to constitute State Level Committees.

The flagship scheme of Assistance for Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries provides financial and technical assistance to states/UT Governments for the conservation and management of National Parks and Sanctuaries. The scope of the scheme has been expanded in the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan with additional components, with the scheme being re-designated as *Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats*. The additional components include support to conservation and community reserves, protecting wildlife outside protected areas, and recovery programmes for critically endangered species and habitats.

The '*Project Snow Leopard*' was launched by the Ministry in January 2009. It envisages conservation of Snow Leopard and its habitat. A Steering Committee for the Project Snow Leopard has also been constituted.

Based on the recovery strategy suggested by the Wildlife Institute of India, it has been decided to introduce a male tiger and two tigresses in the Sariska Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan) and two tigresses in Panna (Madhya Pradesh) Tiger Reserves. The tigers are being closely monitored by radio telemetry.

Based on the initiative announced in Union Budget 2008-09 of a one time grant of Rs. 50.00 crores to the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) for raising, arming and deploying a *Special Tiger Protection Force*, a proposal for such a force has been approved by the competent authority for 13 tiger reserves. Advisory has been sent to Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand for initiating steps for deploying the Force in Dudhwa, Ranthambhore and Corbett tiger reserves, with 100% Central assistance during the current financial year.

### 3.3 Organizational building and strengthening

The capacities of the existing compliance and enforcement mechanism including the Central and the State Pollution Control Boards and the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) Regional Offices need to be enhanced. Side by side, the capabilities of forest and wildlife administration, which is largely at the level of the State Government, also need to be increased, including enhancing mobility, upgrading communications, database management and exchange of information.

### 3.4 Information Technology and e-governance

The Ministry of Environment & Forest (MoEF) has embarked on a comprehensive exercise to implement an e-Governance project titled 'ENVISION' with the objective of applying principles of Good Governance to the management of, and regulation of use of environmental resources. This is an outcome based initiative that seeks to bring about a quantum improvement in operational efficiencies of the Ministry as reflected in the National Environmental Policy, 2006. The project comprises of three stages namely conceptualisation, project development and System Integration & Project Implementation. The Initiative taken to improve the implementation of IT and e-governance for timely achievement of outcomes include:

- ❖ Appointment of Stage III consultant for the project
- ❖ Organization of IT Training for 2000 officers/staff of the Ministry & its various attached offices and Non-IT Training for officers/staff of the Ministry & its various attached offices
- ❖ Imparting of training to e-champions
- ❖ Setting up of Quality Assurance Group and Programme Monitoring Unit in the Ministry
- ❖ Implementation of Security Policy
- ❖ Setting up Data Center (DC) and Disaster Recovery (DR) sites for e-Governance project
- ❖ Development of MIS and Decision Support System
- ❖ Procurement of hardware and software
- ❖ Digitization of records of the Ministry

### 3.5 Evaluation and Monitoring

Schemes/projects are monitored regularly in Headquarters and by on the spot field visits by officials. Senior officers visit the states regularly and monitor progress of schemes/programmes through the mechanism of nodal officers under which each state/UT has been assigned a senior officer as its nodal officer for such regular interaction with state/UT. Monitoring process, *inter alia*, include mandatory audit of accounts of grantee organization, submission of audited utilization certificates, expenditure statement and a progress report on the activities conducted by the grantee organization besides field visits by officers of the Ministry. While NRCD has a detailed MIS system for monitoring in place, research projects are monitored/ reviewed by the concerned Expert Review Committees. Regional offices of the Ministry also review/monitor and follow up on various issues/programmes in the environment, forestry and wildlife sectors.

Under forestry a multi level monitoring and evaluation system of projects in being pursued under NAP. This includes intensive review of projects at the state and central levels by the State Level Coordination committee and national Level Coordination Committee, independent concurrent evaluation by implementing agencies, independent concurrent evaluation for selected projects at national level and monitoring of area coverage and survival percentage of FDAs by agency like FSI.

The adoption of e-governance has aided good management and regulation of environmental resources. Further, the adoption of Electronic Clearance of funds for various schemes is an important improvement for ensuring a quick and faster disbursement of funds, as also to serve as a means of preventive vigilance in respect of these schemes.