

Regarding need for a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for protection of trees during construction/widening of road projects in country- laid

SHRI BALABHADRA MAJHI (NABARANGPUR): Large numbers of trees are required to be cut for any infrastructure project. It is inevitable and there is provision of compensatory reforestation. But, when it comes to road projects, especially those constructed in rural and semi-urban areas, there is a need to issue an SOP so that trees are not cut every time while there is need for widening of the road. It is not just tree cutting, services like water supply pipe lines, telecom cables, gas pipe lines, power supply lines etc are also required to be shifted every time when there is widening work. It costs money to the Government and inconvenience to the public. Widening can be only on one side of road, so that trees & facilities on the other side are saved. Wherever services are provided or trees planted, after the road is constructed, it should be at a sufficient distance to accommodate future widening. For new road, land acquisition should be wide enough to accommodate future widening and for services, including tree plantation. Most importantly, there should be a joint signature of officials of all concerned Departments. Any violation by anybody viz. the defaulting officials, contractors, general public should be taken seriously and penalized appropriately.