

28-10-90

Bamboo-felling by industry barred

Express News Service
Hyderabad, Oct. 28: The wood-based paper industry in Andhra Pradesh is going to be barred from felling bamboo trees in reserve forests from next year.

In future, the factories will have to depend on the Forest Department of the State Government which has been entrusted with felling of bamboo and supplying it to select units according to prescribed norms.

The Government, in principle, has taken this decision in pursuance of the national forest policy (NFP).

Though the NFP had been declared as long back as in 1988, the State Government, surprisingly, did not issue a gazette notification giving effect to the Union Government's decision till now. The delay,

it is learnt, is primarily due to the initial expenditure of Rs. 3 to 4 crore which the Government had to incur to implement the new policy.

However, the Union Government had abrogated all long-term lease deeds executed with the wood-based industries after the announcement of the NFP.

Andhra Pradesh has the largest installed capacity of wood-based paper industry in the country.

Hitherto, the State Government entered into 20-year agreements with the paper industries for the supply of bamboo. As per these agreements, the Government used to assess the requirement of each of the four wood-based industries in the State annually and allow them to fell bamboo accordingly. Thus, the AP Paper Mills was allowed to fell 1

lakh tonnes, Sirpur Paper Mills 70,000 tonnes, Bhadrachalam Paper Boards Ltd 60,000 tonnes and the Rayalaseema Paper Mills was allowed to fell 45,000 tonnes of bamboo annually. The mills used to pay royalty for felling of forest trees to the Government on tonnage basis.

However, these agreements were abrogated by the Union Government in accordance with the NFP which had sought to eliminate middlemen from felling of forest trees for conserving natural wealth. The policy prescribed that whatever be the purpose, whether it was for fuel or fodder or for manufacture of paper, no other agency except that of the Government should be allowed to fell trees.

According to chief conservator of

forests I.V. Rangarajan, the drafts of fresh agreements which the Government had to enter with the paper industries as per the new arrangements had been prepared and the Forest Department was likely start the supply of bamboo to these units.

Mr Rangarajan said at present the Government had 17 logging divisions which were presently extracting fuel wood and timber. These divisions would now be used for the extraction of bamboo for the purpose of supplying it to the paper industries and to basket weaving community who are backward.

The forest officials are hopeful that the extremists in the forest areas would not oppose bamboo felling by the Government, as the wages paid are higher than those paid by the industries in the past.