

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 1005
TO BE ANSWERED ON 15.12.2022

Ecological concerns in Great Nicobar Islands

1005 SHRI MOHAMMED NADIMUL HAQUE:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) the percentage of total forest cover to be cleared for the implementation of the development project recently announced in the Great Nicobar Islands;
- (b) the possible consequences of this project on the ecologically fragile island, particularly on coral reefs and mangroves in the region and details thereof;
- (c) whether Government has any conservation plans for coral reefs, mangroves and leatherback turtles, if so, details thereof;
- (d) whether Government has taken any steps to protect the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes from the probable loss of livelihood since they depend on forest resources for sustenance; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof, if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

- (a) to (e) The Central Government vide letter dated 27.10.2022 has accorded the '*in-principle*'/*Stage-I* approval for diversion of 130.75 sq. km forest land for sustainable development in Great Nicobar Island. The project is of significant strategic and national importance. The area proposed for development is approximately 1.5% of total area of A&N Islands. In this regard, adequate mitigation measures have been proposed to compensate the impact of development on flora and fauna. Further, more than 50% i.e. 65.99 sq. km of the area proposed for diversion will be the area for green development where no tree felling is envisaged. The intention notifications for declaring 03 new Wildlife Sanctuaries have been issued by the UT administration. The Biodiversity Conservation and the protection of the interests of tribes living in this area are inherent in the conditions of Stage-1 approval.

The project activities envisage no disturbance to Shompen tribe and their habitations and for the protection and safety of the tribal settlements there is provision for geo-fencing cum surveillance towers. Further, Department of Tribal Welfare (DTW) is the agency that oversees the protection and safety of the community as per the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Protection of aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956. In addition, the project proponent is mandated to constitute a monitoring committee for ensuring the welfare and other issues related to Shompen and Nicobarese.
