

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No.220
TO BE ANSWERED ON 08.12.2022

Diversion of forest land in Great Nicobar Island

220. SHRI JAWHAR SIRCAR:

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

- (a) whether Government granted an in-principle (Stage 1) clearance for the diversion of 131 sq km of forest in Great Nicobar Island for a mega infrastructure and township project;
- (b) whether it is a fact that nearly 15 per cent of the thickly forested Great Nicobar Island that is teeming with endemic and endangered species and just cannot be compared to Haryana;
- (c) whether this is the largest single such forest diversion in recent times; and
- (d) in what manner Government propose to acquire 130 sq km of non-notified forest land that is contiguous and undisturbed in Haryana for compensatory afforestation?

ANSWER

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

- (a) to (c) The Central Government vide letter dated 27.10.2022 has accorded the In-principle/Stage-1 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 is the area for green development where no tree felling is envisaged. Since the scope of plantation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands is very limited, therefore, the Compensatory Afforestation in the arid landscape and in the vicinity of the urban areas would provide greater ecological value. Keeping in view the importance of the projects and unavoidable requirement of forest land, the diversion of large patches of forest has been allowed in the past as well.
- (d) In this case, the State Govts. of Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have conveyed their consent for undertaking Compensatory Afforestation in their respective States.
