

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2589
TO BE ANSWERED ON 23.03.2023

Balance between environment and development

2589. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI:

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

- (a) the steps taken to maintain the balance between environment and development so that places of fragile ecology, like, Joshimath, etc., could be saved from further deterioration/destruction;
- (b) whether Government has conducted any survey or identified specific locations, regions, etc., in the country which need urgent attention because of their vulnerability due to the stressed developmental and construction activities, if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) whether Government mulls over capping the developmental activities in the areas of fragile ecology, such as, Char Dham Yatra, etc., if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) In order to manage and conserve biodiversity across the Protected Areas, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notifies Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) around the Protected Areas. As part of wildlife conservation strategy, in the year 2002, it was decided that an area around each Protected Areas, requires to be notified as ESZs for creating a buffer as further protection around Protected Areas (PAs). The very purpose of declaring ESZs is to create some kind of 'Shock Absorber' for the specialized Ecosystem, such as protected areas or other natural sites, to act as transition zone from areas of high protection to areas involving lesser protection. Besides, in order to protect the biodiversity in areas having ecological significance Ministry also notifies Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs), which has unique biological resources and has incomparable values, which require special attention for their conservation.

Survey and identification of ESZs are conducted by the respective State Governments for consideration of the Central Government for declaration of the ESZs in respective States around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries as per the guidelines formulated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC). On the basis of proposals and recommendations of the State Government, Ministry notifies the ESZs under the Environment

(Protection) Act, 1986. Section '3' of the ESZ Notification provides the Guidelines for the Zonal Master Plan(ZMP), which is to be prepared by the State Government and Tourism Master Plan of the respective States forms the part of the ZMP.

The ESZ Notification clearly delineates the list of "Permitted", "Prohibited" And "Regulated" activities in accordance with the consultation carried out by the various stakeholders during the process of Notification of ESZ or ESZ. The work related to Char Dham project is being executed in accordance with the directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court dated 14.12.2021.

The Environment (Protection) Act 1986 authorizes the Central Government to undertake all the measures for the protection and improvement of environmental quality, and prohibit or restrict the setting and / or operation of any activity on environmental grounds. The EIA/EMP studies carried out for projects inter alia include evaluation of the baseline environmental quality in respect of water, air, noise, biodiversity etc. along with projected impacts due to proposed activities. In order to mitigate any adverse impacts due to the projects on environment, additional specific conditions are stipulated based on appraisal of various environmental parameters while granting the projects for environmental clearance.
