

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1333**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 14.12.2023

**Doubling of road lane in BESZ**

1333.       SHRI A. D. SINGH :

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

- (a) whether the Bhagirathi Eco Sensitive Zone (BESZ) is a protected site declared under Environment Protection Act, 1986;
- (b) whether the 100 kilometer road in BESZ was changed into double lane road width to facilitate Char Dham Maha Marg Vikas Pariyojana;
- (c) whether it was done without Environment Impact Assessment (EIA); and
- (d) if so, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) to (d) The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has declared the entire watershed of about 100 km stretch of the river Bhagirathi, from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi with a total area of 4179.59 square kilometres as an Eco-sensitive Zone under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court vide its order dated 14.12.2021 permitted widening of the three strategically important National Highways viz. (i) Rishikesh-Mana (NH-7); (ii) Rishikesh-Gangotri (NH-34); and (iii) Tanakpur-Pithoragarh (NH-9) under Char Dham Pariyojana to two-lane with paved shoulder (10 m wide pavement), based on the application filed by the Ministry of Defence before the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The Hon'ble Court has also set up an "Oversight Committee" to ensure the implementation of the recommendations given in the report of High Power Committee (HPC) constituted in terms of its Order dated 08.08.2019 including the environmental aspects of the Projects. The HPC continues to oversee the implementation of its recommendations in the remaining stretches of Chardham Pariyojana.

This Ministry had constituted a High Level Committee vide O.M. No. 21-270/2008 – IA.III dated 11.12.2012 to review the provisions of Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 relating to grant of Environmental Clearance for Roads, Buildings and Special Economic Zone projects. On the recommendations of the Committee, the Ministry vide a notification dated 22.08.2013 has exempted the projects related to expansion of National Highway up to 100 km, involving additional right of way or land acquisition up to 40 meter on the existing alignments and 60 meter on re-alignment or by-passes from the preview of the notification. In view of the above thresholds applicable to roads in Chardham, no road project

associated with the Chardham has been referred to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for appraisal under the provisions of EIA Notification, 2006.

However, under the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the Ministry has constituted a High Powered Committee comprising of representatives from various reputed institutes like Physical Research Laboratory, Wildlife Institute of India, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Central Soil Conservation Research Institute, National Institute of Disaster Management, Forest Research Institute, MoEF&CC officials, etc. with mandate to consider the cumulative and independent impact of Chardham Projects on the entire Himalayan Valleys and to give appropriate directions which are implemented accordingly.

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