

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1173
TO BE ANSWERED ON 01.08.2024

Status of forest and protected land in Great Nicobar

1173. SHRI SAKET GOKHALE:

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

- (a) whether any wildlife sanctuaries or forest land have been denotified as such for 'Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island at Andaman and Nicobar Islands' project proposed by NITI Aayog; and
- (b) the measures proposed under this project to protect the nesting sites for the giant leatherback turtle at Galathea Bay and the uninhabited settlements of tribals belonging to the Shompen community?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

- (a) The proposal to de-notify the Galathea Sanctuary in the Andaman and Nicobar (A &N) Islands was recommended by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life (SCNBWL) in its 60th meeting held on 5.01.2021. 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.
- (b) The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration was directed by the SCNBWL that a comprehensive management plan may be prepared in consultation with Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and other relevant stakeholders, and followed for conservation and protection of Leatherback Turtles in Great Nicobar Islands. The large nesting areas (Western flank) have been retained as such for nesting of turtles. Research unit set up by WII to undertake and monitor sea turtle related research in A&N islands is an important component of the special conditions of Environment Clearance.

The Central Government has also subsequently notified an area to an extent of zero to one kilometer around the boundary of the Galathea National Park as Eco-sensitive Zone on 12th March, 2021 with the objective to ensure forest protection and biodiversity conservation in the area.

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 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.
