

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1963
TO BE ANSWERED ON 08.08.2024

Environmental impact assessment of the Great Nicobar Island Project

1963. SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P:

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

- (a) whether Government is aware of the potential environmental impacts of the Great Nicobar Island Project on the survival of coral reefs and marine species;
- (b) if so, whether Government has done Environmental Impact Assessment studies before sanctioning the projects, if so, the detailed findings thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken by Government to ensure environmental protection in the Nicobar Islands?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c) The decision on the proposal involving development of Great Nicobar Island project has been taken after due consideration of potential environmental impacts on coral reefs and marine species, including the fact that the Project has significant strategic, defence and national importance. As per EIA notification, 2006, as amended from time to time, prior environmental clearance is required for all new projects and/or activities or modernization of existing projects or activities as listed in the schedule to the Notification, 2006. The process of prior Environmental Clearance involves examination of the project at different stages such as screening, scoping, public consultation and appraisal. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report along with Environmental Management Plan (EMP) is prime requirement for the grant of environmental clearance for such projects.

Several studies were conducted and their consequent mitigation measures were undertaken by the top statutory and non-statutory bodies like Zoological Survey of India (“ZSI”), Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (“SACON”), the Wildlife Institute of India (“WII”), Indian Institute for Science (“IISc”). Independent organization with specialized skill such as IIT, NIOT, NCCR, NIO, etc. were also involved during the appraisal process. The evaluation conducted by ZSI has indicated that the project can be implemented with requisite environmental safeguards and appropriate conservation measures.

A detailed scrutiny of the EIA/EMP report took place during the appraisal of the project by an independent Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) having experts from the field of science and engineering. The Environmental Clearance accorded contains as many as 42 specific

conditions dealing with each component of the project, in addition to all standard conditions applicable to each component dealing with statutory compliances, air quality monitoring and preservation, water quality monitoring and preservation, noise monitoring and preservation, energy conservation measures, waste management, green belt, marine ecology, transport, human health environment and risk mitigation and disaster management.

Further, three independent Monitoring Committees to oversee the implementation of Environmental Management Plan is also prescribed in the Environmental Clearance letter namely (i) Committee to oversee pollution related matters (ii) Committee to oversee biodiversity related matters (iii) Committee to oversee welfare and issues related to Shompen and Nicobarese.
