

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 375**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25.07.2024

**Environmental impact of the Great Nicobar Project**

375. SHRI MOHAMMED NADIMUL HAQUE:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that 9.64 lakh trees will be felled for the Great Nicobar Project;
- (b) whether this will impact the critical ecosystem and taxa of the region, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the trans-shipment port in Galathea Bay will affect the nesting of the giant leatherback turtle, if so, the details thereof,
- (d) whether Government proposes specific conservation plans for coral reefs, the Nicobar Megapode bird, and the leatherback turtles, if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER**

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

- (a) to (e) 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. Compensatory Afforestation is carried out in lieu of diverted forest land. Further, more than 50% i.e. 65.99 Sq km of the area proposed for diversion is reserved for green development where no tree felling is envisaged. It is expected that about 15% of development area would continue to remain as green and open spaces and therefore the number of trees likely to be affected is going to be less than 9.64 lakhs.

As per the conditions stipulated in the approvals accorded by the Central Government, adequate mitigation measures to compensate the impact of development on flora and fauna are part of the EC/FC conditions. The special conditions stipulated under the Environmental Clearance (EC) has provisions for preparation of Biodiversity Conservation / Management Plan for the Great Nicobar Island ecosystem with inputs from WII, ZSI, BSI and ICFRE.

The breeding grounds of leatherback turtles are in no way getting altered due to the project. The large nesting areas (Western flank) have been retained as such for nesting of leather backs. Research unit set up by Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to undertake and monitor sea turtle related research in A&N islands is an important component of the special conditions of EC.

The Coral Conservation Plan prepared by Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) addresses both the conservation strategies for coral colonies around Great Nicobar Island (GNI) as well as translocation strategies for impacted corals. Comprehensive studies and conservation measures for endemic Nicobar Megapod as prescribed by Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) and WII is also one of the conditions of EC. The A&N Forest Department has been entrusted with this responsibility of ensuring implementation of the conservation measures.

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