

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 43
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.01.2026

Uncontrolled construction and urbanization in Western Ghats

43. SMT. SUNETRA AJIT PAWAR:

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

- (a) whether Government is aware of deteriorating ecological balance and recurring landslides caused by uncontrolled construction and urbanization in Western Ghats;
- (b) the reasons for delay in implementing the recommendations of the Gadgil and Kasturirangan Committees and the time by when these would be notified;
- (c) whether there has been any assessment of forest cover and biodiversity loss in the ecologically sensitive areas of this "global biodiversity hotspot" during the last three years; and
- (d) the specific long-term plan being formulated by Government to balance conservation of this area along with the livelihood of local communities?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d) In order to protect the rich biodiversity of the Western Ghats region, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has published the draft notification on Ecologically Sensitive Area of Western Ghats, *vide* S.O. 3060(E) dated 31.07.2024 covering an area of 56,825.7 square kilometre spreading across six States namely, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

To safeguard the ecological balance of the region from uncontrolled construction and urbanization, the draft notification prohibits all new and expansion projects related to building and construction with built up area of 20,000 square metres and above, as well as all new and expansion townships and area development projects with an area of 50 hectares and above or with built up area of 1,50,000 square metres and above. However, there shall be no restriction on repair or extension or renovation of existing residential houses within the Ecologically sensitive Area as per the prevailing laws and regulations.

In order to address the issues raised by the respective States on the report of High Level Working Group, the Ministry has constituted a Committee to examine the suggestions of the six States in a holistic manner, keeping in view the conservation aspects of the ecosystem, as well as the rights, livelihoods, needs and developmental aspirations of the region.

The Forest Survey of India has carried out a decadal change analysis of forest cover in Western Ghats Ecologically Sensitive Area which has been published in form of India State of Forest Report 2023. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is implementing a number of schemes for conservation of forest, wildlife and environment in different States and Union

Territories, including Western Ghats States. These include the National Afforestation Programme, Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat, Forest Fire Prevention and Management, Project Tiger and National Mission for Green India. Funds under Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority are also utilized for conservation of forest and wildlife in the Western Ghats.
