

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 578
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.07.2018

Protection of Western Ghats

578. PROF. SAUGATA ROY:

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

- (a) the steps taken so far to preserve and protect Western Ghats of the country;
- (b) the hurdles in implementing Kasturirangan/Madhav Gadgil reports in this regard;
- (c) whether any State Government has objected against those reports and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government has noticed that some State Governments are distributing Ecologically Fragile lands to tenants; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and the action taken to evict the un-authorized occupants of eco-sensitive lands of the country?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(DR. MAHESH SHARMA)

(a) to (c) To preserve and protect Western Ghats, this Ministry had set up the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) under the Chairmanship of Prof. Madhav Gadgil for recommending measures for the conservation and environmental integrity of the Western Ghats to promote sustainable development of the region. The committee submitted its report to this Ministry with its recommendations.

Considering large scale objections to the report submitted by WGEEP, a High Level Working Group (HLWG) under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan was constituted by this Ministry to examine the WGEEP Report in a holistic manner and recommend measures for the protection of the Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) of Western Ghats.

Based on the recommendation of HLWG, to provide immediate protection to the ESA of the Western Ghats, the Government issued Directions under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 on 13.11.2013. As per the Directions, the five categories of new and/or expansion projects/activities having maximum interventionist impact on ecosystems namely (i) Mining, quarrying and sand mining (ii) Thermal Power Plants (iii) Building and construction projects of 20,000 square meters area and above (iv) Township and area development projects with an area of 50 hectares and above and /or with built up area of 1,50,000 square meters and above and (v) Red category of industries are prohibited in the ESA of Western Ghats.

Further, this Ministry had issued a draft Notification on 10.03.2014 declaring an area of 56,825 square kilometres spread over the six states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat in the Western Ghats region as Ecologically Sensitive, which was followed by subsequent Draft Notifications dated 04.09.2015 and 27.02.2017 for seeking stakeholders comments, including those of State Governments. Some of the State Governments have sought revision/modification of the Ecologically Sensitive Areas. The State Government of Karnataka has rejected the recommendation of the HLWG.

(d) to (e) No case relating to State Government distributing ecologically fragile land to tenants in violation of norms is currently reported for consideration of the Ministry of Environment, forest and Climate Change.
