

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 633
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.07.2018

Ecologically Sensitive Areas in Western Ghats

633. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN:
ADV. JOICE GEORGE:

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

- (a) whether the Government has received comments/views/inputs from all the western ghats States about Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) as per Kasturirangan report, if so, the details there of;
- (b) whether the Government has received revised recommendations from the State of Kerala on demarcation of ESA in western ghats and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government is planning to issue a fresh draft notification with incorporating the comments/inputs from concerned States;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the time by which final notification is likely to be issued in this regard; and
- (e) whether the Government has noticed that delay in issuing final notification has aroused much panic among stakeholder population and affected developmental projects like road construction, hospitals, mills etc. and if so, the details thereof and the corrective measures taken thereon?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (e) The High Level Working Group (HLWG) under Dr. Kasturirangan delineated certain areas of Western Ghats spread over six States (i) Kerala (ii) Tamil Nadu (iii) Goa (iv) Karnataka (v) Maharashtra and (vi) Gujarat as Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA).

To facilitate sustainable development in the region, HLWG recommended the Central Government to notify the ESA demarcated by HLWG in public interest. Accordingly, this Ministry had issued a draft notification on 10.03.2014 for declaring an area of 56,825 square kilometres spread over the six states as Ecologically Sensitive. Thereafter, addressing the concerns and apprehensions of the people living in the ESA of the Western Ghats region, subsequent draft notifications dated 04.09.2015 and 27.02.2017 were published for seeking stakeholder comments, including those of State Governments.

To provide immediate protection to the ESA of the Western Ghats, in line with the recommendation of HLWG, 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.

The Ministry has received the revised recommendation from the State of Kerala on demarcation of ESA in the Western Ghats region of the State. It has proposed an ESA of 8656.46 square kilometres in the 92 villages. Besides, a number of States are required to submit their final recommendations or maps and there is need to develop coherent and consistent approach in the matter. This may require some more time and exercise may not be completed within the validity period of the draft notification dated 27.02.2017, necessitating republication of draft. The finalization of draft notification is subject to the final views of the State Governments.

Government has taken into account the difficulties faced by public from time to time and taken steps to address the issue.
