

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2069
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.12.2018

Ecologically Sensitive Area

2069. SHRI B. SENGUTTUVAN:

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

- (a) whether the Government has any proposal to reduce the Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) in the Western Ghats by about 6000 square kms, i.e. from about 56000 square kms to about 50000 square kms extending over an area of 1500 kms and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat will have reduced ESA to make room for sustainable development and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the reduced ESA would adversely affect the lives and livelihood of the people in these States and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government is likely to put in place moratorium on setting up any polluting industry near the ESA; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a)&(b) The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has no proposal to reduce the Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) in the Western Ghats by about 6000 square kilometres, i.e. from 56,000 square kilometres to about 50,000 square kilometres, extending over an area of 1500 kilometres. Recently, this Ministry has republished the fresh draft Notification fourth times *vide* S.O.5135(E) dated 03.10.2108 to declare ESA of the Western Ghats, with an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) of 56,825 square kilometres, in the States of Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The republished draft is in accordance with the order of Hon'ble National Green Tribunal dated 24th August, 2018. After republishing the draft Notification, this Ministry had issued letters seeking views /comments of the concerned State Governments. Earlier, the concerned State Governments have undertaken physical verification for demarcation of ESA and proposed to alter the ESA of their States from the original recommendations of High level Working Group(HLWG). As a result, the draft notifications were not finalised in the past.

(c)The Western Ghats not only harbour rich biodiversity, but also support high human population density; therefore, there is a need to conserve and protect the unique biodiversity of Western Ghats while allowing for sustainable and inclusive development of the region. There will be no displacement or dislocation of the local people living in the habitations within the ESA demarcated in the Western Ghats and practicing of agriculture and plantation activities shall also not be affected.

(d)& (e) The report of HLWG was in principle accepted by the MoEF&CC. It recommends maintaining balance between development and environment protection in the ESA of Western Ghats region. The HLWG also recommended prohibition or regulation of identified projects and activities in the ESA, which have interventionist and destructive impacts on natural ecosystems. Accordingly, this Ministry had issued directions under Section 5 of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 vide Order dated 13.11.2013 to respective State Governments of the Western Ghats regions to prohibit five categories of new and/or expansion projects/activities in the ESA of the Western Ghats, namely (i) Mining, quarrying and sand mining (ii) Thermal Power Plants (iii) Building and construction projects of 20,000 square meter area and above (iv) Township and area development projects with an area of 50 hectare and above and/or with built up area of 1,50,000 square meter and above (v) Red category of industries.
