

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOKSABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 918**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 12.12.2022

**Clearance to Infrastructure Projects in A&N Islands**

918. SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI KARUNANIDHI:  
SHRI MANISH TEWARI:

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

- (a) whether the Government has accorded in-principle approval to develop infrastructure in Andaman & Nicobar (A&N) Islands which would lead to the destruction of 130.75 square kilometres of pristine forest lands and the endemic species living in these forests;
- (b) whether the Government has undertaken any ecological survey or environmental assessment of the proposed project site before granting such clearance, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the compensatory deforestation would be done in a different State and not on the affected island, if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government is aware that about 15 percent of the 900 sq. km of the densely forested area would be affected, if so, the details thereof including the possible number of trees that would need to be felled; and
- (e) whether the clearance is in violation of a Supreme Court order of November 13, 2000 which ordered no further de-reservation of forests, if not, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

- (a)&(b) 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. The project is of significant strategic/national importance and a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study has been conducted in this regard. Further, adequate mitigation measures have been proposed to compensate the impact of development on flora and fauna.
- (c) Since the scope of plantation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands is very limited, therefore, the Compensatory Afforestation in the arid landscape and in the vicinity of the urban areas would provide greater ecological value. In this case, the State Government of Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have conveyed their consent for undertaking Compensatory Afforestation in their respective States.

- (d) The area proposed for development is only approximately 1.5% of total area of A&N islands. Further, more than 50% i.e. 65.99 sq km of the area proposed for diversion will be the area for green development where no tree felling is envisaged. The estimated number of trees to be felled in the remaining forest area earmarked for development is 9.64 lakh. However, it is expected that about 15% of development area will remain as green and open spaces. Thus, potential tree felling would be less than 9.64 lakhs. Further this tree felling will also be done in a phased manner.
- (e) In this case, the Central Government has accorded the In-principle approval for diversion of forest land for non-forest purpose. The same is in consonance with the orders of Hon'ble Supreme Court as any de-notification or change in legal status of the forest land is not envisaged.

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