

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4211**  
**TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.12.2019**

Ecologically Sensitive Area

4211. KUMARI SHOBHA KARANDLAJE:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that Gadgil Panel had proposed to designate the entire Western Ghats as an Ecologically Sensitive Area, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Panel had recommended controls on mining, building new large scale dams and inter basin diversions of rivers, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Western Ghats States have ignored and rejected the recommendations as a result of which they had to face fury of monsoon along with floods and landslides recently;
- (d) if so, whether the Government has directed the concerned States to curb such environmentally dangerous practices and switch over to a more sustainable farming approach in the region;
- (e) if so, the details thereof along with the steps taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (f) whether the Government has formulated any action plan for the conservation and protection of Western Ghats in view of the recent floods and landslides, if so, the steps taken to protect vast ecosystem of Western Ghats and its bio-diversity?

**ANSWER**

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE**  
**(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)**

(a) to (f) 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. 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, the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC) had issued draft Notification *vide* S.O. 733 (E) dated 10.02.2014, with an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) of 56,825 square kilometres, in the States of Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. The draft Notification was subsequently republished thrice, *vide* S.O. 2435 (E) dated 04.09.2015; S.O. 667 (E) dated 27.02.2017 and S.O. 5135 (E) dated 03.10.2018 with same ESA area.

In order to follow a coherent and consistent approach in notifying the ESA of the Western Ghats, Ministry had interactions with all the States of Western Ghats region at various levels from the year 2015-16 till date. Due to persistence demand from the states to reduce/alter the ESA area from the recommendation of the HLWG, the draft Notification could not be finalised.

During the Kerala Flood and Landslides in 2018, the National Disaster management Authority (NDMA) had sent an Expert Team for the study of landslides in Idukki district of Kerala. The brief field report of the team was forwarded to the Government of Kerala for necessary actions. Further, the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) provides overall frameworks for management of different disasters including landslides and floods. In order to reduce the impact of future landslide calamities, NDMA has released a National Landslides Risk Management Strategy to take action by the concerned States/ State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) and other stakeholders for making landslide resilient India.

\*\*\*