

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 3999
TO BE ANSWERED ON 19.03.2021

Conservation of Western Ghats

3999. SHRI HIBI EDEN:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the assessment report prepared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on Western Ghats;
- (b) if so, the details thereof including plans to save/ conserve the environment of the Western Ghats;
- (c) the current status of the report of Madhav Gadgil, the chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP); and
- (d) the action plan formulated by the Government to save Western Ghats from climate change, intense rain and summer, water and air pollution, tourist activities, deforestation, hunting, road and rail projects inside forests, dams, mine and quarry industries, wild fire and other factors that destroy the mountain range?

ANSWER

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

(a) and (b): The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has come out with an assessment report on Western Ghats, i.e. World Heritage Outlook 3: A conservation assessment of all natural World Heritage sites: Western Ghats, wherein the 2020 Conservation Outlook for Western Ghats is listed as “Significant Concern”.

The report suggests that the Western Ghats influence the Indian monsoon weather patterns. It also suggests that until more data is accumulated, both on conservation trends and protection and management aspects and given the level of threats it faces, its conservation outlook assessment is considered significant. Further, it suggests need to integrate multiple designations into a single management approach, requirement of functional corridors, effective coordination of management across multiple components, integration of tribal communities and their innovative livelihood strategies, enhancing staffing and capacity development of Forest Department, etc.

(c) The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) under the Chairmanship of Prof. Madhav Gadgil mandated for recommending measures for the conservation of the Western Ghats submitted its report to the Ministry on 31.08.2011. Subsequently, the Ministry constituted a High Level Working Group (HLWG) under the chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan on 17.04.2012, to inter-alia examine the WGEEP report in a holistic and

multidisciplinary manner. The HLWG submitted its report to the Ministry on 15.03.2013. The Ministry has in-principle accepted the report of the HLWG.

(d) The Government of India stands committed towards combating climate change through its several programs and schemes. This includes, *inter-alia*, implementation of National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). The NAPCC provides an overarching framework for all climate actions. Thirty-three States /Union Territories have prepared their State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) including Kerala, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat, where Western Ghats is located. The Government is also supporting adaptation actions of States/UTs through National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC). The overall aim of the scheme is to support concrete adaptation activities which are not covered under on-going activities under the schemes of State and National Government. Further, the Wildlife Division provides technical and funding support to States/UTs under Centrally Sponsored Scheme – Development of Wildlife Habitat for conservation of wildlife in protected areas, outside protected areas and for species recovery programme for 22 endangered species. Regarding road and rail projects, Ministry has issued advisory to States/UTs for submission of proposals for diversion within the protected areas and Eco-Sensitive Zones along with animal passage plan prepared on the basis of guidelines prepared by Wildlife Institute of India, namely, Eco-friendly Measures to Mitigate Impacts of Linear Infrastructure on Wildlife.

In order to provide immediate protection to the Western Ghats and to maintain its environmental integrity, the Ministry issued Directions under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 on 13th November 2013. As per the Directions, the five categories of new and/or expansion projects/activities, namely (a) Mining, quarrying and sand mining, (b) Thermal Power Plants, (c) Building and construction projects of 20,000 sq. m. area and above, (d) Township and area development projects with an area of 50 ha and above and /or with built up area of 1,50,000 sq.m. and above, and (e) Red category of industries, which have maximum interventionist and damaging impacts on ecosystems shall not be considered for granting Environmental Clearance in the Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA), as identified by the High Level Working Group, in the Western Ghats. On the basis of the Report of the HLWG, the MoEF&CC has brought out draft Notification dated 10.03.2014 and later republished on 03.10.2018, proposing to notify area of 56,825 sq km. of Western Ghats to be declared as Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) requiring protection and conservation.
