

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1024
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.07.2024

Environment Impact Assessment of Hydropower Projects

1024. SHRI VISHALDADA PRAKASHBAPU PATIL:

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

- (a) the reasons for granting preliminary approvals to three large hydropower projects in Ecologically Sensitive Areas of the Western Ghats, despite existing regulations prohibiting such projects;
- (b) whether the Government's interpretation of the December 2013 office memo over the legally binding November 2013 directions under the Environment Protection Act has been reviewed for its legal validity;
- (c) the measures taken by the Government to protect wildlife corridors, endemic species and old-growth forests in the proposed project areas;
- (d) whether any independent Environmental Impact Assessments have been conducted for these projects; and
- (e) the steps being taken to balance renewable energy goals with the preservation of ecologically sensitive areas like the Western Ghats?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) to (e): As per the Office Memorandum (OM) No. 1-4/2012-RE (Pt.) dated 20th December, 2013 issued by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), construction of hydropower projects, being a relatively clean source of energy, was recommended to be allowed in the Western Ghats Eco-Sensitive Area (WG ESA) by the High Level Working Group on Western Ghats subject to stringent conditions. This OM has been issued based on the High Level Working Group Report on WG ESA and the OM dated 16th November, 2013 was accordingly withdrawn.

The MoEF&CC is implementing a number of schemes for conservation of forest, wildlife and environment in the country including in the Western Ghats region.

These include; amongst others, the National Afforestation Programme, Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitat, Forest Fire Prevention and Management, Project Tiger and National Mission. Prior to giving Environmental Clearance to the hydropower projects including those located in Western Ghats region, a detailed area specific Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with the provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006, as amended is carried out. The EIA and the Environment Management Plan (EMP) are duly

appraised by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Ministry comprising domain experts to appraise the possible environmental impacts and its management on the basis of which decision regarding grant of Environmental Clearance or otherwise is taken. The Environmental Clearance so granted includes General and Specific conditions based on the Appraisal carried out by EAC, which are to be adhered to by the concerned Project Proponent.
