

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 215
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25.11.2024

Great Nicobar Island Project

215. SHRI SUDAMA PRASAD:

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

- (a) whether the Government has assessed the impact of Great Nicobar Island project on the Island's ecology specifically with infrastructure upgrade proposed under the said project, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the measures proposed by the Government to protect the threat on the marine and terrestrial biodiversity of the Island;
- (c) the guidelines under National Green Tribunal (NGT) suggested to formulate a high power committee to grant Environmental and Forest Clearance; and
- (d) whether the said Committee has been formulated, if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d) The decision on the proposal involving development of Great Nicobar Island project has been taken after due consideration of potential environmental impacts on island ecology and also taking into account the significant strategic, defence and national importance of the developmental projects. As per EIA notification, 2006, as amended from time to time, prior environmental clearance is required for all new projects and/or activities or modernization of existing projects or activities as listed in the schedule to the Notification, 2006. The process of prior Environmental Clearance involves an examination of the project for assessment of impacts and preparation of an Environmental Management Plan through different stages such as screening, scoping, public consultation, and appraisal.

Several studies were conducted to carryout the environmental impact assessment and studies regarding their consequent mitigation measures were undertaken by the top statutory and non-statutory bodies like Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History(SACON), the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Indian Institute for Science(IISc) as a part of the preparation of EIA/EMP report. Independent organization with specialized skill such as Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), National Institute of Ocean Technology(NIOT), National Centre for Coastal Research(NCCR), National Institute of Oceanography(NIO), etc. were also involved during the appraisal process.

A detailed scrutiny of the EIA/EMP report took place during the appraisal of the project by an independent Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) having experts from the field of science and engineering. The Environmental Clearance accorded contains as many as 42 specific conditions dealing with each component of the project for the safeguard of marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

Further, three independent Monitoring Committees to oversee the implementation of Environmental Management Plan is also prescribed in the Environmental Clearance letter namely (i) Committee to oversee pollution related matters (ii) Committee to oversee biodiversity related matters (iii) Committee to oversee welfare and issues related to Shompen and Nicobarese.

Further, also a High Power Committee (HPC) was constituted by the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change pursuant to the order of the NGT dated 03/04/2023.
