

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3718
TO BE ANSWERED ON 16.03.2026

Separate Environmental Policy for Hilly States

3718. SHRI SURESH KUMAR KASHYAP:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that in the Himalayan and other hilly States, especially in environmentally sensitive areas like Himachal Pradesh, air, water and noise pollution has reached alarming levels during the past few years due to uncontrolled tourism expansion, rampant construction activities, excessive vehicular traffic and indiscriminate disposal of solid waste, plastic waste and sewage;
- (b) whether it is seriously affecting the health of local citizens and posing a long-term threat to the mountain ecosystem, water sources and biodiversity;
- (c) whether the Government is aware of this serious and continuously worsening situation;
- (d) if so, the details of the concrete and punitive steps taken by the Government so far to control pollution along with their actual results;
- (e) whether the Government proposes to formulate a separate, strict and binding environmental policy for the hilly States; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (f) The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), is a life-support system for millions of people in uplands and much more in lowland areas of the country and acts as climate regulator for much of Asia. The ecosystem services emanating from the Himalayan regions contribute significantly for sustenance of most of the Indian sub-continent. This is accompanied by the richness and uniqueness of bio-physical and socio-cultural diversity available here.

Scientific studies and field assessments carried out by the G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (GBPNIHE), an autonomous institute under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), indicate localized deterioration of air quality, water quality, noise levels and landscape stability in certain parts of the Indian

Himalayan Region (IHR). However, potential implications of this on public health and sustainability of mountain ecosystems needs to be explored further.

The Government has taken various regulatory and management measures to ensure sustainable development in the hilly States of IHR. A few initiatives are mentioned below:

- Environmental Sustainability is a key pillar in the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism formulated by the Ministry of Tourism and circulated to the State Governments and UT Administration. In line with the strategy, Travel for LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment) programme was initiated to encourage tourists and tourism businesses to adopt sustainable tourism practice.
- Further, the Ministry of Tourism through its central sector schemes of 'Swadesh Darshan, 'Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) and 'Assistance to Central Agencies for Tourism Infrastructure Development' extends financial assistance to the State Governments /UT Administrations for tourism infrastructure development in the country. The central financial assistance is being extended according to guidelines and based on proposals / detailed project reports received from the States and UT Governments. The Swadesh Darshan Scheme of the Ministry has been revamped as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 with the objective to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations following a tourist and destination centric approach.
- The Central Government has framed a detailed procedure for assessment of environmental impact of development/construction projects and prescribed the same in the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, as amended from time to time. All Projects/Activities mentioned in the Schedule of EIA Notification, 2006, which includes various construction works, are appraised by the sectoral Expert Appraisal Committee where they are duly examined from the point of view of environmental safeguards to ensure that the projects have minimal impact on the environment. It is only after ensuring that the projects pass the rigor of scrutiny from the point of view of environmental safeguards, the projects are granted Environmental Clearances after incorporating the necessary general and specific conditions.
- In order to preserve the fragile eco-system including hilly areas, Ministry stipulates various environmental safeguards/conditions while granting ECs to all construction projects. These includes landslide management plan, comprehensive study on vulnerability for the landslide, eco-fragility study of the area, implementing guidelines of Indian Road Congress (IRC), embankments along the slopes to restrict soil erosion, installation of Sewage Treatment Plants, compliance of Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC), implementation of Catchment Area Treatment (CAT) Plan, Environmental Management Plan (EMP), implementation of Wildlife Conservation Plan, Greenbelt Development and Forest Protection Plan, Stabilization of muck disposal sites, real-time e-flow monitoring, early warning flood system and emergency preparedness plan for dam failure.
- Further, any projects located in the Forest/Protected Areas are permitted to the user agency only after obtaining prior clearance from the Competent Authority under the

Van (SanrakshanEvamSamvardhan) Adhinyam, 1980 and National Board for Wildlife under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

- National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) has been launched by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in January 2019 with an aim to improve air quality in 130 cities (non-attainment cities and Million Plus Cities) in 24 States by engaging all stakeholders. City Action Plans (CAPs) have been prepared by all 130 cities, including those in IHR.
- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has published guidelines for Environmental Management of Construction & Demolition (C & D) Wastes, Guidelines on DUST Mitigation Measures in Handling Construction Material & C&D Wastes, etc. with a view to ensure proper disposal of such wastes.
- The Government of India has further issued National Urban Transport Policy, 2006, Metro Rail policy 2017, Transit Oriented Development (ToD) policy 2017 and other policy guidelines for planning and execution of sustainable transport system by respective State/UTs. Under PM-eBusSewa Scheme, 10,000 air-conditioned e-buses have been sanctioned for 116 cities across 26 States/UTs, including 690 buses for Hilly and north eastern regions, along with central assistance for development of associated infrastructure.
- Further, the G.B. Pant National Institute of Himalayan Environment (GBPNIHE), Almora under MoEFCC is a focal agency to advance scientific knowledge and to evolve integrated management strategies for conservation of biodiversity and natural resources in the IHR. The Institute has developed several policy documents and technical guidelines containing strategic recommendations for environmentally sustainable development of the IHR. These include policy inputs on governance of Himalayan ecosystems, sustainable tourism, carrying capacity assessment, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, natural resource management and region-specific development planning.
