

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2763
TO BE ANSWERED ON 15.3.2016

Eco Sensitives Zones

2763. DR. KIRIT SOMAIYA:

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

- (a) whether the Supreme Court has made any observations regarding Eco Sensitive Zones around forest/national parks;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (c) whether the State Government of Maharashtra has sent any proposal relating to Sanjay Gandhi Rashtriya Udyan, Mumbai;
- (d) if so, the present status of the proposal;
- (e) whether representations from people's representative and other organizations have been received in this regard; and
- (f) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) & (b): As per the National Wild Life Action Plan (2002-2016) adopted by the Indian Board for Wild Life (IBWL) in its XXIst meeting held on 21st January 2002 under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister, it was emphasized that "*All identified areas around Protected Areas and wildlife corridors to be declared as ecologically fragile under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.*" The aforesaid decision was strengthened by the Order dated 4th December 2006 of Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in Writ Petition No. 460/2004, whereby the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change was directed to give a final opportunity to all States/Union Territories to respond to the letter dated 27.5.2005 seeking proposals for Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZs) around Protected Areas. The Ministry had asked the State Governments for proposals for declaration of eco-sensitive zones around National Parks and Sanctuaries in their respective States.

Only about 15 Eco-sensitive Zone notifications could be issued by the Ministry by mid-2014 for want of proposals from the State Governments.

Since then the Ministry has taken up notification of eco-sensitive zones around Protected Areas as a matter of priority so that developmental projects around protected areas are taken up while ensuring conservation of biodiversity and wildlife protection.

The process of appraisal of ESZ proposals inter-alia includes, assessing the extent of ESZ, biodiversity and wildlife value and corridor status and list of prohibited/regulated activities in the ESZ. Geospatial technologies are also used to ascertain the extent of ESZ. An Expert Committee in the Ministry examines the proposal along with objections and suggestions received on the draft notification before a final notification is issued. The process of notification of Eco-sensitive Zones in the Gazette of India also involves legal vetting by Ministry of law and Justice, Government of India.

In order to expedite the process of notifications of ESZs, the Ministry wrote letters to State Governments, held meetings with the concerned States at various levels and after active persuasion, the number of ESZ proposals received by the Ministry has increased. The Ministry as on 11.03.2016 has received 268 proposals complete in all aspects for declaration of Eco-sensitive Zones around Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks from various State Governments. So far, the Ministry has approved/notified, 258 proposals for declaration of Eco-Sensitive Zones around Wildlife Sanctuaries and National Parks, of these 192 have been notified in the Gazette of India, of which, 161 are draft notifications and 31 are final notifications.

(c) to (f): The Ministry had received the proposal for declaration of Eco-sensitive Zone around Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai vide letter of the State Government of Maharashtra dated 7th February 2013. Subsequently, the Government of Maharashtra vide their letter dated 25th February 2015, requested the Ministry to put on hold further processing of the proposal for final approval, till field verification of certain issues raised by people's representative is carried out by the State Government.

The Ministry received the revised proposal with respect to declaration of Eco-sensitive Zone around Sanjay Gandhi National Park in the State of Maharashtra vide their letter dated 4th November 2015, after undertaking field verification. On receipt of the complete proposal for declaration of Eco-sensitive Zone around Sanjay Gandhi National Park from the State Government, the Ministry published draft notification declaring Eco-sensitive Zone around Sanjay Gandhi National Park in the Gazette vide S.O. No. 229 (E) dated 22nd January 2016
