

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:58

ANSWERED ON:09.07.2014

REPORTS ON WESTERN GHATS

Mullappally Shri Ramachandran;Rajesh Shri M. B.

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

- (a) whether the Government had constituted committees on Western Ghats to look into environmental issues;
- (b) if so, the details and salient features of the recommendations of these committees including follow-up action taken thereon; (c) whether concerns have been expressed over the implementation of the recommendations of these committees;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the action taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to address the concerns of the various stake-holders?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) to (e): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement in reply to Parts (a) to (e) of the Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 58 for reply on 9.7.2014 regarding Reports on Western Ghats raised by Shri Mullappally Ramachandran and Shri M.B. Rajesh.

(a) & (b): The Government had constituted the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) under the Chairmanship of Prof Madhav Gadgil on 4th March 2010. The major recommendations of WGEEP report, submitted to this Ministry in August 2011, inter alia relate to demarcation of ecologically sensitive zones in Western Ghats and measures for management of these ecologically sensitive zones. The Ministry undertook consultative process by seeking comments/views of the concerned State Governments/ Central Ministries and also inviting comments of other stakeholders on the report.

Subsequently, this Ministry constituted a High Level Working Group (HLWG) under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan, the then Member (Science), Planning Commission on 17th August, 2012 to inter alia examine the WGEEP Report in a holistic and multidisciplinary fashion keeping in view the comments received from the concerned State Governments / Central Ministries / Stakeholders. The HLWG submitted its report on 15th April 2013.

Major recommendations of the HLWG inter alia relate to (i) identification of eco-sensitive areas in the Western Ghats region, (ii) regulation / prohibition of certain activities in the eco-sensitive areas, and (iii) measures for incentivizing green growth in Western Ghats region. The HLWG report was put in public domain by hosting on the Ministry's website inviting comments of all stakeholders. The concerned State Governments were also requested to give their views.

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 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.

(c) to (e): Comments received on WGEEP report were posed to HLWG to examine while submitting its report. As regards HLWG report, concerns were raised about proposed eco-sensitive area and regulation/prohibition of certain activities in this area. Apprehensions were also raised on issues relating to land use, agriculture, plantations and continued occupation of land in possession of local people as also on the status of ongoing projects/ activities. This Ministry has attempted to address these concerns and apprehensions through the OM issued on 20th December 2013.

The Ministry has issued a draft notification declaring Ecologically Sensitive Area under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 in the Gazette of India vide S.O. No 733 (E) dated 10th March 2014 inviting suggestions and objections from stakeholders on the proposals contained in the draft notification. While responding to the draft notification, some of the State Governments in the Western Ghats have conveyed that they would like to undertake the exercise of demarcating ESA by physical verification as has been already done by the State of Kerala.

This Ministry has decided to give an opportunity to State Governments of the Western Ghats region for undertaking demarcation of ESA by physical verification within their jurisdiction, if they so desire, except for Kerala State which has already undertaken such an exercise, and submit their proposals to the Ministry within a period of two months.