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Title: Need to look into the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee on conservation of the Western Ghat and to ensure inclusion of areas at 500 meters or above only under the fragile zone in Kerala.

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (KOTTAYAM): I raise to convey the widespread resentment of the people of Kerala over the reported recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee on conservation of the ecological character of the Western Ghats. The report is utopian and does not factor in unique demographic pattern of the committees settled along the Western Ghat region in Kerala.

The Gadgil committee has classified 14 taluks in Kerala as falling within extremely fragile ecological zone. Building of dams, power generation units above 10 MV, mining and even cultivation using chemical fertilizers and pesticides are not to be permitted in these zones. Whereas settlement above 500 mtrs altitude are included in the ecological vulnerable zones in Tamil Nadu, the Gadgil Committee has specified an altitude of only 150 mtrs and above for such areas to be included in the fragile zone in Kerala. This is highly discriminatory as most of the agrarian communities in the State, settled along Western Ghat areas are small farmers with holding of less than 2 acres of arable land and it would be a travesty of justice to deny them the advantage of advanced tools of productivity like chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Kerala feels that ecological observation need not be at the cost of development for bare sustenance of livelihood for the masses.

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