

Sixteenth Lok Sabha

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Title: Need to finalise draft notification of Eco-Sensitive Area (ESA) on Western Ghats.

ADV. JOICE GEORGE (IDUKKI): Madam, with great pain, I rise to raise the following issue again regarding the agony and disappointment of the people across the Western Ghats, especially the people of my constituency, Idukki.

The then UPA Government, on extraneous reasons, had appointed Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel headed by Prof. Madavgadkil for recommending certain measures to bring the entire Western Ghats under a regulatory regime. Succumbing to public protest, the then Government had appointed a High Level Working Group headed by Dr. K. Kasturirangan to make some proposals and the Kasturirangan Report was submitted on 31st August 2011. The Kasturirangan Committee has recommended to declare certain areas as ESAs but against those criteria, the Committee had proposed to include 9993 square kilometres of land in Kerala as ecologically sensitive area. In my constituency, 47 villages have been proposed to be included in the Western Ghats,

Again succumbing to public protest, the State Government has appointed another Committee to conduct a study. That Committee has submitted a Report to reduce the ESA further and on the basis of the inputs provided by the Government of Kerala, the Central Government has issued a draft notification on 14th March, 2014 and that has lapsed on 4th September 2015. Three times, the Central Government has repromulgated the draft notification and the final draft notification was issued on 28th February, 2017. It is going to expire on 30th August, 2018.

In the meantime, the Government of India has issued another notification under Section 5 of the EPA on 13.11.2013 prohibiting the activities within the area proposed by the HLWG headed by Dr. Kasturirangan. Due to that prohibitory order, the basic amenities cannot be provided including the MNREGA works.

The issue now is, the State Government headed by Shri Pinarayi Vijayan has taken a decision on the basis of the assurance given by the Minister on the floor of this House on 22.7.2014 that the final notification would be finalized only on the basis of the inputs provided by the State Government. The State of Kerala headed by Shri Pinarayi Vijayan has submitted a proposal to declare the ESA confined within the existing forest area under the control of the Forest Department. In principle, the Government has accepted it also. All the six State Governments have submitted their proposals and the Central Government may issue their final notification.

We are not in a position to construct a Government Medical College in that area. People are sacrificing a lot there. When somebody is sacrificing his life for the entire Western Ghats, I am prepared to sacrifice my life as well to this cause.

My request to the Government is only to issue a final notification within the time frame so as to meet the developmental aspiration of the people of my constituency and across the Western Ghats.

HON. SPEAKER:

Shri P. K. Biju and

Shri M. B. Rajesh is permitted to associate with the issue raised by Adv. Joice George.