

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2985
ANSWERED ON:11.08.2010
ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION
Mahajan Smt. Sumitra

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

- (a) Whether the religious tourism in famous Gangotri, Yamunotri, Badrinath and Kedarnath in Uttarakhand is causing large scale disaster to the ecology of this region;
- (b) if so, the extent of damage to ecology in the above regions; and
- (c) the corrective steps taken/proposed to be taken to save this ecologically fragile areas of the State?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

- (a) & (b) It is a fact that, religious tourism poses threat to ecology and environment. However, no large scale disaster to ecology has been reported.
- (c) (i) Several initiatives to protect the ecology, which includes threat due to religious tourism, have been taken. The initiatives/steps under National Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem under National Action Plan on Climate Change and Himalayan Sustainable Development Forum (HSDF) under the Shimla Declaration adopted during the Himalayan Chief Ministers' Conclave held at Shimla on Oct 29-30, 2009 address the problem of unregulated tourism and pilgrimage along with other environmental issues.
- (ii) Guidelines have been formulated to enable regulated entry into higher regions of Gangotri.
- (iii) Forest Department, Uttarakhand has restricted the entry of tourists visiting from Gangotri to Gaumukh to a maximum of 150 persons per day.
- (iv) Campaigns for collection of plastics and polythene bags have been launched from time to time.