

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

STARRED QUESTION NO:133

ANSWERED ON:03.12.2012

PROTECTION TO ENVIRONMENT

Kateel Shri Nalin Kumar;Ramasubbu Shri S.

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

(a) whether the Western Ghat's Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) has recommended banning of mining and industrial growth in various States to protect the environment and have also suggested several ways and means for promotion of agriculture in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action being taken by the Government to implement the recommendations/suggestions made by the panel?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a) (b) & (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement in reply to Parts (a), (b) & (c) of Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 133 for reply on 3.12.2012 regarding Protection of Environment raised by Shri S.S. Ramasubbu and Shri Nalin Kumar Kateel.

(a) & (b): The Ministry of Environment & Forests had constituted the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) under the Chairmanship of Prof Madhav Gadgil on 4th March 2010 to, inter alia, (i) demarcate ecologically sensitive areas in Western Ghats, (ii) recommend measures for management of these ecologically sensitive areas, (iii) recommend measures for preservation, conservation and rejuvenation of this environmentally sensitive and ecologically significant region and (iv) recommend modalities for the establishment Western Ghats Ecology Authority under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Panel has since submitted its report to the Ministry.

The WGEEP has recommended broad sectoral guidelines for the different proposed ecosensitive zones in the Western Ghats region spread across Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat as demarcated by the Panel. These Guidelines cover important sectors such as agriculture, land use, mining, industry, tourism, water resources, power, roads and railways.

(c): The Ministry of Environment and Forests initiated a formal consultative process with the concerned State Governments and Central Ministries by seeking their comments/views on the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) report. In response to that detailed comments have been received from State Governments of Kerala, Goa and Maharashtra but not from the three other State Governments of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. All states who replied objected strongly to the WGEEP Report on the ground that it will affect development in the states. Some central Ministries have also provided their detailed comments on the WGEEP report.

The Ministry had also uploaded the WGEEP report on its website for seeking comments/views of stakeholders on 23rd May 2012 within a period of 45 days. The time period for which has already expired on 6th July 2012. The Ministry has received large number of comments from stakeholders

The Ministry has since constituted a High Level Working Group under the Chairmanship of Dr. K Kasturirangan, Member, Planning Commission vide office order dated 17.8.2012 to inter alia examine the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel Report in a holistic and multidisciplinary fashion keeping in view the comments received from the concerned State Governments/Central Ministries/Stakeholders and other related important aspects such as preservation of precious biodiversity, needs and aspirations of the local and indigenous people, sustainable development and environmental integrity of the region, climate change and constitutional implications of centre-state relations and to recommend further course of action to the Government with respect to the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel Report.