

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3241  
ANSWERED ON:18.03.2013  
ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF WESTERN GHATS  
Gandhi Shri Dilip Kumar Mansukhlal

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

- (a) whether the Government has any plan to initiate a special programme to protect the ecological uniqueness of Western Ghat;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has any plans to establish a Research and Study Centre dedicated for the said purpose at Ahmednagar;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

**Answer**

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

(a) & (b) The Government of India has already taken several steps to protect the ecological uniqueness of the Western Ghats. A large number of protected areas comprising national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves and elephant reserves have been established to provide stringent protection to both flora and fauna of the Western Ghats. Nearly 10% of the total area of Western Ghats is currently covered under the Protected Area category, serving as home to a healthy population of endemic flora and fauna. Two Biosphere Reserves, namely, Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve are also located in the Western Ghats. The protection of ecological uniqueness of Western Ghats is ensured through the enforcement of various laws such as Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; the Indian Forest Act, 1927; the Forest Conservation Act, 1980; Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; Biological Diversity Act, 2002 and the Rules under these Acts. A Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has also been established to check illegal trade and smuggling in wildlife.

Further, the Planning Commission is implementing a Western Ghats Development Programme in 175 talukas of Western Ghats viz. Maharashtra (63 talukas), Karnataka (40 talukas), Kerala (36 talukas), Tamil Nadu (33 talukas) and Goa (3 talukas). The main objectives of the programme are eco-preservation and eco-restoration with a focus on sustainable use of biodiversity.

(c) As per the information received from the State Government of Maharashtra, there is no such proposal.

(d) & (e) Do not arise.