

Kasturirangan report on Western Ghats

355. SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) the salient features and recommendations made by the High Level Working Group under Dr. Kasturirangan on the eco-sensitive areas in the Western Ghats;

(b) whether Government has decided to proceed with the recommendations of the report presented by the Committee; and

(c) if so, the details of the recommendations that have been adopted, along with the proposed timelines for the implementation of the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (SHRI ANIL MADHAV DAVE): (a) Salient features and recommendations of the Report of the High Level Working Group (HLWG) headed by Dr. K. Kasturirangan relate to definition and delimitation of the Western Ghats Region, identification and demarcation of Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) in the Western Ghats, and regulation/prohibition of certain activities which have maximum interventionist and damaging impacts on ecosystems in the Western Ghats ESA.

(b) and (c) The Government has issued Directions under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 on 13th November 2013 to provide immediate protection to the Western Ghats and to maintain its environmental integrity. As per the Directions, the five categories of new and/or expansion projects/activities *e.g.* (i) Mining, quarrying and sand mining (ii) Thermal Power Plants (iii) Building and construction projects of 20,000 sq. m. area and above (iii) Township and area development projects with an area of 50 ha. and above and/or with built up area of 1,50,000 sq.m. and above and (v) Red category of industries identified in the HLWG Report as having maximum impacts on ecosystems are not to be considered for granting Environmental Clearance in the Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESA) of Western Ghats.

Further, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has issued a draft Notification on 04.09.2015 declaring an area of 56,825 sq. km. spread over six States of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat in the Western Ghats region as Ecologically Sensitive. A time-limit of 545 days has been provided for finalisation of the draft Notification.