

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 853
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.02.2023

Steps to save the Himalayas and human habitations

853. SHRI JAWHAR SIRCAR:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government will review the several permissions and clearances already given for roads, dams and tourist or pilgrim facilities, after the eye-opening incidents of flash floods, landslides and the recent sinking of Joshimath, in order to save future catastrophes and preserve the fragile Himalayas; and
- (b) if so, the details of the steps taken, if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) to (b) The Ministry has delineated a detailed procedure for comprehensive assessment of environmental and social impacts of the project in the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, as amended; which *inter-alia* provides for four stages of consideration process i.e., Screening, Scoping, Public Consultation and Appraisal by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC), for assessment of environmental and social impacts taking into account the location of the project and also for monitoring of projects. Study of the aforesaid and other related factors in the context of specific projects forms the basis for preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment/Environmental Management Plan(EIA/EMP).

The EAC comprising of domain area experts, after detailed examination and deliberations on various environmental and social aspects of the project including appraisal of the studies/information related to seismology, geological profile, study of landslide prone areas, risk analysis studies, recommend the project for grant of Environmental Clearance (EC) by suggesting suitable mitigative measures to minimize the environmental and social impacts associated with the project. It is only after such detailed study and analysis that Environmental Clearances are issued subject to compliance of necessary environmental safeguards and general and specific conditions by the Project Proponent (PP) during construction and operation of the project.

Project specific conditions related to safety measures like installation of Early Warning Telemetric system, implementation of Emergency Preparedness Plan, Disaster Management Plan, Catchment Area Treatment plan, stabilization of muck disposal sites, rim plantation, pasture development, nursery development etc. are also prescribed in the Environmental Clearances.

Whenever, a proposal for diversion of forestland is received, it is examined and due diligence is exercised to avoid the use of forestland, or to keep it at barest minimum. In cases where it is unavoidable, the forest area is allowed to be diverted, subject to certain conditions including the Compensatory Afforestation (CA), payment of Net Present Value (NPV) and the protection/afforestation of Safety Zone area. Wherever necessary, the additional mitigation measures in the form of Soil and Moisture Conservation works, Wildlife Management plan etc. are also stipulated on case-to-case basis.

Apart from above, the hydro-electric proposal is also assessed by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) from the aspect of safety and seismicity in consultation with Central Water Commission (CWC), Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Central Soil and Materials Research Station (CSMRS).
