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Gujarat, Goa, M'ashtra, K'taka, Kerala to come under 'go' and 'no-go' areas

## Govt spells out steps to protect Western Ghats

Kalyan Ray, New Delhi, Aug 18, DHNS:

***In a few months, the Union Environment Ministry plans to come up with a set of "no-go" areas in the Western Ghats where no developmental projects will be allowed under any condition so as to protect the pristine ecology of the region.***



At the same time, the ministry will demarcate areas where such projects like hydro-power plants and dams could be set up with stricter norms and regulations.

The "go" and "no-go" areas will be for all Western Ghat states—Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala.

The demarcation will be on the lines of a similar exercise the Environment Ministry undertook in nine coalfields in the central and eastern India. At the end of the exercise, the ministry declared almost 35 per cent areas in coalfields are out of bounds for mining as they are forest rich zones.

### Controversies

The decision triggered many controversies with states as well as Power and Coal Ministry accusing Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh for blocking development works particularly in the field of power generation.

Wiser from the coalfield exercise, Ramesh has promised to consult the state governments before coming out with the demarcated zones list.

"A clear picture will emerge by the end of this year when the Madhav Gadgil committee on the Western Ghat ecology will submit its report," Ramesh said addressing a meeting of the MPs from the Western Ghats on Wednesday. Gadgil—a retired professor at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore—familiarised the MPs on the scope of his task.

Ramesh has already instructed the Gadgil panel to review all planned development projects in the Western Ghats including many hydro power plants like Gundia in Karnataka.

All decisions on clearing the Western Ghat projects have been put on hold till the Gadgil panel submits its report to the government. The 1600-km-long Western Ghats covering 1.6 lakh sq km area is one of the four biodiversity hotspots of the country. Close to one-third of the Ghat region is forest which houses 1,741 species of flowering plants, 403 species of birds and many animals.

Responding to Ramesh's proposal of "no-go" areas, the MPs cutting across party lines said while protecting the environment, the Centre should not forget people living in forests or in the vicinity and take steps to make their life easier. The members asked the minister to allow creation of local roads through the forests to help people move from one place to another.

Also they wanted the ministry to recognise the real problem of man-animal conflict for those living on the edge of the forests. Ramesh assured the MPs that not only the states would be consulted, but Gadgil panel will also take inputs to grassroots leaders at panchayats and zilla parishad before finalising its report.

Highlighting the flaws of the existing environment impact assessment system, Gadgil said no EIA accounted for the damage caused by power distribution line because only

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By: G.srinivas  
On: 19 Aug 2010 09:07 am

Western Ghats to be made fully protected with zero activity like construction of roads, power plants, expansion of townships etc.Further greeni ng of western ghats taken by closing down of ugly mining activities, SEZs etc. An International Eco forest protection and development to moniator henceforth this forests and further develop it

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