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# Activists object to reducing ESZ of Bannerghatta Park

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Image of Bannerghatta park area (Photo | EPS)

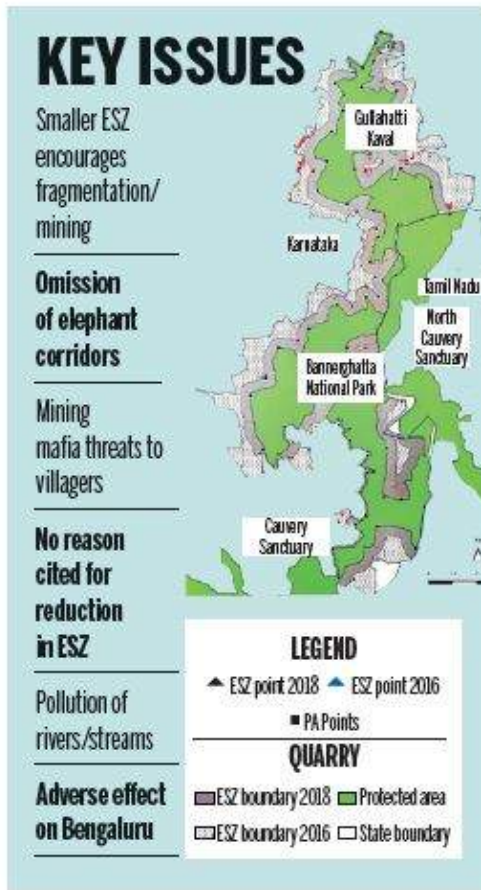
**By Meera Bhardwaj**

**Express News Service**

BENGALURU: Environmentalists, NGOs and activists have filed their objections to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) on the draft Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) notification for Bannerghatta National Park. Urging the MoEF to assess the situation and ensure 268.96 sqkm as ESZ, they say with its proximity to Bengaluru, the National Park and its surroundings play a crucial role in reducing the heat island effect. It also helps in reducing pollution.

Presently, the ESZ draft notified on October 30, 2018 has reduced the eco-sensitive zone for the park by 100 sqkm. While the extent is just 100 m to one km from the boundary of the park. Earlier, the 2016 draft notification had earmarked an ESZ of 268.96 sqkm and an extent of 4.5 km around the park.

The objections have been filed by United Bengaluru, comprising convenor, Suresh N R, senior freedom fighter, H S Doreswamy, environment policy expert, ATREE, Dr Sharachchandra Lele, professor of Sustainability, Azim Premji University, Dr Harini Nagendra, Project Vruksha Foundation, Vijay Nishant, and many others.



They said, “Reduction of ESZ threatens the fragile eco-system and biodiversity of BNP and also defeats the stated purpose of establishing an ESZ to buffer the impact on the national park. They threaten the lives of citizens living around the park, who have been at the receiving end due to blasting and dust pollution from rampant stone quarrying and crushing activities. Further, BNP serves as a watershed for many rivers and forest streams that finally empties into the Cauvery.”

Questioning the issue of proliferation of mining activities, they said, “Smaller ESZ will lead to fragmentation of forests and increase in mining. Studies have shown that if there has been considerable reduction in green cover, mining has increased by 100 per cent from 1973-2015, in an area of 0.5 to 105.4 hectares. Studies by IISc have

shown how mining and urban expansion has increased by over 2,400 per cent and 1,000 per cent respectively.”

An RTI application filed by Namma Bengaluru Foundation has further revealed that many mining operations were functioning well within the safe zone of one km and 10 km buffer zone. Further, the minutes of meeting between the state mines and Geology Department and Forest Department on June 14, 2018 clearly reveals: Disturbance to wildlife movement, dumping of mining debris in water sources and the contamination of water holes of the national park. Quarrying and stone crushing activities have been allowed to operate in the default ESZ without any approval, while reducing the ESZ to 100 m without adhering to the SC’s guidelines for a 10 km ESZ.