

[Home](#) / [Specials](#) / [Sunday Spotlight](#) / [Politics over Western Ghats](#)

## Politics over Western Ghats

Inviting Disaster: States must put an end to the denuding of Western Ghats, but they couldn't care less



Kalyan Ray, DH News Service, New Delhi, SEP 02 2018, 00:50AM IST | UPDATED: SEP 02 2018, 01:38AM IST



We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).

[Learn more](#) [I agree](#)



A magnificent mountain range next only to the Himalayas, the Western Ghats is a biological treasure trove. Both the Madhav Gadgil-led Western Ghat Ecology Expert Panel and the High Level Working Group, chaired by space scientist K Kasturirangan stressed on the need to protect and conserve its unique ecology and pristine forests, although they proposed two different approaches to doing so.

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).

protected. According to the Kasturirangan panel, the total area is 1,64,280 sq km, out of which 37% representing an area of 59,940 sq km is Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA), representing a continuous band of vegetation and including the protected areas and heritage sites. This is to be saved at any cost.

None of the Western Ghats states – Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu -- agree with the experts. They have a different game plan.

Based on the Kasturirangan panel's recommendation, the Union Environment Ministry issued for the first time on March 10, 2014 a draft notification declaring 56,825 sq km of Western Ghats area as ESA. The shortfall of 3,115 sq km of area was in Kerala.

Since the HLWG relied heavily on space-based imaging to prepare the maps, each of the six states were to conduct ground-truthing surveys and submit their reports along with maps to finalise the draft.

Kerala was the only state that did the survey. It carried out the exercise even before the publication of the draft, as a result of which Kerala's ESA was reduced from 13,108.7 sq km to 9,993.7 sq km in the draft. The other states were less forthcoming. They invented excuses and delayed the exercise.

The first draft lapsed after the mandatory 545 days and a second draft was issued on September 9, 2015. Barring Tamil Nadu, the other Western Ghats states submitted their responses, but documents were incomplete. The second draft notification also lapsed, and a third draft was published on February 27, 2017.

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).

the Western Ghats, another layer of protection in the form of ESA was not required. As per the draft, Karnataka's ESA was an area of 20,668 sq km – highest among the six states – with 1,576 villages. The officials said Karnataka was not in favour of the ESA because of the apprehensions of people, without elaborating what those apprehensions were.

Since Karnataka cannot be left out of a plan to protect the Western Ghats, the MoEF in April 2018 asked the state to form an expert panel for a re-look at the “apprehensions and concerns of the state government for developing a coherent approach in declaring the ESA of the Western Ghats in Karnataka.” Four months later, Karnataka has now said it does not want to form any such panel. Rather, if the Centre forms a panel to address the state's concerns, Karnataka would fully cooperate with the panel.

In Chennai, under a new chief minister following the death of AIADMK supremo J Jayalalitha in December 2016, the previous stonewalling stopped. Tamil Nadu now said its forest department had identified 6,665.47 sq km of Western Ghats area, spread over 52 villages, that could be included in the proposed ESA, along with 62.33 sq km of non-forest enclaves. Taken together, the total area would be 187 sq km less than what was proposed in the draft.

Tamil Nadu even suggested new areas for inclusion. These are (1) part of Nilgiri's eastern slope in Erode district; (2) 11 pieces of reserved forest/ reserved land along the boundary of Theni district to provide for existing elephant and tiger corridors; (3) Saptur reserved forest of Madurai district, part of the Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary and; (4) Gandamanur East reserved forest of Theni district and Soolapuram and Elumalai reserved forests of Madurai district, part of the Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary.

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).

put forth seven conditions that the MoEF must adhere to if it wished to finalise the draft.

They include allowing new hydro-power projects irrespective of their capacity, even though major hydro-power projects with capacity more than 25 MW are listed in the 'red' category by both the central and TN Pollution Control Board; the state wants to continue with an existing quarry (66.65 ha) in Bolampatti-I reserved forest in Coimbatore district, instead of phasing it out in five years. The state wants permissions to expand red category industries if they meet the pollution norms and an assurance that restrictions on development activities, as mentioned in the panel's report, are not to be brought back.

Kerala, too, wants its pound of flesh. From the notified area of 9,993.70 sq km the Malabar state suggested cutting off another 886.7 sq km of non-forest area. It now leaves 9,107 sq km of area as ESA, with 118 villages. Compared with the original recommendation, that's a drop of more than 4,000 sq km of area.

Maharashtra followed the suit. The HLWG recommended an area of 17,340 sq km with 2,159 villages as ecologically sensitive. After its own assessment and verification of land records, the western state submitted a proposal to reduce the ESA area to 15,613.23 sq km and the number of villages from 2,133 to 2,123, as recorded in the draft.

Goa and Gujarat did not participate in the latest round of the exercise, but sources in the MoEF told Deccan Herald that Goa, too, wanted to reduce the ESA, citing urbanisation pressures, whereas Gujarat dropped some of the villages listed in the draft but added a few others. Taken together, the ministry is now looking at the possibility of just about 50,000 sq km of ESA in the Western Ghats, rather than 56,825 sq km as notified in the first draft.

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).

mindless urban growth had made the region vulnerable to the fury of nature. It remains to be seen whether the Union Environment Ministry under Harsh Vardhan can put forth to the states the scientific arguments to protect the Western Ghats.

Western Ghats



Liked the story?



Kalyan Ray, DH News Service, New Delhi, SEP 02 2018, 00:50AM IST | UPDATED: SEP 02 2018, 01:38AM IST

### Contact us on this story

[✉ kalyanray@deccanherald.co.in](mailto:kalyanray@deccanherald.co.in)

[🐦 kalyanray30](https://twitter.com/kalyanray30)

### COMMENTS:



Share your thoughts about that

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).



GOK when our politicians will understand anything about environment . Their focus is only on how to loot and make money. They do not understand anything else

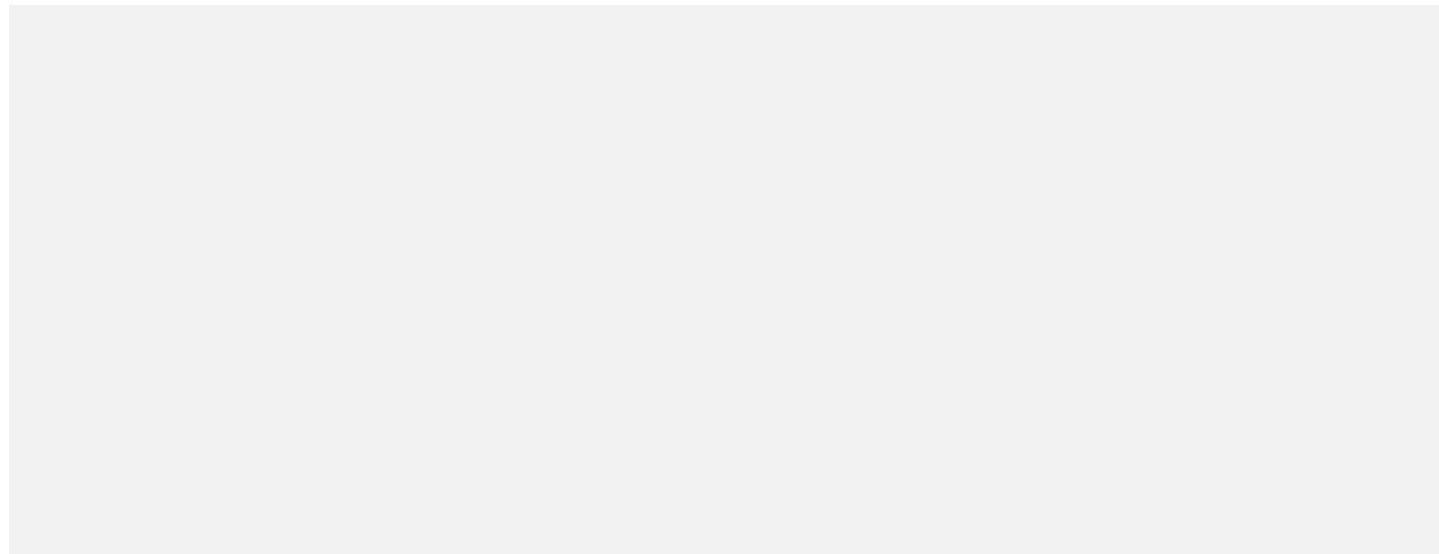
Reply • 0 👍 | 0 🗨️



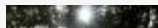
**Kian Br** • 9/1/2018 11:04 PM

no state will agree to centers demands and will continue politicizing the nature treasure that is Western ghats. Lets a few cities erode and life come to standstill, then the people and politicians will come to their senses

Reply • 0 👍 | 0 🗨️



## LATEST STORIES



We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).



**Gandhi's blood pressure record to be made public**



**'Rape allegation may clean bad elements in Church'**

## DH PICKS

- **Nawaz Sharif released on parole for wife's funeral**
- **Delhi HC declines to interfere with fuel price issue**
- **CRPF man, forest guard injured in Jammu shooting**
- **World sinks to 10-year happiness low: Survey**
- **NOTA favourite for rural; not urban voters**
- **Apple expected to unveil bigger, pricier iPhone**

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).



Corruption costs 5% of global GDP, says UN chief



**SOCIAL FEED**

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).

## Tweets by @DeccanHerald



**Deccan Herald** ✓

@DeccanHerald

[#Elections](#) are scheduled to be held across 230 Assembly constituencies of [#MadhyaPradesh](#) by the end of the year.[deccanherald.com/national/mp-32...](https://deccanherald.com/national/mp-32...)



We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).



## Land use policy critical

9th Sep 2018



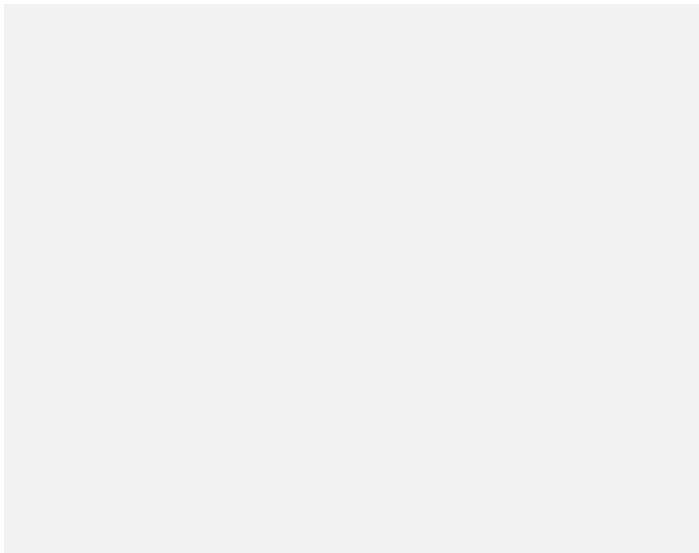
## Final test awaits Hubballi-Ankola Rly line

6th Sep 2018



## 'Don't alter draft order to reduce ESZ in W Ghats!...

4th Sep 2018



We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).



These people came in  
way of corporate  
plunder

9th Sep 2018



Letters from the jungles  
to urban naxals!

8th Sep 2018



Activists: enemies of  
State?

8th Sep 2018

## What does your star sign say?

Explore



YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).

[HOME](#) [BENGALURU](#) [KARNATAKA](#) [NATIONAL](#) [SPORTS](#) [WORLD](#) [BUSINESS](#) [OPINION](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#)  
[SUPPLEMENTS](#) [VIDEOS](#) [PHOTOS](#)

[About](#) [E-Paper](#) [Archives](#) [Sitemap](#) [Classifieds](#) [Contact](#)

Follow us [!\[\]\(2e897e890e69d81eae4503a8342c36b0\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(ce4e2504c7100a62a9a9496b2e01b6e4\_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(d6653e1cf2c96f17cfd897a08e4b2bd5\_img.jpg\)](#)

[Printers Mysore](#) [Prajavani](#) [Prajavani E-paper](#) [Sudha](#) [Mayura](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) [Terms](#) [Disclaimer](#)

© 2018 The Printers (Mysore) Private Ltd.

Designed By Lollypop    Developed by Yodasoft

We use cookies to understand how you use our site and to improve user experience. This includes personalising content and advertising. By continuing to use our site, you accept our use of cookies, revised [Privacy Policy](#).