

**No. J.21011/58/2010-IA-I**  
**Government of India**  
**Ministry of Environment and Forests**

Paryavaran Bhawan  
CGO Complex, Lodi Road  
New Delhi - 110 003

Dated: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013

**OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

**Sub: Consideration of proposals from Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, Maharashtra.**

1. This has reference to the Ministry's Office Memorandum of even no. dated 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2010 and its subsequent amendments including OM issued on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2013 regarding extension of moratorium upto 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2013 on consideration of projects from the districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg, Maharashtra under the EIA Notification, 2006 by this Ministry or by the Maharashtra State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).

2. The Ministry of Environment and Forests had appointed a High Level Working Group (HLWG) under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan, Member (Science), Planning Commission vide office order dated 17.8.2012 in order to study and make recommendations on how to protect preserve and nurture the rich biodiversity and environmental integrity of the Western Ghats and suggest steps and the way forward to prevent further degradation of the fragile ecology of the Western Ghats. The HLWG was also tasked with the mandate to take a holistic view of the issue and to bring synergy between protection of environment and biodiversity and the imperatives of equity for the indigenous residents of the Western Ghats area, particularly disadvantaged sections of society, so that their rightful aspirations for inclusive growth and sustainable development are also protected and addressed.

3. The HLWG submitted its report to the MoEF on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2013 and it was thereafter put in public domain by hosting on the MoEF website, and also disseminated to all stakeholders including the 6 Western Ghat States for feedback and comments. All Stakeholders were also invited to offer their views. Thereafter, on completion of a transparent process, MoEF has accepted in principle the HLWG report and the definition of Western Ghats as demarcated by HLWG.

4. The High Level Working Group has noted that a substantial portion of the Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri Districts where moratorium has been imposed falls outside the definition of Western Ghats as identified by HLWG. The High Level Working Group has recommended the lifting of moratorium in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg Districts subject to certain stipulations.

*Contd. p 2*

The relevant extract of the HLWG report is quoted below

*“Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri districts have three categories of areas: (i) area under ESA, (ii) area under non ESA within Western Ghats and (iii) area outside Western Ghats region. HLWG recommends that the moratorium imposed should be lifted with the following conditions. As per the recommendations of this report, in the area of these two districts, which has been categorized as ESA, the sectoral restrictions and regulations will apply. In addition, all development projects located within 10 km of the Western Ghats ESA and requiring Environment Clearance (EC) shall be regulated as per the provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006. In the remaining area, including the area outside ESA but within Western Ghats, environment and forest processes and regulations will continue to apply. However, in order to ensure that such development projects do not adversely impact the environmental balance of the two districts, MoEF should monitor on regular basis the cumulative impact of projects, which may come up in these districts and take policy decisions at appropriate time based on such findings.”*

ESA: Ecologically Sensitive Area

5. Further, there is also an ongoing Public Interest Litigation (PIL No. 179 of 2012) pending in the High Court of Bombay in the matter of Awaaz Foundation Vs Union of India & Ors relating to declaration of Sawantwadi-Dodamarg Corridor as an Ecologically Sensitive Area. Both Sawantwadi and Dodamarg Talukas are part of Sindhudurg District. The Sawantwadi Taluka falls inside the Western Ghats as defined by HLWG while the Dodamarg Taluka falls outside Western Ghats. The Hon’ble Court has linked the current moratorium with the present case to prevent any degradation of Ecology of the Sawantwadi Dodamarg area.

6. The Ministry has examined the recommendation given by the High Level Working Group on the moratorium for consideration of projects from the Districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg, Maharashtra under the EIA Notification, 2006 by this Ministry or by the Maharashtra State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) as also the implications of the ongoing PIL in the Hon’ble Bombay High Court.

7. Keeping in view that the process for declaration of Ecologically Sensitive Area in Western Ghats as recommended by HLWG may take some time as also the ongoing Public Interest Litigation in the High Court of Bombay, the Ministry has presently decided to lift the moratorium in non-Western Ghats area of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts only except for Dodamarg Taluka. This would help in maintaining the ecology of the Western Ghat areas as also the Sawantwadi-Dodamarg Corridor.

8. Accordingly, the Moratorium would be lifted from all the Talukas in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg District of Maharashtra except for the following talukas:

**S.No. District Ratnagiri**

- 1 Khed
- 2 Chiplun
- 3 Sangameshwar
- 4 Lanja
- 5 Rajapur

*Contd. p 3*

**S.No. District Sindhudurg**

- 1 Kankavli
- 2 Sawantwadi
- 3 Dodamarg
- 4 Deogad
- 5 Vaibhavwadi
- 6 Kudal

The Moratorium in the above mentioned Talukas would continue till further orders.

This issues with the approval of Competent Authority.



**(Lalit Kapur)**

Director

To

The Chairman, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board/Maharashtra, SEIAA/SEAC

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