

Include entire Aravalis in forest area, greens tell govt

Vimal Chander Joshi, TNN | Jul 10, 2015,

GURGAON: City-based environmentalists have urged the Centre and the state government to take cognizance of the alleged anomalies in the recent mapping of the natural conservation zones (NCZ) and demanded that the entire Aravalis be brought under forest area.

In an email to the secretary of the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change, Ashok Lavasa, on Thursday, the activists demanded the restoration of NCZs to their original size. Senior officials of the ministry, the state town and country planning department, and the state's forest department will meet on Friday apparently to discuss the issue.

"From time to time, the ministry of environment, forest and climate change has raised objections to the state government's hastily drawn sub-regional plan 2021 that was notified in May last year. But without paying attention to any of those concerns, the state left out major parts of NCR outside the ambit of protected areas," wrote Sarvadaman Oberoi, an environmentalist.

He added, "In the NCR sub-regional plan, Mangar Bani has not been demarcated and provided permanent protection. Major parts of Aravalis have also been left outside NCZ."

On March 5 last year, the PMO had urged the Union urban development ministry (that heads the NCR Planning board) not to go ahead with formulating any plan on the Aravallis without incorporating the suggestions of MoEF that had raised its concerns through two letters.

The ministry, through two letters, had urged the NCR Planning Board to restrain from

making any plan of allowing tourism in the Aravalis or relaxing the limit of NCZ. Though the board paid attention to the concerns and called a special meeting on April 25 last year, the state government still went ahead with the sub-regional plan on May 28, 2014, without incorporating the ministry's suggestions.

City-based green crusaders have also underlined the need to remove the disputed portion in the sub-regional plan on page 294 wherein a major loophole is kept to allow construction in the Aravalis. "At the end of Chapter 14 of sub-regional plan, it is written that the Aravalis would be excluded from NCZ if they are in urbanisable area. This clause is a direct assault on protection of NCZ," read the e-mail.

"Entire Aravalis should be defined as forests as per extended meaning of forests settled by Samatha versus State. Mangar Bani should be included in the NCZ. And the 500-metre buffer to Mangar should be included in the sub-regional plan," it said.

"When any major policy is made that has a bearing on the entire state, such as formulating the sub-regional plan, then it is imperative to get feedback of the civil society rather than finishing these things behind closed doors," Amina Shervani, an environmentalist, said.

Source:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/gurgaon/Include-entire-Aravalis-in-forest-area-greens-tell-govt/articleshow/48010972.cms>