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Javadekar to Hold Review Meeting with State Environment and Forests Ministers of Western Ghats Region Tomorrow

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The Government has made a significant move towards the conservation of the landscape of Western Ghats and its unique biodiversity. The Minister of State (Independent Charge), of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Prakash Javadekar has called a meeting, here tomorrow, of the State Environment and Forests Ministers of the Western Ghats region viz. Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The meeting will review the progress of physical demarcation of Ecologically Sensitive Area in Western Ghats and will discuss the further course of action for the protection and conservation of Western Ghats. The main focus of the meeting will be to conserve the biodiversity of the Western Ghats region, while providing adequate opportunities for livelihood security of the local people in the broad paradigm of Ecologically Sensitive Area, which is not just about regulation of development, but is intimately linked to positive promotion of environment-friendly and socially inclusive development. Based on the requests received from some of the State Governments of the region, the Ministry had decided to give an opportunity to State Governments of Western Ghats region to undertake the demarcation of Ecologically Sensitive Area within their jurisdiction by physical verification and submit their proposals to the Ministry by 30th June 2015, except for the State of Kerala, which has already undertaken such an exercise.

The Ministry had published a draft notification in Gazette of India on 10th March 2014 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for declaring Ecologically Sensitive Area in the Western Ghats in the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The identified Ecologically Sensitive Area represents a continuous band of natural vegetation, extending over a horizontal distance of about 1,500 km. along the west coast of the country.

Western Ghats is a global biodiversity hotspot and a treasure trove of biological diversity harbouring many endemic species of flowering plants, fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and invertebrates. The Western Ghats not only harbour rich biodiversity, but also support a population of approximately fifty million people and also include areas of high human population density. Therefore, there is a need to conserve and protect the unique biodiversity of Western Ghats, while allowing for sustainable and inclusive development of the region. The concept of Ecologically Sensitive Area provides a mechanism to conserve biological diversity of an area while allowing for sustainable development to take place.

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