



Kasturirangan Committee on Western Ghats

Why in News

Recently, the **Government of Karnataka** has informed the Center government that the state is opposed to the [Kasturirangan Committee report](#) on Western Ghats.

- The Kasturirangan committee report has proposed **37% of the total area of Western Ghats** to be declared as [Eco-Sensitive Area \(ESA\)](#).
- The Karnataka's Government is of the opinion that declaring **Western Ghats as ESA** would **adversely affect the livelihood of people in the region**.

Key Points

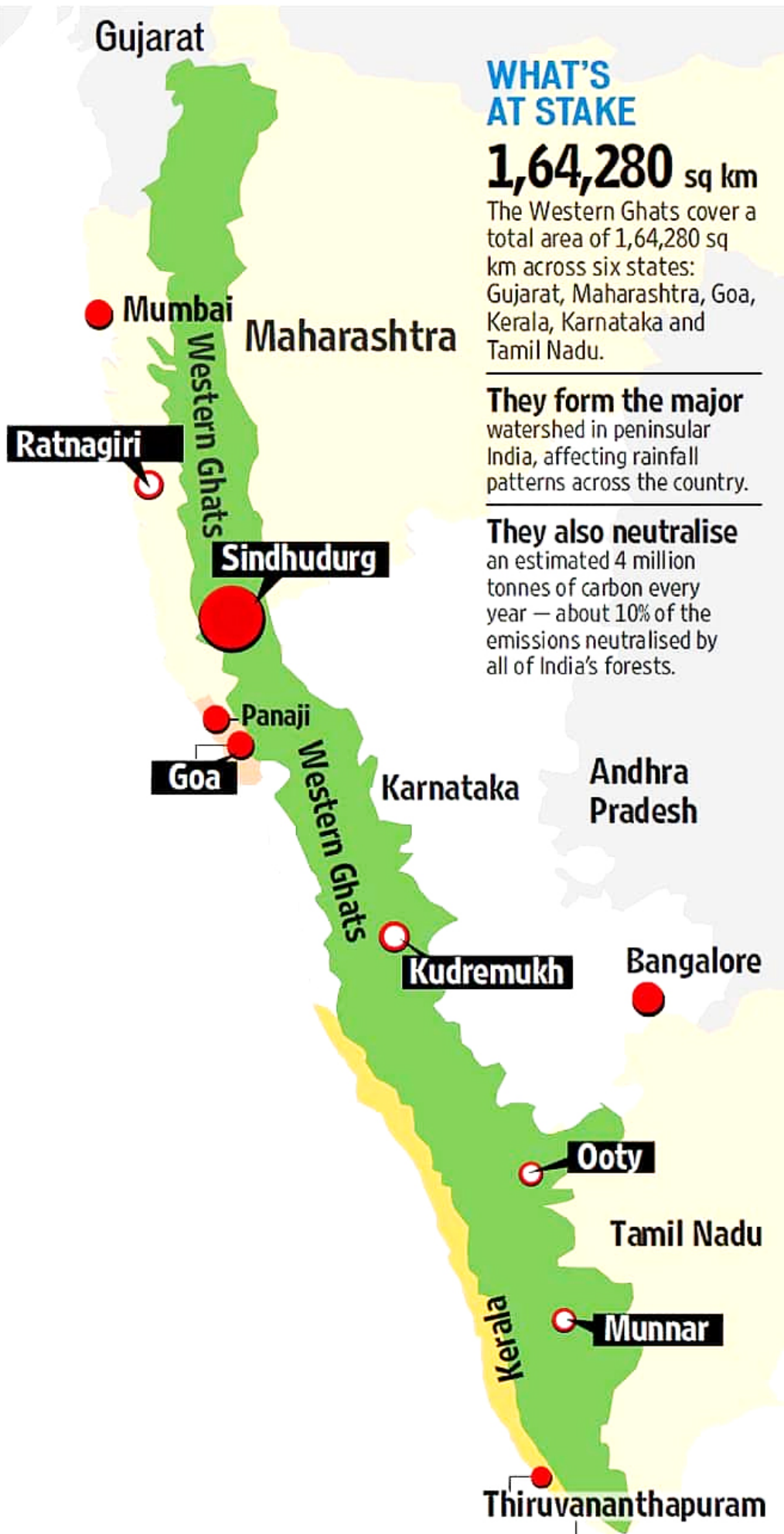
▪ About Eco-Sensitive Areas:

- **Eco-Sensitive Areas (ESAs)** are located within **10 kms around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries**.
- ESAs are notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under [Environment Protection Act 1986](#).
- The basic aim is **to regulate certain activities** around National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries so as to **minimize the negative impacts of such activities** on the fragile ecosystem encompassing the protected areas.

▪ About Recommendations Of The Kasturirangan Committee Report:

- **Area to be Covered:** The Kasturirangan committee report proposes **roughly 60,000 square kilometers, to be declared as eco-sensitive area (ESA)**.
 - Out of this, **20,668 sq km of the area falls** in Karnataka covering **1,576 villages**.
 - The boundary of the sites, are in most cases, **boundaries of the legally demarcated national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves and forest divisions** and therefore, already accorded with high level of protection.
- **Desired and Banned Activities:** The report recommended a **blanket ban** on mining, quarrying, setting up of red category industries and thermal power projects.
 - It also stated that the **impact of infrastructural projects on the forest and wildlife should be studied** before permission is given for these activities.
- **UNESCO Tag:** It also stated that the [UNESCO Heritage tag](#) is an opportunity to build global and domestic recognition of the enormous natural wealth that exists in the Western Ghats.
 - The 39 sites are located across the Western Ghats and distributed across the states (Kerala 19), Karnataka (10), Tamil Nadu (6) and Maharashtra (4).
- **Role of State Governments:** The state governments should view this development and build a plan to protect, conserve and value the resources and opportunities of the region.

ESA Proposed By Kasturirangan Committee



WHAT'S AT STAKE

1,64,280 sq km

The Western Ghats cover a total area of 1,64,280 sq km across six states: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

They form the major watershed in peninsular India, affecting rainfall patterns across the country.

They also neutralise an estimated 4 million tonnes of carbon every year — about 10% of the emissions neutralised by all of India's forests.

▪ **Opposition of Karnataka Government:**

- **Impeding Developmental Progress:** Karnataka has extensive forest cover and the government has taken care to protect the biodiversity of Western Ghats.
 - The state government believes that **implementation of the report will halt the developmental activities in the region.**
- **People-Centric Developmental Model:** The Kasturirangan report has been prepared based on the satellite images, but the ground reality is different.
 - People of the region have adopted **agriculture and horticultural activities in an eco-friendly manner.**
 - Priority has been accorded for environment protection under the [Forest Protection Act 1980](#).

Way Forward

- **Preventive Approach:** Considering the changes in climate, which would affect the livelihood of all people and hurt the nation's economy, it is prudent to **conserve the fragile ecosystems.**
 - This will cost less compared to the situation prone to calamities than spending money /resources for restoration / rejuvenation.
 - Thus, **any further delay in the implementation will only accentuate degrading** of the most prized natural resource of the country.
- **Engaging With All Stakeholders:** a proper analysis based on scientific study followed by consensus among various stakeholders by addressing respective concerns is required urgently.
 - Holistic view of threats and demands on the forest land, products and services, devising strategies to address these with clearly stated objectives for the authorities involved must be taken.

[Source: IE](#)

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