

MP RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR'S SPEECH ON NEED FOR AN URGENT REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS IN OUR CITIES AND STATES TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE – PARTICULARLY WITH REFERENCE TO BENGALURU AND KARNATAKA.

ZERO HOUR - RAJYA SABHA

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We all agree that we have a solemn obligation to protect our Environment and resources for our future generations. That any development that we undertake shouldn't needlessly create an irreversible cost of our environment.

Sir, I rise to bring to the attention of the house the need for an urgent review of Environmental Regulations especially with reference to my city of Bengaluru Sir, because we all agree Sir, we have a solemn obligation to protect our environment and resources for future generation.

Sir, I will just layout four brief points to justify this need for an urgent review of Environmental Regulations.

1) Functioning of state level Environment regulator SEIAA.

There are serious questions about the functioning of *State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA)* that has instead of being a regulator is instead itself seemingly party to or even complicit in rampant violation the Environment Regulations. The major example being the highly controversial Steel Flyover & Peripheral Ring Road project where SEIAA, Karnataka had failed to take any action against the **environmentally intrusive and illegal project which was in direct contravention of the provisions of Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**. Further, on BDA's request, the SEIAA had gone beyond its mandate by issuing an opinion on

whether an Environmental Clearance was required prior to undertaking the 'elevated road project'. This was again in contravention of Environment Regulations, 2006. The project proponent, i.e., the Govt. of Karnataka through BBMP had decided that there is no necessity for obtaining an environmental clearance as per the regulations of 2006 and it is absurd that the SEIAA, Karnataka had failed to take action against the same. It was appalling to note that throughout the series of communications between SEIAA and BDA there was no reference of the environmental impact from felling of trees. It was only after the intervention of NGT that the Steel Flyover Project was considered to be illegal. This clearly indicates how the SEIAA is failing at the State level.

Further, a few reports suggest that the recent projects that have been undertaken by the Government of Karnataka will cause extensive damage of the eco-sensitive zones around Bannerghatta National Park and Western Ghats. SEIAA has failed to act upon such deliberate flouting of Environmental laws and Court Directives by government of Karnataka.

2) Dying lakes of Bengaluru

Another burning issue with no solutions in sight is that of the dying lakes in the city of Bengaluru. This is a direct result of the apathy of Govt. of Karnataka which has turned a blind eye to the **illegal activities and the rampant illegal constructions on the buffer zone which are mercilessly killing the lakes.** Bengaluru's lakes are a complex inter-connected network that need to be protected and reclaimed from encroachers and polluters because they are critical for our water security and environmental sustainability of the city.

There is a growing risk to these ecologically & environmentally sensitive areas like lakebeds, catchment areas around lakes & valley zones due to these illegal activities which are in blatant disregard to NGT's directions which strictly prohibited such constructions. No concrete action has been

taken by the Govt. of Karnataka in this regard. I request urgent intervention by the Ministry of Environment

3) Illegal Activities in the Eco-Sensitive Zones of BNP & Malnad (Western Ghats)

There was a string of illegal mining and quarrying operations which was carried out in the Eco-Sensitive Zone of Bannerghatta National Park which has been temporarily stopped by the Mining & Geological Dept. of Karnataka. Strict action must be taken against violators.

Now, the **Govt. of Karnataka is trying to dilute the rules thereby shrinking the size of Eco-Sensitive Zone by enforcing Private Conservancy Rules, 2018.** These rules, if enforced, will cause great damage to the existing wildlife, the flora and fauna in the said regions. I urge the Govt. of India to take steps to ensure that any attempt by GoK to shrink the limit of ESZ around BNP as prescribed by the MoEF's notification published in June, 2016 should be discouraged. Again I bring this to the urgent intervention and inspection by the Union Environment Ministry

4) Developmental Projects in Karnataka

Several projects conceived by the Karnataka Govt in the name of development are giving a go-by the required Environment Impact assessment, leaving no room for alternate sustainable solutions. There are some projects where the facts have been concealed for expediency.

Currently the only recourse for citizens is to approach the NGT – which is overloaded and is in itself recommending a 15 day window for Government or regulators to act. But for that we need functioning state level regulators and so the immediate need to review the Environmental

Regulations to strengthen the Environmental Regulators for ensuring the sustainability of life in future.

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