



**Press Release
18 August 2020**

Janta Parliament calls on urgent action for ecological security

Given the inability or unwillingness of the government to convene a monsoon session of parliament in time, people's movements and groups are organizing an online Janta Parliament with 11 thematic sessions various public interest issues from 16-21st August.

Today, in the Environment session of the Janta Parliament, about 30 speakers from various parts of India presented their views on the state of India's environment. This session was organised by Kalpavriksh, National Alliance of People's Movements, Environment Support Group, Greenpeace India, Veditum, Fridays for Future India, Extinction Rebellion India, Let India Breathe, Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti, Vikalp Sangam, and Yugma.

In the backdrop of the realization that pandemics like COVID19 are a result of the destruction of natural ecosystems, and the recent countrywide uproar on the proposed EIA notification for 'ease of doing business', the session highlighted several key issues:

- (i) **India's environment has been rapidly deteriorating**, and its environmental regulatory regime weakened in the name of 'ease of doing business';
- (ii) **Steps taken by the government in the last 5 months**, such as clearances of many mining, hydro and highway projects in ecologically sensitive areas, have further worsened the situation;
- (iii) Several proposals or decisions with major environmental impacts are being taken in a period in which **effective public participation has been impossible**, such as the proposed EIA notification;
- (iv) These steps have also **violated the country's environmental commitments under international agreements**, e.g. the 2015 Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals, Convention on Biological Diversity;
- (v) The government's '**self-reliance**' package is oriented more towards corporatisation than towards the interests and self-reliance of farmers, fishers, pastoralists, craftspersons, and other sections of society most closely dependent on nature and natural resources;
- (vi) The **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has become a mere rubber stamp** for destructive development and corporate profiteering.

In view of the above, **the People's House passed the following resolutions**, amongst others:

- (i) **Withdraw clearances** given to mining, industrial, and infrastructural projects in the last 5 months; **withdraw coal block auctions**;
- (ii) **Withdraw the draft EIA notification 2020**, and begin widespread consultation to draft a comprehensive environmental regulatory regime;

- (iii) **Revise the draft National Fisheries Policy 2020 and the PM-MSY scheme**, currently oriented towards culture fisheries and big investment, in a manner that will ensure food security and livelihoods of traditional fishing communities;
- (iv) **Put a moratorium on diversion of natural ecosystems** for projects (except very small ones for community basic needs), till such a regulatory regime is in place;
- (v) **Revive quality of air, water and soil to safe levels**; for this, substantially revise the National Clean Air Plan, amend the Water and Air Acts, and notifications under the Environment Protection Act, increasing the autonomy of all pollution control and monitoring institutions and participation of citizens;
- (vi) **Revise the national climate action plan**, with widespread participation of communities most affected, with substantial upward revision of goals for mitigation and adaptation;
- (vii) **Reorient national energy policy** away from fossil fuels, large hydro and nuclear, as also from mega-solar/wind parks, towards decentralised renewable energy that is both ecologically sustainable and democratic;
- (viii) **Initiate dialogue and collaboration with neighbouring countries** for regional climate and environmental action;
- (ix) **Regenerate and conserve natural ecosystems** across India, including forests, coastal & marine, grassland, wetland, desert and mountain areas;
- (x) **Empower local self-governance bodies** (gram sabhas, area sabhas, etc) to govern surrounding nature and natural resources, and to be mandatory part of all planning, budgeting, and policy-making;
- (xi) **Bring in a comprehensive legal regime** to ensure ecologically sensitive areas are permanently conserved, and provide governance and management rights to local communities;
- (xii) **Put maximum resources in a green recovery package towards generating tens of millions of ecologically sustainable and dignified livelihoods**, including organic agriculture, assistance to pastoralists, fishers and forest-dwellers, decentralized renewable energy and water harvesting, cottage industries including crafts, and regeneration of degraded land and water systems;
- (xiii) **Fundamentally re-orient the Atmanirbharbharat packages**, which currently favour corporatisation and big players, to the above approach;
- (xiv) **Frame comprehensive urban decentralisation and sustainability policy** and framework law, including central participation of urban local bodies in all matters of land, water, budgeting, nature conservation, energy, and so on;
- (xv) In all of the above, **ensure participation and rights of women, youth, and other socially or economically marginalised sections of society.**

Overall, members of the Janta Parliament resolved to continue acting towards, and pressurising the government to act on, the above recommendations.

To watch the full session: https://youtu.be/iRuzHuH-o_k

For further information on the session and Janta Parliament:
<https://jantaparliament.wordpress.com/>

