

# Aravalis to retain protection from non-forest activities

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NEW DELHI: In good news for protection of Aravalis in the National Capital Region, the Prime Minister's Office and a group of ministers headed by home minister Amit Shah have directed the urban affairs ministry not to change the classification of Aravalis as a Natural Conservation Zone (NCZ) which provides it protection from non-forest activities.

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## 'Aravalis' not in new draft NCR plan, Hry wanted 'hills' gone too

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**WITHERING GREENS**

**NCR may shrink 24% as Haryana wants 5 dists out**

**JULY 5, 2022**

New Delhi: After the term "Aravalis" was dropped and replaced with "hills" in the draft National Capital Region (NCR) Plan 2041, the NCR Planning Board (NCRPB), the government had in the past been in a tug-of-war with the state as well. Details of the plan circulated among states for the NCRPB meeting scheduled on Tuesday have revealed.

- Reference to 'Aravalis' dropped in draft NCR Plan 2041, replaced with 'hills'
- Sources say Haryana pushed for doing away with 'hills' reference too but NCR Planning Board didn't relent
- Green activists say board's proposal to replace 'Natural Conservation Zone' with 'Natural Zone' will further expose the sensitive

The area of National Capital Region (NCR) would shrink by nearly one-fourth (24%) if the NCR Planning Board on Tuesday gives the go-ahead to Haryana's proposal to exclude five districts of Karnal, Jind, Mahendragarh, Charkhi Dadri and Bhiwani completely and take out three



TOI has learnt that ministry officials presented these details at a recent review meeting on the proposed Regional Plan 2041 chaired by urban affairs minister and former Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar.

Haryana has demanded that the term NCZ be replaced with Natural Zone (NZ) and the mention of Aravali be done away with from the Regional Plan 2041, which has not yet been finalised. Sources said amid divergent views on the NCZ issue, the PMO and the GoM have categorically told the ministry not to make any changes in the existing provision. "The GoM held a meeting on the issue before the Lok Sabha election. There was a clear instruction not to go for any change in the NCZ provision of the existing Regional Plan 2021," said a source. It is mandatory for states to protect areas falling under NCZ, which include environmentally sensitive areas, extension of Aravali ridge, forest areas, rivers and tributaries, major lakes and water bodies in the NCR. Similarly, ground water recharge areas such as water bodies, ox-bow lakes and paleo-channels also come under this category.

The current norm puts severe restrictions on any non-forest activities in these areas and that too only up to 0.5% of the area.

This is not the first time when top govt functionaries have stood by no dilution in the NCZ and Aravalis. In March 2014, during the last leg of the UPA govt, the PMO had taken note of reports of how the NCR Planning Board was considering changes to the NCZ to allow more construction in the name of eco-tourism.

The PMO had directed the urban affairs ministry to "first obtain views" of the environment and forest ministry on the proposed changes and "apprise" it before taking any final view.

Since then, till Jan 2022, the environment and forest ministry had maintained that the NCZ provision should be retained as it is in the Regional Plan 2041.

TOI on July 11, 2022, had reported how 95% of the suggestions and objections on the draft Regional Plan 2041 received by the NCRPB were concerning NCZ and NZ.