



Protect reserve forests in T.N., parties and NGOs write to Stalin

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Various political parties, NGOs and social organisations have written to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to revoke the government order that would affect the reserve forests in the State.

On December 14, 2022, a G.O. lifting ban on quarrying or mining within 1 km radius of reserve forests was issued. Only on November 2, 2021, the government issued an order banning such activities in reserve forests, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves, and elephant corridors.

It was viewed as a significant order back then and the removal of the ban now was shocking, according to the letter endorsed by parties like MDMK, CPI, CPI(M), VCK among others and NGOs like Poovulagin Nanbargal.

The government had rejected applications for opening 32 quarries in the 1 km radius of reserve forests. Besides many other quarries and mines had to stop operations. This had led to loss of revenue for the government, it said.

The removal of ban meant not only giving permission to new quarries but also reopening of the quarries, mines and brick kilns. The government claimed that the ban continued for the other protected areas like tiger reserves and sanctuaries, but the western and eastern ghats had mostly reserve forests and it was essential to retain the traditional migratory paths by notifying elephant corridors to prevent man-animal conflict.

Thadagam in Coimbatore was one such classic case of man-animal conflict region. In such a situation, it was painful that the government had removed the ban on reserve forests which would legally pave way for destroying the hills in Kanniyakumari and Tirunelveli districts, the letter said .

The new G.O. was against the verdicts of the Supreme Court in several cases to protect the reserve forests. As the government had initiated several landmark projects for forests and wildlife, the Chief Minister must intervene and revoke the G.O. No. 243, the leaders and activists demanded.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/protect-reserve-forests-in-tn-parties-and-ngos-write-to-stalin/article66338441.ece>