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Govt to review 2019 decision on ecologically sensitive zones

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Thiruvananthapuram: Forest minister A K Saseendran said in the assembly on Tuesday that the state government is willing to re-examine its decision to declare 1km around the protected forest areas as eco-sensitive zones (ESZs).

Congress MLA Sajeev Joseph pointed out during the question hour that the decision taken by the state cabinet on October 23, 2019 would adversely affect the review petition being filed by the state government in the Supreme Court against its recent order on ESZs.

The cabinet decision, as long as it stands, will also have a bearing on the state's plea before the Centre's empowered committee, he said.

In response, the forest minister said the state government has already taken steps to review the cabinet's decision but added that the government was firm on banning mining and industrial establishments in the protective areas.

The state government has apprised the Centre that the buffer zone regulations cannot be implemented in all areas alike in the state. The situations vary in each region and that was the reason why the state has sought an amendment in the regulations, he said.

Saseendran said concerns over setbacks to development works in the Ernakulam district when the buffer zone regulations come into effect around the Mangal forest area are genuine. Similarly, the government will also take efforts for scrapping the notification issued for the Bhavani Wildlife Sanctuary in Attapadi, he said.