

KERALA

No need for panic on ESZ declaration, says Forests Minister

STAFF REPORTER

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Forests Minister K. Raju has said that there is no need for panic regarding the draft notification of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) declaring eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) around the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary as it would be revised before execution.

Earlier, the ESZ was fixed at 118.59 sq. km around the sanctuary, including 18.21 sq. km of human settlements, inside the forest. The State government had submitted a revised draft notification on January 25 to the MoEFCC by reducing the ESZ to 88.21 sq. km after excluding the human settlements on 30 sq. km, said Mr. Raju in a release here on Saturday.

When the revised draft notification would be published, all human settlements would be excluded from the ESZ, the Minister added.

The draft notification, published on January 28, will be taken up for consideration after a period of 60 days. The public could also send in comments and suggestions on the draft proposals within 60 days of publication, said Mr. Raju.

The guidelines for declaring ESZ was issued by the Central government on February 9, 2011, as per the direction of the Supreme Court. Later, it was decided to declare up to 10 km on the border of the protected area as default ESZ, if the zone would not be declared properly.

A Cabinet meeting on November 23, 2019 decided to announce the ESZ from 0-1 km around 23 protected areas in the State, including national parks, and submitted draft notifications to the Central government for the purpose.

When the Central government had issued the draft notifications one by one by fixing the ESZ at 0-1 km around the protected areas, many human settlements were included in the zone and the public protested against the move.

Later, the State government decided to submit maps of the zones on 28 September, 2020, by completely excluding human settlements. At present, human settlements in the State had been excluded from the ESZ, the Minister added.

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