



# Shri Sammed Shikharji Removed from Eco-tourism Zone and Tourism

## Why In News?

On January 5, 2023, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has imposed an immediate ban on the implementation of the provisions of **Section 3 of the notification** and all other tourism and eco-tourism activities to the environmentally sensitive area associated with **shri Sammed Shikharji mountain range located in Giridih** district of Jharkhand.

## Key Points

- Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren had written a letter to Union Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Bhupesh Yadav in this regard. The Chief Minister had said through the letter that Parasnath Sammed Shikhar has been a world famous holy and revered pilgrimage site of the Jain community since ancient times. According to the belief, out of the total 24 Tirthankaras of Jainism, 20 Tirthankaras have attained Nirvana at this place.
- It may be mentioned that the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has received several representations from various organization's representing the Jain community regarding some activities taking place in the Parasnath Wildlife Sanctuary in the last few days, which has adversely affected the sentiments of followers of Jainism.
- The complaints mention faulty implementation of the provisions of the notification of environment sensitive zone of Parasnath Wildlife Sanctuary by the Jharkhand government and said that such negligence of the state government has hurt their sentiments.
- In this regard, Union Minister Bhupender Yadav had invited various representatives of the Jain community to discuss the entire issue and a possible solution. Delegates came in large numbers and talked about the present status of Sammed Shikharji and the demands of the community to maintain the sanctity of the place.
- The representatives were apprised that the Parasnath WL Sanctuary was established by the then Bihar Government in 1984 under the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, while the Environment Sensitive Area (ESZ) was notified by the Government of India in consultation with the Government of Jharkhand in 2019 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- Environmentally sensitive areas act as a kind of '**shock absorber**' for protected areas by restricting, controlling and promoting activities around protected areas.
- The ESZ notification is not intended to promote uncontrolled tourism, and certainly not to promote every kind of development activities within the limits of the sanctuary. The announcement of ESZ is actually meant to restrict activities around the sanctuary and, therefore, outside its limits.
- There are adequate provisions in the management plan of Parasnath WL Sanctuary which prohibit activities that adversely affect the sentiments of the Jain community, the Government of India may issue guidelines to the Monitoring Committee as a whole to address any problem, keeping in view the sentiments of the Jain community.
- Union Minister Bhupender Yadav specifically mentioned that the Ministry accepts the established fact that the Sammed Shikharji Mountain area is a sacred Jain religious place not only for the Jain community but for the entire country and the Ministry is committed to maintain its sanctity.
- It was decided in the meeting that the Government of Jharkhand should be directed to strictly implement the important provisions of the management plan of Parasnath Wildlife Sanctuary, which are especially harmful to flora or fauna, coming with pets, playing loud music or using

loudspeakers, sites or places of religious and cultural importance. such as dirtying sacred monuments, lakes, rocks, caves and temples; and the sale of alcohol, drugs and other narcotics; Parasnath prohibits unauthorized camping and trekking etc. on the hill.

- The Jharkhand government has been directed to strictly comply with these provisions. The state government has been directed to strictly enforce the ban on sale and consumption of liquor and non-vegetarian food items on Parasnath Hill.
- Further, for effective monitoring of the provisions of the aforesaid Environmentally Sensitive Area Notification under sub-section (3) of Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Central Government has constituted a Monitoring Committee under Section 5 of this Notification.
- The state government has been directed to keep two members from the Jain community and one member from the local tribal community as permanent invitees to this monitoring committee, so that proper participation and oversight can be done by important stakeholders.

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