

SUPREME COURT ASKS ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY TO FILE COUNTER-AFFIDAVIT TO PLEA BY A MINOR TO PROTECT WESTERN GHATS

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The future of entire southern India was intimately linked with the healthy survival of the Western Ghats, the Supreme Court said. File | Photo Credit: The Hindu

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Environment Ministry to file its counter-affidavit to a petition filed by a minor, M. Kaviya, who is a resident of Nilgiris, seeking judicial intervention to protect the Western Ghats from destruction.

“Month by month, the Western Ghats is being chipped away... Please intervene,” senior advocate Raj Panjwani and advocate Shibani Ghosh, for Ms. Kaviya, urged a Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud.

The court listed the case for July. It said the Centre and other authorities had to file their counter-affidavits in four weeks.

The petition has been in limbo for the past two years since the top court issued notice in 2020. Several environmental activists and NGOs such as the Goa Foundation and Peaceful Society, Bandora, from across six Western Ghats States have joined hands with Ms. Kaviya to seek judicial intervention to re-instate the recommendations of the Dr. Madhav Gadgil-headed Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel’s report.

Ms. Kaviya and seven other children have sought “justice in terms of intergenerational equity”, saying that unbridled “development” in the ancient mountain system would leave their generation without a future or a livelihood. They have sought an “effective, sustainable and credible conservation regime for the Western Ghats, its diverse ecosystems and ecologically sensitive zones”.

Goa Foundation said the petition concerned a total land area of 1,29,037 sq. km. A population of 50 million people was directly dependent on the Western Ghats and its ecology, and another 200 million people were indirectly dependent. The future of entire southern India was intimately linked with the healthy survival of the Western Ghats.

The petition referred to the massive environmental disasters that assaulted several parts of

Kerala and Karnataka during the consecutive monsoons of 2018 and 2019.

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