

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 828
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.02.2023

Sacred forests in Meghalaya

828. SHRI RAKESH SINHA:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the concept of sacred forests in the State of Meghalaya;
- (b) the total number of sacred forests in the State and their classifications in the three regions, i.e., Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills;
- (c) whether Government assists communities which protect such forests and is also one of the reasons for safety of forests; and
- (d) whether Government would consider utilising spiritual sentiments and traditions to protect forests from the wood smugglers?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a) & (b) As per report received from State of Meghalaya, there are numerous sacred forests in the State of Meghalaya. Further, a comprehensive survey of all the sacred forests in Meghalaya has not been undertaken so far. However, according to the estimates by different academicians, the number of sacred forests in the Meghalaya is likely to be more than 400. The number of sacred forests in each of the three regions in the Meghalaya (viz Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills) has not been assessed by the State Forest Department.

(c) & (d) Protection and management of forests are primarily the responsibility of concerned State/UT Governments. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change implements various Centrally Sponsored Schemes namely Green India Mission, Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme, Development of Wildlife Habitats and CAMPA fund for taking up various afforestation activities and forests and wildlife protection through communities living in and around forest areas.

As per report received from State of Meghalaya, a scheme namely "Grassroot level Response towards Ecosystem Enhancement and Nurturing (GREEN)" is launched in the state to support villages, communities, clans or individuals who commit to conserve and protect natural forests, including sacred forests, for a minimum period of 30 years and also protect forest through awareness and public participation in management of such forests utilising spiritual sentiments and traditions to protect forest from the wood smugglers.
