

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 368
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.02.2025

Forest cover in the country

368. SHRI DEREK O' BRIEN:

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

- (a) whether Government is aware that there has been a loss of 1488 square kilometre of 'unclassified forests' as per the State of the Forest Report 2023;
- (b) if so, the reasons for the same;
- (c) the details of the extant guidelines for estimating the forest cover in the country; and
- (d) whether there is a correlation between 'forest cover' and 'forest area' ?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

- (a) to (d) Forest Survey of India, Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change carries out assessment of Forest Cover of the country every two years and publishes the findings in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR). Assessment of forest cover published in ISFR includes both in the recorded forest areas and outside forest areas as per definition of forest cover which refers to all lands, more than or equal to one hectare in area, with a tree canopy of more than or equal to 10%, irrespective of ownership and legal status and includes orchards, bamboo, and palm.

Recorded Forest Areas includes the Reserved Forests, Protected Forests and Unclassed Forests. The unclassified forest is progressively re-classified as Reserved Forests and Protected Forests by some of the State Governments. However, there has been an overall increase of 89 square kilometer in the Recorded Forest Area as per ISFR 2023 when compared with ISFR 2021. In addition, as per ISFR 2023, the forest and tree cover of the country has increased by 1445.81 square kilometer as compared to the ISFR 2021.

According to Decision 19/CP.9 of the Kyoto Protocol, the definition of a forest can vary from one country to another, depending on the country's capacities and capabilities. Accordingly, India has adopted the structural definition of forest which include a 10% threshold for minimum tree crown cover and a minimum area of 1 hectare with trees in these areas should have the potential to reach a minimum height of 2 to 5m at maturity in their natural habitat.
