

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO: 217
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.03.2025

Recorded Forest Area in Assam

217*. MS. SUSHMITA DEV:

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

- (a) whether the forest cover inside Assam's Recorded Forest Area (RFA), as per the latest India State of Forest Report, has declined, if so, the area declined and the reasons therefor;
- (b) the total area in hectares of forest land in Assam diverted for development projects in the last decade;
- (c) the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) funds allocated and utilised in Assam for afforestation and forest restoration; and
- (d) the steps taken to improve monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to prevent illegal deforestation, especially in Recorded Forest Areas?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV)

- (a) to (d) The statement is laid on the table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to part (a) to (d) of Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 217 due for reply on 20.03.2025 regarding 'Recorded Forest Area in Assam' by Ms. Sushmita Dev

- (a) Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, carries out the assessment of forest and tree cover of the country biennially and the findings are published in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR). The forest cover assessment is a wall-to-wall mapping exercise based on remote sensing supported by intensive ground verification and field data from the National Forest Inventory.

As per ISFR 2023, the total forest and tree cover of the country is 8,27,356.95 square kilometer which is 25.17 per cent of the geographical area of the country. This includes 7,15,342.61 square kilometer as forest cover and 1,12,014.34 square kilometer as tree cover. The current assessment shows an increase of 1445.81 square kilometer in the forest and tree cover as compared to the last assessment of 2021. There has been a net increase of 16,630.25 square kilometer in forest cover during last decade from 2013 and 2023.

As per ISFR, 2023, the total recorded forest area in the State of Assam is 26,836 square kilometer, which is 34.21% of the geographical area. Further, as per the present assessment of forest cover inside recorded forest area/ green wash has declined by 86.66 square kilometer as compared to the last assessment in 2021.

The factors contributing to decline in forest cover in any of the State including the State of Assam may include developmental activities, shifting cultivation practices, human activities, natural calamities, etc.

However, the forest cover in the State of Assam has increased by 748.65 square kilometer that is 2.72% in past one decade from 2013 to 2023. In nutshell, there is a net increase of 1268.11 square kilometer in forest and tree cover of Assam between 2013 to 2023.

- (b) Approval for diversion of 1720.172 hectares of forest land has been accorded for the various developmental projects under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 in the State of Assam during 2014 to 2024.
- (c) During the period 2018-19 to 2023-24, an outlay of Rs. 511.50 crores approved for the State CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority) for taking up afforestation, conservation and protection of forest and wildlife. As per information received from the State of Assam, Rs 355.78 crores of funds have been utilized during the aforesaid period.
- (d) The protection and management of forest and tree resources is primarily the responsibility of the concerned State Government/Union Territory Administration. There are legal frameworks for the protection and management of forest and tree resources which include, the Indian Forest Act 1927, Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam 1980, and the State Forest Acts and Rules. The State Governments /UT Administrations take appropriate actions to protect forests and trees as per the provisions made under these Acts/ Rules. The details in this regard are maintained by the concerned State Government/ UT Administration.

To improve monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to prevent illegal deforestation, the State Government of Assam has reported that various steps have been taken which include:

- (i) Deforestation watch, an Artificial Intelligence based alert system utilizing satellite imagery has been initiated to identify tree felling areas and to share the information to the field staff for quick response.
- (ii) 295 Eco Development Committees (EDCs) and 165 of Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMCs) have been formed involving local people of the fringe villages around Reserved forests and wildlife protected areas to provide them alternate livelihood opportunities and motivate them to protect the nearby forest areas.
- (iii) Enhanced protection measures by raising a new battalion of Assam Forest Protection Force (AFPF) and recruitment of approximately 2000 no. of forest frontline staffs in the year 2023 has been taken.
