

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO: 2321
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.03.2025

Decrease in forest cover in West Bengal

2321. SHRI SAMIK BHATTACHARYA:

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

- (a) whether there has been a decrease in forest cover in West Bengal in the last five years;
- (b) the districts in West Bengal that have experienced the highest decrease in forest cover;
- (c) the primary factors contributing to the decline in forest cover in West Bengal; and
- (d) the measures being taken by Government to address and mitigate the decrease in forest cover in West Bengal?

ANSWER

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

- (a) to (d) 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. 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.

The ISFR 2023 has reported the forest cover of the West Bengal as 16,832.33 square kilometer whereas the forest cover of the West Bengal as per ISFR 2019 was 16,902.00 square kilometer.

As per ISFR, 2023, out of 23 districts of West Bengal, 13 districts have shown increase in the forest cover whereas 10 districts have shown decrease in the forest cover, as compared to ISFR 2021. The districts of West Bengal showing decrease in forest cover are Cooch Behar, Dakshin Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Hoogly, Howrah, Murshidabad, North 24 Parganas, Purba Medinipur, South 24 Parganas and Uttar Dinajpur.

As per information received from the Government of West Bengal, the factors contributing to decline of forest cover in the State of West Bengal may include harvesting of trees by the individual farmer who had raised tree crop on their land outside recorded forest, as per provisions of the West Bengal Trees (Protection and Conservation in non-forest Areas) Act, 2006 after obtaining felling permission.

The protection, conservation and management of the forest resources are primarily the responsibility of the respective State Government and Union territory Administration. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change supports the efforts of the State Government through various schemes and programmes, which include National Mission for a Green India (GIM), Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats, Nagar Van Yojana (NVY). These funds support the efforts of the States and UTs for ecological restoration through afforestation in and outside forest areas, forest landscape restoration, habitat improvement, soil and water conservation measures, and protection etc.
