

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

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UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3732
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.04.2025

Forest conservation and afforestation efforts

3732. SHRI NARHARI AMIN:

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

- (a) the key factors contributing to the increase in the country's forest and tree cover from 24.16 per cent in Indian State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2015 to 25.17 per cent in ISFR 2023;
- (b) the measures taken by the Ministry to ensure that afforestation programmes contribute to biodiversity conservation and not just an increase in tree cover;
- (c) the manner in which the Ministry plans to enhance forest monitoring efforts using advanced technologies such as satellite imagery, GIS mapping, and remote sensing; and
- (d) the manner in which the Ministry ensured effective utilization of CAMPA funds, ₹38,502.21 crore disbursed in the last five years, for afforestation, forest restoration and habitat improvement?

ANSWER

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

- (a) to (c) Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, carries out the assessment of forest cover biennially since 1987 and the findings are published in 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 2015, the total forest and tree cover was 7,94,067.00 square kilometer which accounts for 24.16 percent of the geographical area of the country. 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. As per ISFR 2023, the key factors contributing to the increase in India's forest cover includes natural growth of vegetation, often due to conservation efforts; establishment of new vegetation through afforestation initiatives, improved protection measures in plantation and traditional forest areas, increase in trees growing outside designated forest areas, regeneration of areas under shifting cultivation, positive changes not discernible during previous cycle might also show up in the subsequent cycle due to growth in the intervening period, etc.

Further, the protection, conservation and management of forest and tree resources is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations.

The Ministry provides technical and financial support to the States/UTs for protection, conservation and management of forests in the country. For afforestation, the Ministry provides funds under various schemes and programmes such as National Mission for a Green India (GIM), Development of Wildlife Habitats (DWH), Forest Fire Prevention and Management Schemes (FPM), Nagar Van Yojana (NVY) and Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI). Afforestation is also carried out by the States/UTs under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA). 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.

It is a result of the comprehensive action taken regarding protection and conservation of forests as well as afforestation efforts that India's forest and tree cover has increased by 33,289.95 square kilometer between ISFR 2015 & ISFR 2023. There is a general improvement in soil health, soil organic carbon, improvement in humus etc. and the increase in forest areas mixed size classes indicates improved floral biodiversity and improved surroundings for faunal biodiversity.

The first report of 1987 used LANDSAT-MSS satellite data with a spatial resolution of 80 m at 1:1 million scale whereas the latest report i.e. ISFR 2023 is based on Resourcesat-2 LISS III satellite image, with a spatial resolution of 23.5 m and scale of 1:50,000. The Ministry has always kept pace with technological advancements and improved its assessment over the years.

- (d) The primary objective of Compensatory Afforestation is to compensate for the loss of forestland and ecosystem services against the forestland diverted for non-forestry purposes.

National CAMPA is dedicated for development, improvement and restoration of forests and biodiversity that strengthen life supporting ecosystems and their services through compensatory afforestation, reforestation and restoration.

CAMPA fund is used to compensate for the loss of forest land and ecosystem services against the forest land diverted for non-forestry purposes and is used for eco-restoration of degraded forest. The compensatory levies available with the respective States and Union Territories is used on the activities in the approved Annual Plan of Operation. National CAMPA supports States/UTs by approving their Annual Plan of Operations for utilization of the State CAMPA fund to protect and conserve forests, improve quality of forests and wildlife habitats.
