

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1149
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.11.2019

Forest Area

1149. SHRI GIRISH BHALCHANDRA BAPAT:

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

- (a) whether the forest area is rapidly shrinking in urban areas, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether it is a fact that in smart cities that are being developed with the objective of maximum forest cover have less than six per cent area under forest and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government is aware that the pollution in the cities is increasing with the declining forest cover; and
- (d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto and corrective measures being taken by the Government to tackle the situation?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)

- (a) & (b) Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry carries out assessment of forest cover of the country biennially and the findings are published in India State of Forest Report (ISFR). As per the latest report i.e. ISFR-2017, the total forest and tree cover in the country is 8,02,088 square kilometre (forest cover 7,08,273 square kilometre, tree cover 93,815 square kilometre) which is 24.39% of the geographical area of the country. There is an increase of 8,021 square kilometre (forest cover 6,778 square kilometre, tree cover 1,243 square kilometre) of total forest and tree cover in the country including urban areas compared to that of ISFR-2015.

One of the features of smart cities is preserving and developing open spaces- parks, playgrounds and recreational spaces in order to enhance the quality of life of citizens, reduce the urban heat effects and generally promote eco-balance. Urban forestry is also an important tool for storm water management as trees absorb and store rainwater through the canopy, and slow down and filter runoff with their roots. Other benefits include noise control, traffic control, and glare and reflection control.

The State/UTs Governments are responsible for carrying out the afforestation activities/ tree plantation drive in the concerned State/UTs.

The ISFR published by FSI provides State/districts wise forest cover of the country and changes thereon with respect to the previous assessment. However, FSI does not assess forest cover of urban areas and smart cities.

As per ISFR-2017, the forest cover of districts included as overlapping with the major metropolitan cities are given below:-

(Area in Square kilometre)

Metro Cities District	Geographical area	Forest Cover as per ISFR 2015	Forest Cover as per ISFR 2017 (percentage of geographical area)	Increase in Forest Cover
Delhi (State) (All Districts)	1,483	188.77	192.41 (12.97)	+3.64
Kolkata (District)	185	0	1 (0.54)	+1
Chennai (District)	144	13	14 (8.00)	+1
Mumbai (City)	157	2	3(1.91)	+1

As per ISFR-2017, there is an increase of forest cover in the above major metropolitan cities compared to that of ISFR-2015.

- (c) & (d) The increase in pollution in the cities is mainly due to increase in the number of vehicles, emissions due to industrial smoke, bio mass burning, open waste burning and operation of fuel based power plants and diesel generation sets.

The corrective measures taken by Government to tackle pollution in cities are as follows:-

- (i) The Central Government has launched National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) under the Central Sector “Control of Pollution” Scheme as a long-term, time-bound, national level strategy to tackle the air pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner with targets to achieve 20 % to 30 % reduction in PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations by 2024 keeping 2017 as the base year for the comparison of concentration. A total of 102 non-attainment cities have been identified based on ambient air quality data for the period 2011 – 2015 and WHO report 2014/2018. The city specific Action Plans have been approved for ground implementation for all 102 non-attainment cities.

Out of 102 non-attainment cities identified under NCAP, for the cities with million plus population and $PM_{10} > 90 \mu g/m^3$, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change is funding ₹10 Crore in the current year for 28 such priority cities for various components, that, *inter alia*, include Installation and commissioning of CAAQMS, Creating green buffer zone along the roads, Mechanical street sweeper, Mobile Enforcement Unit, Public awareness and capacity building activities, Water sprinkler.

For the remaining non-attainment cities, funding of ₹10 Lakh per city for cities with population less than 5 Lakh and ₹ 20 Lakh per city, for cities with a population of 5 to 10 Lakh have been sanctioned.

- (ii) A new Central Sector Scheme on 'Promotion of Agricultural Mechanization for in-situ management of Crop Residue in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi' for the period from 2018-19 and 2019-20 has been launched with an outlay of Rs.1151.8 Crore.
- (iii) BS-IV standards have been adopted from 1st April, 2017. Leapfrogging from BS-IV to BS-VI fuel standards since 1st April, 2018 in NCT of Delhi, in NCR since October 2019 and from 1st April, 2020 in the rest of the country for both fuel as well as vehicles.
- (iv) Operationalisation of Eastern Peripheral Expressway and Western Peripheral Expressway in 2018 to divert non-destined traffic from Delhi.
- (v) To promote electric vehicles, Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) -2 scheme has been rolled out with an outlay of Rs 10000 Crore for 3 years.
- (vi) Permit requirement for electric vehicles has been exempted.
- (vii) Under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) Mission launched by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs aims for:-
 - Ensure that every household has access to a tap with the assured supply of water and a sewerage connection.
 - Increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery and well maintained open spaces (e.g. parks) and
 - Reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport (e.g. walking and cycling). All these outcomes are valued by citizens, particularly women, and indicators and standards have been prescribed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in the form of Service Level Benchmarks.
