

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1150
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.11.2019

Bio-diversity Hotspots

1150. SHRI PRADYUT BORDOLOI:

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

- (a) whether very rich bio-diversity Hotspots exist in the Tinsukia, Assam under Digboi forest division in its Reserved Forests and Dehing Patkai wildlife sanctuary, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether as many as 17 notified Reserved Forests and more than eight Proposed Reserved Forests besides the Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary fall under Digboi forest division, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government is aware that an organized coal mafia with the criminal connivance of certain forest officials and local administration has been carrying on deforestation and wide scale “Rat Hole” coal mining activities with the mechanized equipment inside the reserved forest for more than three years now, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) whether the Government proposes to conduct an urgent inquiry and depute a fact finding team to these affected areas in Tinsukia to protect and restore the bio-diversity hotspots and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

- (a) Yes Sir. As per the information received from Government of Assam, Dehing Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary in Digboi and Dibrugarh Forest Division, which is classified as “Assam Valley Tropical Wet Evergreen Forest” was notified on 13th June 2004. It is home to faunal species like elephant, Tiger, Hollock Gibbon, Slow Loris, Chinese Pangolin leopard, reptiles, beetles, butterflies, moths, lesser cats, hornbill etc. The floral species present in the region include Hollong, Mekai, Nahar, Keteki, Togor, Champa, Ajar Tree, Orchids, Ferns etc.

- (b) As per the information received from Government of Assam, there are 15 Reserve Forests (RF) and 6 Proposed Reserve Forests (PRF) in the Digboi Division. On 13th June 2004 the Government of Assam has declared an area of 111.9 Sq. km forest area as the 'Dehing Patkai Sanctuary' of which 2/3rd area falls in Digboi Division and 1/3rd fall in Dibrugarh Division. The details of RF/PRF in Digboi Forest Division are as below:

Reserve Forest under Digboi Forest Division

| Sl. No. | Name of the Reserve Forest | Area of Reserve Forest(in Ha.) |
|---------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Upper Dehing Reserve Forest (East Block) + 1 st Addition | 13173.82 |
| 2. | Digboi Reserve Forest (East Block) | 70.2 |
| 3. | Tirap Reserve Forest | 1455.6 |
| 4. | Namphai Reserve Forest + 1 st Addition | 2117.41 |
| 5. | Tipong Reserve Forest | 445.34 |
| 6. | Lekhapani Reserve Forest | 1396.76 |
| 7. | Paharpur Reserve Forest | 166 |
| 8. | Upper Dehing Reserve Forest (West Block) | 27485.06 |
| 9. | Bogapani Reserve Forest | 97.17 |
| 10. | Digboi Reserve Forest (WB) | 972.47 |
| 11. | Dirak Reserve Forest | 3042.51 |
| 12. | Tinkopani Reserve Forest | 3033.6 |
| 13. | Kotha Reserve Forest | 1133.6 |
| 14. | Mkumpani Reserve Forest | 485 |
| 15. | 1 st Addition to Dirak Reserve Forest | 676.14 |

Proposed Reserve Forest under Digboi Forest Division

| Sl. No. | Name of Reserve Forest | Area of Reserve Forest(in Ha.) |
|---------|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. | Saleki PRF | 2940.00 |
| 2. | 1 st Additional to Triap PRF | 3025.00 |
| 3. | 1 st Additional to Tipong PRF | 2020.00 |
| 4. | Dalai PRF | 244.15 |
| 5. | Deosali PRF | 220.00 |
| 6. | 1 st Additional to Makumpani PRF | 55.00 |

- (c) Yes, the Government of Assam informed that the State Government is aware of illegal coal mining in forest areas of Digboi Division namely, Compartment No. 2 of Namphai Reserve Forest (RF), Tinkapani RF, Tipong RF/PRF, Tirap RF/PRF, Lekhpani RF and Saleki PRF. Connivance of forest officials in illegal coal mining has not been reported. However, action has been initiated against certain forest officials of Digboi Division for dereliction of duty. The details of areas where illegal coal mining was detected by forest officials in the recent past during combing operations are given below:

| Sl. No. | Combed up area of RF/PRF | Area of the RF/PRF | Illegal mining in Hact |
|---------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | Tirap PRF | 3025 | 40.47 |
| 2. | Tipong PRF | 2020 | 70.20 |
| 3. | Tipong RF | 445.340 | 18.70 |

Government of Assam has informed that the Rat Holes, which were dug, were filled up and planting of seedlings was carried out.

- (d) As per the information received from Government of Assam, the State Forest Department conducts field inspection/enquiry from time to time to check all kinds of illegalities in forest areas including illegal coal mining and the reports are submitted to the concerned authorities and the State Government for requisite action. Further, the following measures are taken up by the Assam Forest Department to prevent illegal Coal Mining:
- i. Seizure of coal, vehicles and Machineries and apprehending offenders indulging in illegal Coal Mining.
 - ii. Deployment of armed personnel of Assam Forest Protection Force in the affected Forest Divisions.
 - iii. Coordinated efforts involving the line departments of the Government/ concerned agencies such as Police, Civil Administration etc. being made.
