

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO: 3254
TO BE ANSWERED ON 13.03.2020

Increase in Forest Cover

3254. SHRI DUSHYANT SINGH:
SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY:
SHRI JAYANT SINHA:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that the forest cover is consistently increasing yet the percentage increase as per India State for Forest Report (ISFR) 2017-19 has only been 0.17 per cent, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government proposes to protect dense forests by strict compliance to rules and regulations, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government plans to achieve the rate and quantity of expansion of forest cover by 33 per cent of the geographical area;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government is likely to conduct comprehensive survey every five years to keep a check on quality of forest cover, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

- (a) Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organization under the Ministry carries out the assessment of forest and tree cover of the country biennially and the findings are published in India State of Forest Report (ISFR). The total forest and tree cover of the country, as per the ISFR 2019 is 8,07,276 km² which is 24.56% of the total geographical area of the country. The current assessment shows an increase of 3,976 km² (0.56%) of forest cover, 1212 km² (1.29%) of tree cover and 5,188 km² (0.65%) of forest and tree cover put together, at the national level as compared to previous assessment of 2017.
- (b) Protection of forests including dense forests from various threats, including encroachment, is primarily the responsibility of the respective State or UT who take action as per the existing Acts/Rules. State/UT Forest Departments also issue directions

to field officers/staff for regular patrolling and take action against encroachers of forest land and remove encroachments, if any, as per extant law.

Government of India issues advisories to the States and UTs to remove encroachment on forest land. Funds are provided to States and UTs for forest protection measures such as survey and demarcation of forest boundaries, fixing of boundary pillars etc under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016 and Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules, 2018, funds.

- (c)& (d) As per the National Forest Policy 1988, the national goal should be to have a minimum of one- third of the total land area of the country under forest or tree cover. In the hill and in mountainous regions, the aim should be to maintain two-third of the area under such cover in order to prevent erosion and land degradation and to ensure the stability of fragile eco-system.

To increase the forest and tree cover further in the country, Ministry has been taking several initiatives. These include Centrally Sponsored Schemes such as National Afforestation Programme, National Mission for a Green India and Development of Wildlife Habitats. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules, 2018 also contain provisions for taking up assisted natural regeneration, artificial regeneration and silvicultural operations in forests which contribute to increase in forest cover. Afforestation and tree planting activities, including in non-forest areas, are also taken up under various programmes/funding sources such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and under the schemes/plans of States and UTs.

- (e) FSI, Dehradun carries out a comprehensive remote sensing based assessment of the country's forest cover every two years wherein the forest cover is classified in various density classes, namely Very Dense Forest, Moderately Dense Forest and Open Forest. The assessment is validated by intensive ground truthing. FSI also conducts National Forest Inventory involving survey and enumeration on a large number of sample plots distributed throughout the country. The findings of these activities, along with several other studies, are published in the India State of Forest Report which is published biennially. So far, FSI has published 16 such reports.
