

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**STARRED QUESTION NO: 224**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.03.2025

**Declining Forest Cover in Assam**

224\*. SHRI GAURAV GOGOI:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the National Green Tribunal's (NGT) recent directive seeking a response from the Centre regarding the declining forest cover in the State of Assam;
- (b) the steps taken by the Government to address deforestation and forest degradation in the said State during the last five years;
- (c) the details of the measures being implemented to ensure compliance with environmental protection laws in Assam, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas;
- (d) whether the Government has conducted any assessments recently on the impact of deforestation in the said State and if so, the details of key findings; and
- (e) the specific actions being taken to restore lost forest cover and prevent further environmental damage in the State of Assam?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
(SHRI BHUPENDER YADAV)

(a) to (e) The statement is laid on the table of the House.

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**Statement referred to in reply to part (a) to (e) of Lok Sabha Starred Question No.224 due for reply on 17.03.2025 regarding 'Declining Forest Cover in Assam' by Shri Gaurav Gogoi**

- (a) The National Green Tribunal's (NGT) has impleaded the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in Original Application (O.A.) No. 20/2025, related to state of Assam.
- (b)to(e) The protection and management of forest and tree resources is primarily the responsibility of the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations. There are legal frameworks for the protection and management of forest and tree resources of the country, which include, the Indian Forest Act, 1927; Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980; the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; and the State Forest Acts and Rules.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issues advisories to State Governments/UT Administrations to protect forests and wildlife, as per the provisions of the law. Further, in order to protect forests, various measures are taken by the State Forest Departments, which include survey and demarcation of forest areas, fixing of pillars along forest boundary and regular patrolling by field staff to guard against illicit felling of trees. It is a result of the comprehensive action taken regarding protection and conservation of forests as well as afforestation efforts that India's forest cover has increased from 6,98,712.36 square kilometer to 7,15,342.61 square kilometer and the tree cover from 91,267 square kilometer to 1,12,014.34 square kilometer during last decade between ISFR (India State of Forest Report) 2013 to ISFR 2023.

In addition, the Ministry provides technical and financial support to the States /UTs for protection, conservation and management of forests in the country through various centrally sponsored schemes. For afforestation, the Government has provided funds under 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.

The State Government of Assam has reported that various steps for ecological restoration, prevention of environmental damages and addressing the forest degradation have been taken through protection, conservation, and restoration of forests in last five years. The details are as under:

- (i) Under Externally Aided Project, namely, Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) Phase-II, plantation over 12,032 Ha has been raised since 2019-2020.
- (ii) In addition to this, under the CAMPA scheme, plantation over 10,759.145 Ha has been completed since 2020-2021.
- (iii) More than 10,000 Ha of forest area in Reserve Forests and Wild-life Sanctuary has been made encroachment free.

- (iv) Enhanced protection measures by raising a new battalion of Assam Forest Protection Force (AFPF) and recruitment of approximately 2000 no. of forest frontline staffs in the year 2023 has been taken.
- (v) In the mega plantation drive called Amrit Brikshya Andolan, a total of 4.31 crore seedlings were planted outside the forest areas during 2023 and 2024.

The Van (Snarakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 restricts de-reservation of forests or non-forestry use of any forestland for any purpose, other than reafforestation. Hence, deforestation in forest area is not a permissible activity.

In addition, while regulating the diversion of forest land for various developmental purposes under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980; a balance between conservation and development is ensured with appropriate mitigation measures which includes the Compensatory Afforestation (CA), payment of Net Present Value (NPV), Soil and Moisture Conservation Works, and the site specific conservation plan.

The State Government of Assam has also informed that Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ) around all Protected Areas of Assam are maintained strictly according to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the rules made thereunder. Eco-Sensitive Zone for eight Protected Areas have been notified.

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