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Capital's green cover doubled in two decades: Centre to Delhi high court

14 March 2023

Quoting from the India State Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 published by Forest Survey of India, the Centre in an affidavit said that the increase in the green cover depicts gradual improvement in its percentage share of the geographical area of the state from 10.2% in 2001 to 23.06% in 2021.

Green cover in the national capital has doubled in the last two decades from 151sqkm in 2001 to 342sqkm in 2021 due to large-scale planting programmes undertaken by several agencies, the union government on Monday told the Delhi high court.

Quoting from the India State Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 published by Forest Survey of India, the Centre in an affidavit said that the increase in the green cover depicts gradual improvement in its percentage share of the geographical area of the state from 10.2% in 2001 to 23.06% in 2021.

The Centre said that according to the India State of Forest Report 2021, "very dense forest" cover has remained constant and "medium dense forest" cover in Delhi has increased over the past two years, adding that this shift towards increase in denser forest areas is a welcome sign as it signifies an increase in the capacity of forests to mitigate environmental pollution.

According to the Forest Survey of India, a department under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, "very dense forest" is defined as "all lands with tree cover (including mangrove cover) of canopy density of 70% and above". Medium dense forest is defined as "all lands with tree cover (including mangrove cover) of canopy density between 40% and 70% above".

The Centre, however, added that ISFR 2021 recorded a decrease in 0.62sqkm of open forest in comparison to ISFR 2019, which has effected a change of 0.44sqkm in the total forest area of Delhi.

Open forest areas are all lands with tree cover (including mangrove cover) of canopy density between 10% and 40%.

The affidavit was filed before a bench of chief justice Satish Chandra Sharma and justice Subramonium Prasad, who were a hearing a batch of PILs, including a suo motu petition on the poor air quality and pollution in the national capital.

The document was filed in pursuance to the court's earlier direction asking the Centre, Delhi government, forest department and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to explain how a multi-storeyed building, in ridge area, was permitted construction.

In response, the union government said that the comparative areas of (forest cover and tree cover) Delhi reported from 2001 to 2021 has shown continuous increase in the forest cover and tree cover as reported in ISFR.

On Monday, the court granted time to the amicus curiae, senior advocate Kailash Vasdev to respond to the Centre's affidavit and posted the matter for hearing on July 13.

The Centre has told the court that the day-to-day management of sanctuaries and national parks is the responsibility of states and Union territories.

It said the Union ministry provides technical and financial support to the states and Union territories and as per the relevant provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state or Union territory is the authority to control, manage and maintain all sanctuaries and national parks.

“It may also be noted that in case of any encroachments in the sanctuaries and national parks, the powers to remove such encroachments are vested with States / Union Territories under Section 34A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972,” the affidavit said.

It said prior approval of the central government under section 2 of the Forest (conservation) Act, 1980 is mandatory for carrying out any non-forestry activity on forest land and that ‘Land’ is a subject matter of the state government.

“The forest areas and the legal boundaries thereof are determined and maintained by the concerned state government. That being the repository of land records, the state government has the primary responsibility to determine status of any parcel of land giving due regards to the Gazette notifications, provisions under the State and Central Acts and concerned judgments and directions passed by the Supreme Court,” the Centre said.

Source:<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/delhi-news/capitals-green-cover-doubled-in-two-decades-centre-to-delhi-high-court-101678733273759.html>