

Forests in peril: MP lost 408 sq km forest in 5 years

Oct 4, 2025, 12.27 AM IST



Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh is the only state in central India showing a decline in forest cover. Across the country, five states reported a decline, with the four others located in the north-east.

While India's forest cover increased in the last five years, Madhya Pradesh's reduced. It also leads the country in forest land encroachment.

Between 2019 and 2023, MP lost 408.56 square kilometres of forest, according to the union govt's reply in the Rajya Sabha on July 24. Among states, only Arunachal Pradesh recorded a higher loss, at 806.43 square kilometres. MP's forest land also suffers the highest level of encroachment.

Despite the loss, Madhya Pradesh still has the largest forest cover in India, with a total of 77,073.44 square kilometres.

As forest cover declined in MP and four northwestern states, the overall country's forest cover increased during the period, according to the union govt. Nationally, forest cover rose by 3,093.61 square kilometres—from 712,249.00 sq km in 2019 to 715,342.61 sq km in 2023.

Further, 528.59 lakh hectares of forestland in MP are under encroachment—the highest in the country, the union govt informed the Rajya Sabha on August 21. The issue comes into focus as MP marks Wildlife Week from October 1 to 7.

The union govt stated that protection, conservation, and management of forests are primarily the responsibility of state govts. Legal frameworks include the Indian Forest Act, 1927; the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980; the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; and various state forest acts and rules.

The union ministry of environment, forest, and climate change issues advisories to state govts for forest protection and provides technical and financial support through schemes like the National Mission for a Green India, Forest Fire Prevention and Management, Nagar Van Yojana, Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats, and the Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes. Afforestation efforts are funded under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), though CAMPA funds have faced criticism for irregularities at the state level.

The top five states reporting forest cover decline in the last five years, per the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2019, 2021, and 2023, include Madhya Pradesh and four northeastern states.

LOSING FORESTS, LEAF BY LEAF, TREE AFTER TREE:

MP's Forests Take a Hit While India Turns Greener

The Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun, an organisation under the ministry of environment, forest and climate change, carries out the assessment of forest cover biennially since 1987, and the findings are published in ISFR report

SHRINKING FOREST COVER:

State - ISFR 2019 - ISFR 2021 - ISFR 2023

Arunachal Pradesh - 66,688.00 sq km - 65,972.74 sq km - 65,881.57 sq km

Madhya Pradesh - 77,482 sq km - 77,444.98 sq km - 77,073.44 sq km

Nagaland - 12,486 sq km - 12,274.36 sq km - 12,222.47 sq km

Manipur - 16,847 sq km - 16,640.29 sq km - 16,585.46 sq km

Meghalaya - 17,119 sq km - 16,996.84 sq km - 16,966.84 sq km

(Area in square kilometres)

MAX ENCROACHMENT

State - Encroached area - Area of Encroachment Cleared

Madhya Pradesh - 546,089.45 hectare- 17,496.54 hectare

Assam - 362,082.62 hectare - 0 hectare

Karnataka - 86,308.44 hectare - 11,196.64 hectare

Maharashtra - 57,554.87 hectare - 244.72 hectare

Arunachal Pradesh - 53,499.96 hectare - 0 hectare

(Data as per the Union govt)