

Gujarat government to use Rs 1500 Crore CAMPA fund to increase forest cover

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The Gujarat government plans to use the Rs 1500 crore of CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Management and Planning Authority) fund for a host of afforestation measures in the state as well as wildlife conservation.

It should be noted that whenever forest land is diverted for some other purpose, the organisation/company seeking the land has to put up a certain amount in the CAMPA fund.

At a press conference held in Gandhinagar, deputy chief minister Nitin Patel said the Centre will be releasing the rest of the CAMPA funds on Friday and it will be used for additional plantation of 3.5 crore trees. "The state government has set itself a target of 10 crore tree plantation in the state of which 6.5 crore have been accomplished," said Patel. He added that since the year 2009-10, the Gujarat government had deposited Rs 2291.21 crore as part of the fund and so far only Rs 557.40 crore had been released by the Centre in various installments. Generally, 90% of the CAMPA funds are to be given to the state government for use in the state.

Patel said the fund will be used for compulsory afforestation, developing cultural forest, ensuring moisture preservation through model plots. He added that the funds will also be used to create nurseries and increase urban forestry, bamboo plantation and seed production too.

"The funds will increase employment opportunities for Adivasi areas," Patel said. A part of the fund will also be used for wildlife conservation, particularly for Asiatic lions.

"The money will be used to create walls around open wells in villages in and around areas populated by lions. As of now, 36000 wells have been covered but 6000 are still open and this poses a danger to the lions. The funds will be used to build a wall around such wells," said Patel.

Environment minister, Ganpat Vasava said that the forest cover in areas of the state due to incessant rains have seen a rise over the years. "As per the forest survey an additional 450 sq km of the forest area has increased in south Gujarat while the number of trees as part of social forestry increased from 23 crores to 33 crores," said Vasava.

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