

Meghalaya Lost Over 110 Sqkm of Green Cover

2017 report says four more NE state saw receding forests

Feb 19, 2018

NEW DELHI: The northeast India, which also includes Meghalaya, once considered being the last vestige of hope for a green environment is losing its vital forest cover in contrast to the rest of the country, according to the latest report by the Forest Survey of India.

The India State of Forest Report 2017, released by Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) Harsh Vardhan notes a decrease in forest cover in five northeastern states — Mizoram (531sq km), Nagaland (459sq km) Arunachal Pradesh (190sq km) Tripura (164 sq km) and Meghalaya (112 sq km).

In Meghalaya, Jaintia Hills lost a total of 64 sq km of forest cover loss followed by West Garo Hills which lost 27 sq km and West Khasi Hills with a total loss of 26 sq km. Other districts lost a total of 5 sq km. However, East Khasi hills gained 6 sq km of forest cover. The report mentions the reasons for this decline as shifting cultivation, biotic pressure, rotational felling, and diversion of forest land for development activities, submergence of forest cover, agriculture expansion and natural disasters. The north-east is among the most densely forested regions of the country, supporting unique flora and fauna. This development was the dark spot in a report which had several revelations for cheering. Forest and tree cover had increased by one per cent since 2015 with now 8,021sqkm under forest cover. More importantly, very dense forest cover (VDF),

which absorbs the maximum amount of carbon dioxide, has increased by 1.36 per cent. Mangrove cover has increased by 181sqkm with Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh registering the increase. The total carbon stock in forest has increased by 38 million tonnes to 7,082 million tonnes.

Another positive trend was the increase in water bodies by 2,647sqkm over the last decade. The minister said the green highways policy to develop a140,000 km long tree line would help in increasing green cover.

The survey itself notes that much of the increase in the forest cover can be attributed to plantation activities within and outside recorded forest areas as well as in the interpretation of satellite data. Since its inception, the audit has been recording plantations, including commercial monocultures. Such green wealth does have ecological functions but patches of greenery cannot sustain endangered animals nor give birth to rivers or control floods. Several studies have shown that such monocultures (one, two or, at the most, three tree species) are no substitute for biodiverse ecosystems. In the hill state maximum loss of forest cover was recorded from jaintia hills with 64 sq km loss. It is followed by west Garo hills 27 sw km and west Khasi hills 26 sq km loss. Other districts lost 5 sq km forest loss. Only eastkhasi hills reported 6 km gain in forest cover.

Source:

<http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2018/02/19/meghalaya-lost-over-110-sqkm-of-green-cover/>