

Delhi: Bid to ensure deemed forests live up to name

TNN | Jan 3, 2024, 09:45 AM IST



NEW DELHI: The forest department has started assessing the condition of deemed forests in the city to record the change in tree density in such areas. Department officials will visit these areas accompanied by officials of the land-owning agencies and carry out plantation of trees in depleted deemed forests. The forest department recently filed an affidavit on this matter in Delhi High Court, which is hearing a plea regarding the conditions of the deemed forests. "The deputy conservators of forests (DCFs) are required to assess the conditions of deemed forest areas, clearly recording the change in tree density and to undertake joint visits to the sites with land-owning agencies to plan re-afforestation. In case of any violation found under extant Acts, rules and direction of the courts, action may be initiated accordingly," said the affidavit.



A forest officer said, “We have directed DCFs and land-owning agencies to determine the space in deemed forests. Plantations will be carried out in the deemed forests’ vacant spaces after including the targets in the next financial year’s plantation drive.”

The forest department also informed the high court that digitalisation of deemed forest land of 1,049.6 hectares and 287.5km in Delhi had been completed, while digitalisation of 656.5 hectares and 93.7km had been partly accomplished, leaving 408.3 hectares and 77km to be tackled. “We have finished digitalisation of deemed forests falling under the forest department and the process is under way for those under the purview of other departments,” explained an official.

The forest department has also asked the Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change to clarify if the roadside plantations that were once part of deemed forests could still be termed as deemed forests since the stretches had lost tree density over the years. The forest department has sought this clarification under the Forest

Conservation (Amendment) Act after the high court asked the forest department to inform it on the steps taken on the depletion of the deemed forests.

Tree activist Bhavreen Kandhari said people should know that there were forests in Delhi other than the ones under the forest department. “Unfortunately, the forests that are under the management of other departments have not been protected in the past years,” said Kandhari. “Deemed forests have been destroyed over the years and permission to fell trees in these forests aren’t taken under the Forest Conservation Act. There is an urgent need to protect the existing deemed forests before they vanish. Steps also have to be taken to replant trees in these forests to undo the damages of time.”