

## Dense forests get Odisha double aid under 15th Finance Commission recommendations

21 August 2020



BHUBANESWAR: Odisha's forest conservation efforts are going to generate the Naveen Patnaik Government substantial revenue as it stands to get Rs 6,257 crore for 'forest and ecology' in 2020-21 as per the 15th Finance Commission recommendations.

The finance panel has incentivized forest conservation in devolution of taxes to states which means the State will get more than double it had received under the 14th Finance Commission under the criteria 'Forest'. Odisha had got Rs 2824 crore then.

'Forest & Ecology' has been given 10 pc weightage by the 15th Finance Commission against 7.5 pc weightage to 'Forest' by the 14th Finance Commission. The score for each state is derived by calculating the share of the dense forest of each state in the aggregate dense forest of all the states. The 15th Finance Commission has earmarked Rs 85,518 crore under the criteria for the states.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Sandeep Tripathy said, Odisha has greatly benefited as it was among the top five states in India with the parameter of percentage of dense forests. "The increased allocation is a testimony of Odisha Government's pledge and drive to enhance the forest cover and bio-diversity in the State," Tripathy said.

While the geographical area under forest in Odisha is 1,55,707 square kilometres (sq km) as per the State of Forest Report 2017, 28337 sq km have dense forest which includes very dense and medium dense forest areas. The forest and ecology inter-se share of Odisha was calculated to be 7.317 pc.

He, however, said out of 185 sq km increase in forest area in Odisha, only 57 sq km is outside and 128 sq km is inside recorded forest. Tripathy said the State is attaching importance to Community Forest Resource (CFR) and Vana Surakhya Samiti (VSS) apart from Ama Jungle Yojana. The number of VSS is likely to increase from 11,000 to 20,000 by the year-end.

The share of states in the Centre's taxes has been recommended by the 15th Finance Commission to be decreased from 42 pc during the 2015-20 period to 41 pc for 2020-21. The Commission headed by NK Singh was required to submit two reports. The first report, consisting of recommendations for 2020-21 financial year, was tabled in Parliament on February 1, 2020. The final report with recommendations for the 2021-26 period will be submitted by October 30, 2020.

Odisha's share in the devolution of taxes has been calculated at Rs 39,586 crore for 2020-21 financial year. Besides, the State will also receive Rs 2258 crore for rural local bodies and Rs 1087 crore for urban local bodies. However, in the 2020-21 budget estimates, Rs 36,300 crore has been allocated to Odisha which is Rs 3286 crore less than the 15th Finance Commission recommendations.

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2020/aug/21/dense-forests-get-odisha-double-aid-under-15th-finance-commission-recommendations-2186412.html>