



FDCM wants 287sq km lush forests in lieu of Kanhargaon

11 October 2021

Nagpur: At a time when forests are necessary for ecological security and to fight climate change, forest department's move to grant 287 square kilometre (sq km) high-quality forests — equivalent to the area occupied by 26 Navegaon Bandh lakes — to the Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (FDCM) has come in for sharp criticism from greens.

On Friday, principal chief conservator of forests, head of forest force (PCCF (HoFF)) G Saiprakash held a meeting in Chandrapur to discuss the issue with officials concerned, who were asked to identify reserve forest patches adjoining the existing FDCM area in the district. The area is being demanded in lieu of 256 sq km area diverted for Kanhargaon wildlife sanctuary.

Sources said the HoFF had sought a report about the proposed area for FDCM, which would be at least 10km from Kanhargaon. They were asked to identify some compartments in the Ballarshah range.

FDCM has identified a little over 287 sq km spread across 134 compartments. Of this, 30 sq km area (19 compartments) is in Dhaba range under Central Chanda division in Chandrapur, and 257sq km (115 compartments) in Allapalli division under Gadchiroli circle.

Chandrapur officials are already opposed to diverting the Dhaba area to FDCM. If 30 sq km of the 53 sq km Dhaba range is transferred, the range will shrink to a mere 24 sq km. Central Chanda's 90% revenue from logging operations comes from Dhaba which also has two adult tigers and cubs, and is also a corridor.

Opposing the move, Gadchiroli honorary wildlife warden Uday Patel said, "Instead of handing over 30 sq km area from Dhaba to FDCM, its leftover area of 75 sq km surrounding Kanhargaon should immediately be included in the sanctuary, without which the new protected area is incomplete. The said area is a bottleneck formation and has maximum perennial streams used by wildlife."

Wildlife conservationist Prafulla Bhamburkar said, "FDCM's monoculture plantations (mainly teak) for generating revenue are now outdated, when climate change demands forests for carbon sequestration. Old, dense mixed forests having cultural heritage values are now more important to maintain biodiversity, as well as for ecological balance. These valuable forests are on the radar of the corporation, mainly in eastern Vidarbha, after the corporation retreated to north and western Maharashtra."

Bhamburkar added, "On one hand, the state government is striving to save old urban trees having heritage value and on the other hand, high-value forest is being clear-felled by FDCM. Such old mixed forests act as food security and habitat for people and wildlife. In the present scenario, FDCM's expertise should be used for wasteland greenery projects."

State wildlife board member Bandu Dhotre echoed the view. “In the present context, there is no need to give forest area to FDCM anywhere in the state. Instead, the corporation should be closed down in a phased manner, and the area with it should be handed over to the territorial wing. FDCM is still working with a 1952 mindset. Forest policies now aim for betterment and restoration of natural mix forest for the country’s ecological security, and not for revenue collection,” Dhotre said.

Patel said, “What type of development is FDCM doing? Taking fat salaries for cutting forests is no big achievement. The environmental value of these forests is higher, considering food, water, soil and biodiversity conservation.”

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/fdcm-wants-287sq-km-lush-forests-in-lieu-of-kanhargaon/articleshow/86923076.cms>