

Green activist urges UP govt to issue notification to ensure post-plantation maintenance of tree saplings for 8 years

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AGRA: As over 18 districts in UP, including Agra and Mathura, lose considerable forest cover in the past two years, environmentalist, Akash Vashishtha, has written a letter to the UP government urging it to issue a notification for ensuring post-plantation maintenance and care of trees for at least a period of 8 years.

According to the latest India State of Forests Report (ISFR) 2019, nearly 9.4 sq km forests have been wiped out in Agra in two years since 2017. The city, which is known for World heritage monument Taj Mahal, one of the seven wonders of the world, attracts 6.8 million tourists from across the world annually, while adjoining district Mathura, which attracts over 100 million pilgrims and tourists every year, too has lost nearly 3 sq km of

forests in the same period.





As many as 11 districts including Aligarh, Banda, Bulandshahr, Ghaziabad, Hardoi, Jalaun, Kannauj, Kheri, Mainpuri, Pilibhit and

Shrawasti have recorded a negative decline, ranging between -1% to -2%, in their forest/tree covers from 2017 to 2019, as per the report.

Despite massive plantation drive by the state government every year, tree cover (outside forests) of Uttar Pradesh has decreased by 100 sq km in two years.

According to information, the state government has fixed a target of planting a total 25 crore trees this year under the government's plantation drive. In fact, the state had taken the initiative to plant 22 crore saplings on August 9, 2019. The UP forest department had roped in farmers as stakeholders to plant seedlings in their fields.

In the letter, Vashishtha wrote, “the primary reason for the high mortality of the plants is the lack of maintenance and care for the tender plants. It would be in the state’s interest if the focus of these plantations and plantation targets shifts from numbers to their maintenance”.

He further said that the entire range of efforts undertaken by the state government and its agencies would be much more productive, if the size of the plantations are reduced and thorough care and maintenance of the new plantations/regenerations is made mandatory throughout the state. “Strict liability must be fixed on those concerned with the plantations and maintenance,” he urged in his letter to the chief secretary.