

## **Gujarat: BJP MLA suggests floating tenders for plantation drives**

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[BJP](#) MLA and former minister Govind Patel, in the Gujarat Assembly on Friday, suggested the state government to go for result-oriented and contract-based tree plantation drives which could — in the long run — increase the green cover of Gujarat and prove to be an asset for the environment. Patel made suggestions in this regard while participating in a discussion on budgetary demands for the Forests and Environment department.

“The way we are planting trees, I was studying figures in that regard. In 2013, we planted 30.14 crore trees (saplings) and in 2017, we planted 34.15 crore trees (saplings). In 2019, we planted saplings on 25,000 hectare land,” said Patel. “We don’t have an objection to this (method of) plantation, but we get the results only after the planted saplings are properly cultivated by watering, etc.”

Patel then suggested that the campaign of tree plantation should be allotted by floating tenders. According to Patel, a private firm should be given a tender for the plantation of a particular number of trees on a decided land parcel for a period of three years. This means that the firm has to plant a particular

number of trees for three years and the payment for each plant is to be done after three years, based on the number of trees that have been cultivated and survived.

“Tree plantation should be done through a contract system and with less expense. We should plant trees not on 25,000 hectare, but on 10,000 hectare so that after three years, we can count the number of trees on those 10,000 hectare. If such an arrangement is done, then we can develop better jungles. We will be able to cultivate such trees that will be an asset of the state. I request that the Forest department considers this suggestion,” Patel said. Patel added that the plantation should be done of selected trees which may be useful for birds and animals and this would also be a better use of the public money.

Later, speaking with [The Indian Express](#), Patel said that the Social Forestry division of the Forest department is currently conducting a tree plantation drive outside the forest area. As a part of this drive, tree saplings are being given to various voluntary organizations, gram panchayats, social groups and environmentalists.

“In the current system, the survival rate of trees is said to be around 70-80%, but it can be 100% in contract system because the clause of accountability is there.”

When contacted, Forest Minister Ganpat Vasava said that while Patel’s suggestion is good, the state government and Forest department are also doing a good job.

“In the 2017 report of the Forest Survey of India, our forest area has increased by 100 square kilometre. In 2004, we had 25 crore trees which have increased to 35 crore,” said Vasava. He added that since all forest laws are of the Central Government, the state has to consult the Centre before making any changes. He added that the state government is not considering changing the current system of tree plantation campaigns.

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