



More legal shield to extend forest cover

06 February 2021

New Delhi: The forest department has started notifying compensatory afforestation land as “protected forests” under Section 29 of Indian Forest Act to give them legal protection. Recently, the forest department had notified two plots given by construction agencies in exchange for deemed forest lands acquired for development-related projects. These included 8.11 hectares in Dhulsiras in southwest Delhi against deemed forest acquired for the Central Vista project. The other land was in Usmanpur spread over 0.124 hectare, which was allotted by Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Forest officials said notification of over 10 such projects was in process.

A senior forest department official said, “Whenever deemed forest land is acquired for a project, the agency provides compensatory land of the same area within the city. There was also an order of the Union ministry of environment and forests and climate change to notify such land under Section 29 of Indian Forest Act, but the practice was started recently.”

Two portions of deemed forest land measuring around 50 and 5 hectares, which were acquired for Urban Extension Road-II project, were allotted in Narela and Dichaon Kalan in South West district, respectively. “These two lands will soon be notified as protected forests,” said the forest official.

The compensatory land patches, which are in the process of final notification under Section 29 of the Act, include 10 sites mostly located in the central forest division of the Delhi forest department. An official said the size of these plots varied from 5 hectares to 20 hectares and most of them were allotted by DDA.

Explaining the significance of declaring a piece of land as protected forest, the forest official said, “It will give legal sanctity. If any violation of tree pruning or felling occurs there, more stringent sections can be imposed. Even trespassing or removal of bushes or shrubs in these protected forests can invite action.”

Another official said the GIS cell set up in the forest department had carried out a survey for notification and land was notified after receiving approval from the government.