

Odisha diverts whopping 4,514 hectare of forest land for non-forestry use last year: MoEF report

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BHUBANESWAR: Odisha diverted a whopping 4,514 hectare forest land – highest in the country - for non-forestry use last year. By doing that, the State has overtaken Madhya Pradesh in the forest diversion chart, the latest annual report of Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change says.

With 51,619 sq km forests, Odisha boasts of the fourth largest forest cover in India. Between January 1 and November 6, 2019, the State diverted 4,514 hectare forest land (for 14 cases) which comes close to 40 percent of the total forest diversion in the country, standing at 11,467 hectare. Telangana stood next with diversion of 2,055 hectare forest land.

Madhya Pradesh was distant fourth having diverted 795 hectare forest land during the period, says the report which was released by the Union Ministry on Monday. Compare it with 2018 and MP was on top with diversion of 6,748 hectare.

In the second place was Odisha which had diverted 4,453 hectare forest land for 21 cases. In the last few years, the State has been aggressively pushing mining and industrial projects. Between 2014 and 2019, according to reports furnished before the Rajya Sabha, the State has diverted over 15,070 hectare forest land for non-forest purposes.

According to the India State of Forest 2019, Odisha had recorded a rise in forest cover by 274 sq km – from 51,345 sq km in 2017 to 51,619 in 2019.

However, much of the gain was in moderately dense forest cover. Its dense forest cover, which is critical for eco-system balance and wildlife, rose barely by three sq km. “Much of the gain came from joint forest management initiatives whereas the State has lost huge chunks of dense forests to diversion of various projects.

Besides, very little is gained by the afforestation and plantation schemes, which are a poor substitute for the forest land lost,” said a senior Forest officer of the State.

By virtue of its forest diversion, the State has received large funds under the compensatory afforestation schemes. The MoEFCC reports says that the State was transferred Rs 5,933 crore from the National Compensatory Afforestation Fund.

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2020/jun/11/odisha-diverts-whopping-4514-hectare-of-forest-land-for-non-forestry-use-in-2019-moef-report-2154972.html>