

Panel for performance audit of Forest Department

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Taking cognisance of Haryana having the lowest forest cover in the country, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Haryana Legislative Assembly has recommended to the Principal Accountant General (Audit), Haryana, to conduct a performance audit of the forest department.

Forest cover (geographical area)	
■ 2017	3.59 %
■ 2019	3.62 %
■ 2021	3.63 %
(SOURCE-INDIA STATE OF FOREST REPORT)	

The PAC noted that forest cover in the state has been the least amongst all states in the country, as per India State of Forest Reports of 2019 and 2021 “that too after spending hundreds of crores annually the position remaining unchanged”.

The performance audit could look into the outcome of various afforestation schemes in the state.

As per the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021, the forest cover in the state was 1,603 sq km, which was 3.63 per cent of the geographical area. It was the lowest in the country, excluding Ladakh UT. In comparison to 2019, the forest cover increased by just 1 sq km in the state; 0.06 per cent.

The ISFR is a biennial publication of the Forest Survey of India, where forest cover is computed using remote sensing techniques, sample plot-based national forest inventory and special studies carried out at the national level.

Chairman of PAC, MLA Varun Chaudhary, had raised the issue of the forest cover even during the Budget session when the ghost plants scam of the Forest Department was being discussed in the House.

He had then said that the scam had taken place in the state with the lowest forest cover despite spending crores.

Chaudhary is from the Congress, and for the first time an MLA from the Opposition has been nominated chairperson of the PAC in Haryana.

The PAC has also taken suo motu cognisance regarding the absence of an advertisement policy for urban local bodies in Haryana. It took notice of the newspaper reports that the advertisement policy was scrapped years ago and the new policy had not seen the light of the day.

There is a strong apprehension that this vacuum has caused a loss of hundreds of crores to the state exchequer, said a member of the PAC.

“The Vidhan Sabha being the custodian of the public purse, the PAC has demanded comments from the Department of Urban Local Bodies regarding the advertisement policy in the state,” said Chaudhary.

Source: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/haryana/panel-for-performance-audit-of-forest-department-396052>