



Panel formed to ensure forest management

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NEW DELHI: The environment ministry has constituted a task force to study the proposed amendments to the National Forest Policy, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, and regulatory regime for agro-forestry or trees outside forest, and make recommendations to develop synergies between all aspects of forest management in the country. The 19-member task force, headed by director general of forest and special secretary in the ministry, will submit its report by May 31. The suggestions will help in bringing out a new forest policy of India, bringing clarity on the definition of 'forest' in the country by adopting uniform standards for protection and management of green cover in sync with India's global commitments. "It has been decided to constitute a task force under the chairmanship of director general forests and special secretary to study and analyse the National Forest Policy, 1988, the proposed National Forest Policy, proposed amendments in the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the current regulatory regimes on agro-forestry/tree outside forests across the country, in order to make recommendations to develop synergies for promotion of sustainable development and management of forests and trees outside forests in the country," said the ministry

Except four members including a legal consultant, rest of them are drawn from different wings of the government. Critics have, however, pointed out the absence of any representative from two hotspots — northeast and Western Ghats — in the task force.

The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is the principal legislation that regulates deforestation in India. It prohibits diversion of forests for any 'non-forestry' use without prior clearance. In order to streamline it keeping in view decentralisation of green clearance power and enabling infrastructure projects in the forest areas, the ministry had last year brought out a public consultation paper on the proposed amendments. The paper was, however, severely criticised by the environmentalists.

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