

U'khand Forest Cover Shrinks, Says Report

In a recently submitted report to the Parliament by the ministry of environment and forest, Uttarakhand recorded a major loss of 268 square km forest cover between 2013-2015. The state ranks second in negative forest cover growth (-1.11 square km) after Mizoram with a growth of -1.36 square km.

In the report, a copy of which is with TOI, this disturbing trend is attributed to rotational felling of trees and diversion of forest land for developmental purposes. According to the Forest Survey of India report, 2015, the state had 24,240 square km forest cover compared to 24,508 square km in 2013. Even though details of the exact areas where forest cover has been lost are unavailable, environment minister Prakash Javadekar, last Tuesday, had informed that Uttarakhand received Rs 356 lakh in 2015-2016 under the Intensification of Forest Management scheme.

The report, in the meanwhile, also stated an increase of 21.34 per cent forest cover nationally, with Himachal Pradesh registering a positive growth of .09 per cent.

Reacting to the state's dwindling forest cover, Kalyan Singh, who has been running 'Mati Andolan' to fight deforestation across the state, said, "It is a very disturbing fact that forest cover in Uttarakhand is depleting because of developmental activities. The state government must not ignore the fact that forests contribute to our lives. If we do not focus on afforestation, we stand to lose everything."

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