



Assam: 3,400 hectares of forest land cleared of encroachment from 2016-20, says minister

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The Assam government has cleared over 3,400 hectares of forest land of encroachments from 2016-2020, Environment and Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya said on Sunday. A total of 915.05 hectares of land have been cleared of encroachment between April and June 23 this year, he said. The Forest Department has destroyed 2,960 illegal structures in reserve forests, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and other protected areas and arrested 194 people between 2016 and 2020, he said. A total of 615 hectares have been cleared in Karbi Anglong West Division, 185.5 hectares in Lower Assam Zone, 50 hectares in Karbi Anglong East Division, 40 hectares in Kokrajhar's Haltugaon area, 22 hectares in Orang National Park and 2.5 hectares in Upper Assam Zone. "We have adopted a zero-tolerance policy towards encroachments in protected areas and stringent legal action is being taken against offenders," he said.

The Forest Department is committed to freeing forest land from encroachments with the help of civil and police administrations, the minister said. The department has generated a revenue of Rs 302.38 crore from sand and stone quarries under minor mineral concession areas in 2020-21 and Rs 20.02 crore till June this year, Suklabaidya said.

Massive afforestation programmes have also been taken up to increase the green cover in the state, he said. To ascertain the exact figure of forest land that is under encroachment, Divisional Forest Officers (DFO) have been asked to submit reports on encroachments in their respective areas, a senior official said.

In 2019, the state government had informed the assembly that 3.87 lakh hectares of forest land are under encroachment. The Land Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2019 was passed to free forest land from encroachment.

Source: <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/india/assam-3-400-hectares-of-forest-land-cleared-of-encroachment-from-2016-20-says-minister-715006>