



At 83,000 hectares, Karnataka has third highest forest encroachments

17 August 2021

BENGALURU: With more than 83,000 hectares of its forest land under encroachment, Karnataka has the third highest illegal occupancy of forests in India, behind only Madhya Pradesh and Assam, notwithstanding efforts by consecutive governments.

According to data from the ministry of environment, forests and climate change, more than 13.3 lakh hectares of forests are under encroachment across the country.

Of this, Karnataka alone has 83,092.3 hectares, which, according to local authorities, includes families occupying forests without permission. Here's some perspective: The extent of forest area under encroachment is more than the size of Bengaluru — the city has a land area of about 74,000 hectares — and more than four times the size of Mysuru.

In Karnataka, the issue of forest encroachment has for long been both a critical and sensitive one. While there are encroachments for commercial activity, the other, more sensitive type of encroachment, has been by families living in areas they shouldn't, as per the department. Sanjai Mohan, principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife), said: "These encroachments include those by families that are occupying forest land. And as per the government's directive, we are not supposed to evict those occupying less than three acres of land until we're able to rehabilitate them through an alternative parcel of land. A significant part of the forests encroached are by such families, and we have no funds to implement the rehabilitation programme." According to the state forest department, most encroachments in Karnataka are in the Shivamogga circle, followed by Bengaluru and Belagavi circles.

Five states have 83% encroachment

As per Union ministry data, of 13.3 lakh hectares, more than 40% of the encroachment is in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Assam, which accounts for 27% of the encroached land. Although Karnataka's share is much less — around 6% — compared to these two states, it occupies the third place, followed by Maharashtra and Arunachal Pradesh (see graphic).

These five states together account for nearly 83% or more than 11 lakh hectares of encroachment in the country.

Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand and Odisha have reported more than 20,000 but under 50,000 hectares of encroachment, while Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Mizoram have more than 10,000 but under 20,000 hectares of encroached lands.

Aside from Goa, Puducherry and Lakshadweep, which have shown zero encroachments, five other states have reported illegal occupancy of under 100 hectares. Encroachments, however, need to be viewed in the context of the extent of forest lands in each state and no one state may be directly comparable with another.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/at-83000-hectares-karnataka-has-third-highest-forest-encroachments/articleshow/85390161.cms>