

'Forest' not defined in any Central laws, says government

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The word "forest" is not defined in any Central forest acts, namely, the Indian Forest Act 1927, or the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Central government has also not laid down any criterion to define a forest, the Parliament was informed on Monday.

This was revealed in the statement tabled in the Rajya Sabha by Environment, Forests & Climate Change Minister Bhupender Yadav in reply to a question by member Rakesh Sinha, who sought to know "how the forest is defined/formed and, whether, there is any specific criteria?" Sinha had also wanted to know the total forest area and waste land area in the country (state-wise details) and the area of land under Section 4 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, (state-wise details). He also sought to know the area of forest land which is under dispute and being claimed by individuals or villages, and the steps taken to resolve such disputes by the government. While the statement did provide data about forest land and waste land, the government skirted the issue of dispute, saying it has no records for the same.

"The disputes regarding forest lands are variable in nature and keep changing depending upon the pace of settlement process, recording of new disputes, demarcation/survey on case-to-case basis etc. by the respective state/UT authorities as per due process of law applicable to the area. As such forest area under dispute for the country has not been quantified by the Ministry," Yadav said.

The recorded forest area of the country is 7,67,419 sq kms. As per the Wasteland Atlas, 2019 published by the Ministry of Rural Development, the total wasteland in the country is 5,57,665.51 sq kms, the Rajya Sabha was told.-IANS

Source: <https://www.theweekendleader.com/Headlines/64565/forest-not-defined-in-any-central-laws-says-government.html>