

# Over 99,000 ha forest land diverted for projects in last five years: Govt

Vartha Bharati | 04-12-2025 | 22:33:00 IST



New Delhi (PTI): India has diverted more than 99,000 hectares of forest land for non-forestry purposes since 2020, with roads, mining, hydroelectric, and irrigation projects accounting for the largest share, according to official data shared in Parliament on Thursday.

Union Minister of State for Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh told the Rajya Sabha that 22,233 ha were diverted for road projects alone between 2020-21 and 2024-25, followed by 18,914 ha for mining and quarrying, and 17,434 ha for hydel and irrigation works.

Power transmission lines required 13,859 ha, while railway projects saw the diversion of 5,957 ha.

Other major categories include forest village conversion (1,362 ha), drinking water projects (1,281 ha), rehabilitation works (1,508 ha), canals (80 ha), defence projects (6,042 ha), optical fibre cable (391 ha), industries (150 ha), and new petrol pumps (1,927 ha).

Smaller diversions were recorded for solar and wind power, schools, hospitals and communication posts.

Data shows a sharp rise in certain categories in 2024-25, including drinking water schemes (376 ha), petrol pumps (42 ha), and power transmission lines (3,820 ha). The re-division/land use change category also saw 180 new cases that year.

The ministry said that a total of 3,826 road projects received forest clearance since 2020, the highest across all sectors.

Pipelines (756), drinking water projects (676), optical fibre cable (524), hydel/irrigation (194), mining/quarrying (190) and railway projects (182) formed the next major categories.

Among smaller but notable categories were defence (116 clearances), industry (41), village electricity (31), school and educational institutions (37), and non-conventional energy (7). Solar and wind power projects received only eight and one clearances respectively over the five-year period.

The reply did not provide details of people affected by forest diversion or clearances.

The minister said such information is handled through the land acquisition law and reviewed during environmental clearance processes.