

# 2 yrs after enacting law, Centre unlocks ₹66k cr green fund

**New Delhi:** Unlocking a fund of more than Rs 66,000 crore to increase the country's green cover, the Centre has finally notified the rules for utilisation of the money by states and Union Territories, and for setting up authorities to monitor its use for afforestation and conservation.

The rules have been framed two years after a law to this effect was enacted.

The fund is an accumulated amount which user agencies have been depositing as compensation for diverting forest land for non-forest purposes such as setting up industries or creating infrastructure, over the past 10 years.

The rules, which were notified on Friday, specify that 80% of the compensatory afforestation amount will be utilised by states for plantations, assisted natural regeneration of forests, forest fire prevention, pest and disease control in forest, soil and mo-

## UNSPENT HOARD

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- ▶ **Though law to use money was passed by Parliament in 2016, it could not be rolled out in absence of enabling rules within Act for two years**

isture conservation works and improvement of wildlife habitat, among other things from a list of 13 permissible activities.

The remaining 20% is meant to be used for 11 listed works to strengthen infrastructure related forest and wildlife protection.

# ‘Move to help re-green forest, non-forest land’

The list includes third-party monitoring of works, forest certification, development of certification standards and casual hiring of local people to assist forest department staff.

“The move will help India re-green its forest and non-forest areas which have lost trees due to forest diversions — amounting to more than 1.3 million hectares after the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 kicked in — for allowing various developmental activities,” said Ajay Kumar Saxena, deputy director of the Network for Certification and Conservation of Forests.

Though the legislation — Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act — to utilise the money was passed

by Parliament in July 2016, it could not be implemented in absence of enabling rules within the Act for two years. As a result, only Rs 14,418 crore out of Rs 80,716 crore had been disbursed to states and UTs under a temporary and time-consuming mechanism till March 31.

The remaining Rs 66,298 crore has, therefore, been lying unspent with an ad hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) created by a Supreme Court order in 2009.

Among states, Odisha has the highest share (Rs 9,725 crore) in the accumulated fund, followed by Chhattisgarh (Rs 7,288 crore), MP (Rs 6,353 crore) and Jharkhand (Rs 5,193 crore).

*Full report on*