Environment Ministry to get a dedicated Forest Satellite

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change will have its own dedicated satellite to monitor the forest cover of India. Besides improving the management and monitoring of the forest areas, it will accelerate the department clearance procedures since several projects are getting delayed due to non-availability of accurate data. The portfolio minister Shri. Prakash Javadekar takes a special interest on the project and has completed several rounds of discussions. The Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi has already given directions to all ministries to better harness the space technology offered by Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) which in turn will aid for the economic development of our nation. A senior forest official has stated that "ISRO officials have been consulted in this regard. A dedicated satellite is highly required for the ministry as we gather data inputs from other agencies". Another advantage of a separate satellite is that data duplication will be avoided.

Shri. Prakash Javadekar - Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

The official further explained that with a forest satellite in place, the ministry would not have to wait for biennial reports of the Forest Survey of India to gain an understanding of the health of country's forests. "It will get us a real-time picture of our forests. Also, industry, which applies for forest clearances seeking diversion of forest areas for their projects, can rely on much more accurate data using that. It is because projects many a times get stuck in absence of data regarding density and quality of forests," the official added. When asked about the plan, Javadekar confirmed the move but declined to elaborate, saying the details will be revealed at an appropriate time. The environment ministry says state governments and other institutions can also make use of the forest satellite. "We want to make it a cost-effective product. So, we can also look at commercializing a part of it so that it covers our running and maintenance costs. We are trying to give a final shape to the plan and discussing the details with ISRO. But at present, the cost of the satellite has not been finalized," the environment ministry cited above said.

The final cost and launch details will be finalized after the environment ministry zeroes in on the specifications of the satellite. Use of space technology has increased after the PM asked all Union ministries to maximize use of India's progress in it. The environment ministry recently launched a geographical information system to facilitate rapid, transparent and predictable decisions on forest clearance applications.