

Environment ministry proposes India's first tree census

Move aimed at taking stock of nation's biodiversity and ensuring protection of green areas

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Once completed, the tree census may become a regular feature that can be repeated every five years and serve as a potential platform for an environmental education programme. Photo: Indranil Bhoumik/Mint

New Delhi: The environment ministry proposes to conduct India's first tree census, a move aimed at taking stock of the country's biodiversity and ensuring protection of its green areas.

The census is also aimed at encouraging community awareness of the need for tree conservation, regulating pruning and felling and increasing green cover with people's participation. "We have finalized our plans for this ambitious programme of a nationwide tree census. A national tree census would be for the first time in the country's history. It will be a huge effort and would take months," a ministry official said on condition of anonymity. Until now, efforts have been made at a local level on a small scale to count the number of trees. In 2014, some Delhi neighbourhoods undertook a tree

census, and some 150 have so far completed the effort. The tree census is part of the ministry's forest protection endeavours.

"We have been accused of only being a green clearance industry but we are also taking a lot of steps for protection and conservation of the environment. Tree census is one among those many steps as protection of existing green areas and trees is a high priority area for us," explained the ministry official.

Once completed, the tree census may become a regular feature that can be repeated every five years and serve as a potential platform for an environmental education programme that would help spread awareness about the need for clean air, recharging of ground water, maintenance of biodiversity, reduction of noise pollution and so on. "Environment protection needs to be a mass

movement as the governments can't do it alone. We would encourage participation of government departments, civil society, local citizens, schools, NGOs and sustainable institutions to carry out tree census under the supervision of forest departments. This way they would feel connected to environment... We would also encourage participation of children so that feeling of environment protection can be cultivated in them," the official said. Tree conservation and protection and management of urban greenery have emerged as

a focus area for the environment ministry with the urban population increasing from 17% in 1951 to 31 % in 2011 and expected to reach 55% by 2050. India's national forest policy envisages an average forest and tree cover of 33% of the geographical area for the whole of the country.

Source:

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