



Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)

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Why in News?

Recently, the [Forest Advisory Committee \(FAC\)](#) of the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change reprimanded the Odisha government for building walls, without approval, in forest land that will be part of the **proposed Shree Jagannath International Airport in Puri**.

What is the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC)?

▪ About:

- It is a statutory body which was constituted by the [Forest \(Conservation\) Act 1980](#).
- It comes under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change (MoEF&CC)**.
- The FAC **evaluates industrial projects** which require forest land for their activities.
 - The committee **may or may not approve a project** and can give an approval for forest land to be diverted, after imposing certain conditions.
 - In the recent case, satellite pictures showed that the **agency tasked with the project had already built a wall without waiting for approval** by the FAC.

What is the Forest Conservation Act, 1980?

- **About:** The [Forest Conservation Act of 1980](#) was enacted to streamline forest-related laws, regulate deforestation, oversee the transportation of forest products, and levy duties on timber and other forest produce.
 - Under the provisions of this Act, **prior approval of the Central Government** is required for diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.
 - It primarily applied to forest lands recognized by the [Indian Forest Act, 1927](#), or State records since 1980.
- **Supreme Court's Interpretation:** The *Godavarman judgement, 1996* by the [Supreme Court](#) mandated the protection of forests regardless of classification or ownership.
 - This introduced the concept of **deemed forests or forest-like tracts** referring to areas resembling forests but not officially classified as such in government or revenue records.
- **Concern Regarding Varying Definitions of Forests:** States in India interpret 'forests' differently based on surveys and expert reports, leading to diverse definitions.
 - For example, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh base their definitions on size, tree density, and natural growth, while Goa relies on forest species coverage.
 - Varying definitions result in estimates of deemed forest ranging from 1% to 28% of India's official forest area.
- **Recent Amendment to Forest Conservation Act:**
 - The recent [Forest \(Conservation\) Amendment Act, 2023](#) aimed to bring clarity and address concerns surrounding deemed forests.
 - It focused on **defining the scope of forest land under the Act's purview, exempting certain categories of land** from its provisions.

- It exempts up to 0.10 hectares of forest land for connectivity purposes along roads and railways, up to 10 hectares for security-related infrastructure, and up to 5 hectares in [Left Wing Extremism Affected Districts](#) for public utility projects.
- However, the **Supreme Court's interim directive maintains the traditional approach to forest governance**, unaffected by the recent amendment enacted by the Centre.
 - Also, the Supreme Court **ruled that the creation of zoos or safaris by any government or authority must receive final approval from the court.**

Initiatives for Forest Conservation

- [Indian Forest Policy, 1952](#)
- [Forest Conservation Act, 1980](#)
- [National Forest Policy, 1988](#)
- [National Afforestation Programme](#)
- **Other Related Acts:]**
 - [Wildlife Protection Act of 1972](#)
 - [Environment Protection Act of 1986](#)
 - [Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers \(Recognition of Forest Rights\) Act, 2006](#)

Read More: [Environment vs. Development - An Ethical Debate](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2023)

Once the Central Government notifies an area as a 'Community Reserve'

1. the Chief Wildlife Warden of the State becomes the governing authority of such forest
2. hunting is not allowed in such area
3. people of such area are allowed to collect non-timber forest produce
4. people of such area are allowed traditional agricultural practices

How many of the above statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three

(d) All four

Ans: (b)

Q. The "Miyawaki method" is well known for the: (2022)

- (a)** Promotion of commercial farming in arid and semi-arid areas
- (b)** Development of gardens using genetically modified flora
- (c)** Creation of mini forests in urban areas
- (d)** Harvesting wind energy on coastal areas and on sea surfaces

Ans: (c)

Q. On which one of the following rivers is the Tehri Hydropower Complex located? (2008)

- (a)** Alaknanda
- (b)** Bhagirathi
- (c)** Dhauliganga
- (d)** Mandakini

Ans: (b)

Q. Where are Tapovan and Vishnugarh Hydroelectric Projects located? (2008)

- (a)** Madhya Pradesh
- (b)** Uttar Pradesh
- (c)** Uttarakhand
- (d)** Rajasthan

Ans: (c)