

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023

April 12, 2023

In news— Recently, the Union government introduced The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 in Lok Sabha to make changes to The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Key features of the bill-

- The Bill amends the **short title of the Act to be called the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.**
- It clarifies the scope of applicability of the Act upon various lands.
- **It exempt certain categories of lands from the purview of the Act which includes the following:**
 - Such **forest land situated alongside a rail line or a public road** maintained by the Government, which provides access to a habitation, or to a rail, and roadside amenity up to a maximum size of 0.10 hectare.
 - **The forest land as is situated within a distance of one hundred kilometres along international borders** or Line of Control or Line of Actual Control, as the case may be, proposed to be used for construction of strategic linear project of national importance and concerning national security.
 - **Land up to ten hectares**, proposed to be used for construction of **security related infrastructure.**
 - **Land as is proposed to be used for construction of defence related project or a camp** for paramilitary forces or public

utility projects, as may be specified by the Central Government, the extent of which does not exceed five hectares in a Left Wing Extremism affected area as may be notified by the Central Government.

- **The Act restricts the de-reservation of forest or use of forest land for non-forest purposes.** Such restrictions may be lifted with the prior approval of the central government.
- **The Act specifies certain activities that will be excluded from non-forest purposes,** i.e., the restrictions on de-reservation of forest or use of forest land for non-forest purposes will not apply. These activities include works related to the conservation, management, and development of forest and wildlife such as establishing check posts, fire lines, fencing, and wireless communication.
- **The Bill adds more activities to this list such as:**
 - Zoos and safaris under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 owned by the government or any authority, in forest areas other than protected areas,
 - Eco-tourism facilities,
 - Silvicultural operations (enhancing forest growth), and
 - Any other purpose specified by the central government.
- **The Bill provides that two types of land will be under the purview of the Act:**
 - Land declared/notified as a forest under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 or under any other law, or
 - Land not covered in the first category but notified as a forest on or after October 25, 1980

in a government record.

- Further, the **Act will not apply to land changed from forest use to non-forest use** on or before December 12, 1996 by any authority authorised by a state/UT.
- Under the Bill, the **Central Government is authorized to give directions to any relevant authority** within the Central Government, State Government, or Union Territory Administration, as well as any recognized organization, entity, or body under the State or Central Government, as deemed necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.