

Amendment of Indian forest Act

Why in news?

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Lok Sabha amended Section 2(7) of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 which had led to bamboo being seen as timber.

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What are the provisions of earlier forest acts on bamboo?

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- Bamboo is woody and can grow up to towering heights, but taxonomically, it's a grass.

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- The law dating back to the colonial era classified the plant as a tree, but the colonial-era definition of bamboo had an economic logic.

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- Forests had to be protected because they were repositories of timber, Bamboo was slotted as a “forest produce” and placed in the same category as palm and other trees.

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- After Independence, bamboo being a tree was under the control of the forest department and it found its way to markets largely through auctions held by the department.

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Why this amendment is significant?

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- In 1996, the Supreme Court ruled that “felled bamboo” was not timber and the Forests Rights Act (FRA), 2006 also classified bamboo as a “non-timber forest produce”.

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- But both the apex court and the FRA stopped short of aligning bamboo with

its taxonomic classification.

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- Section 2(7) of the 1927 Act was never amended and this created confusion in implementing the court ruling and the FRA.

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- The recent amendment has removed bamboo from the category of “timber” under colonial-era law and it enlisted under the category of grass.

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- It will remove the forest department’s hold over the natural resource and will reduce dependence on bamboo imports.

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Why bamboo is economically important?

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- India has nearly 14 million hectares of bamboo forests, and it has 30 per cent of the world’s bamboo resources.

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- Bamboo can fully regenerate in three to five months, while other commercially-important woody plants take about five years to mature.

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- Bamboo has a big role in the agarbatti industry, India produces 3,000 tonnes of them creating employment around north eastern states.

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- New form of fibre is being derived from bamboo to weave clothes which provide employment to tribal population of Central India.

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Source: Indian Express

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