Karnataka at fourth spot in increasing forest cover

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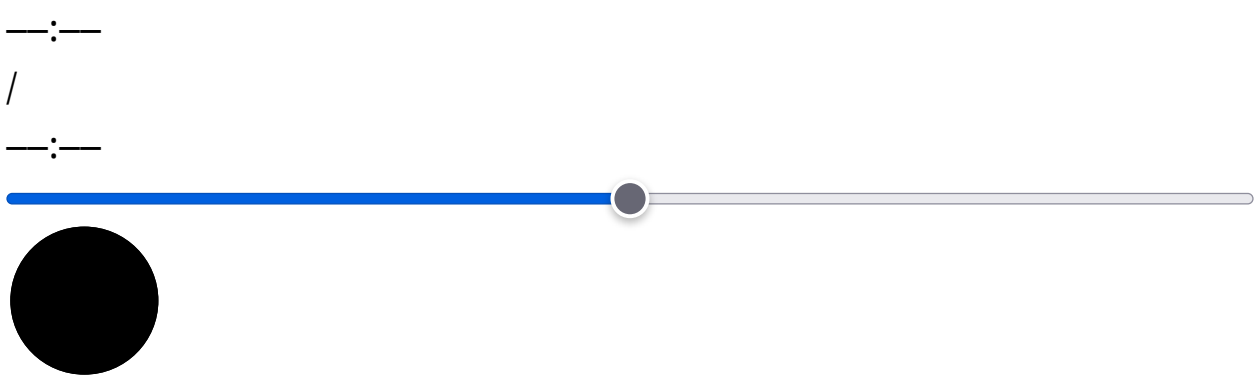
By Bala Chauhan

Express News Service

BENGALURU: The forest and tree cover in India is now 80.9 million hectares (8,09,537 sqkm), which is 24.62 per cent of the country's geographical area, and 1,540 sqkm more compared to the 2019 assessment, stated the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021, published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI). The report was released by Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav at a virtual ceremony on Thursday.

FSI defines 'forest cover' as all lands of a hectare or more with tree patches, with canopy density of more than 10 per cent. Karnataka ranks fourth among the top

five states in terms of increase in forest cover, starting with Andhra Pradesh (647 sqkm), Telangana (632 sqkm), Odisha (537 sqkm), Karnataka (155 sqkm) and Jharkhand (110 sqkm). Karnataka's forest area is about 22.61 per cent of the state's geographical area. The recorded forest area of Karnataka is 43,356.47 sqkm, as per the annual report of the state's Forest Department for the year 2014-15.



The southern state stands third in the increase in mangrove cover along the vast 7,500km coastline, spread over 12 states and UTs. Mangrove cover is 4,992 sqkm, with an increase of 17 sqkm, compared to the assessment of 2019. Top three states showing mangrove cover increase are Odisha (8 sqkm) followed by Maharashtra (4 sqkm) and Karnataka (3 sqkm).

The ISFR-'21 has observed an increase in total carbon stock in the country's forests, which is estimated at 7,204 million tonnes. "There is an increase of 79.4 million tonnes in carbon stock of the country, as compared to the last assessment of 2019," the report states.

The report has recorded a decline in forest cover in the country's hill and tribal districts, as well as across the northeastern states, besides observing an overall

decadal decline in forest cover across 52 tiger reserves. FSI in collaboration with BITS Pilani, Goa campus, has conducted a study based on 'Mapping of Climate Change Hotspots in Indian Forests' to map climatic hotspots over forest cover, using computer model-based projection of temperature and rainfall data, for 2030, 2050 and 2085.

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