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THE TIMES OF INDIA

India's forest, tree cover rose by 2,261 sq km in last 2 years: ISFR report

PTI | Jan 13, 2022, 05.11 PM IST



NEW DELHI: India's forest and tree cover has risen by 2,261 square kilometers in the last two years with Andhra Pradesh growing the maximum forest cover of 647 square kilometers, according to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 released on Thursday.
The biennial report by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), an assessment of the country's forest resources, was released by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav.

He revealed that the total tree-and-forest cover in the country includes an increase of 1,540 square kilometres of forest cover and 721 sq km of tree cover compared to the 2019 report.

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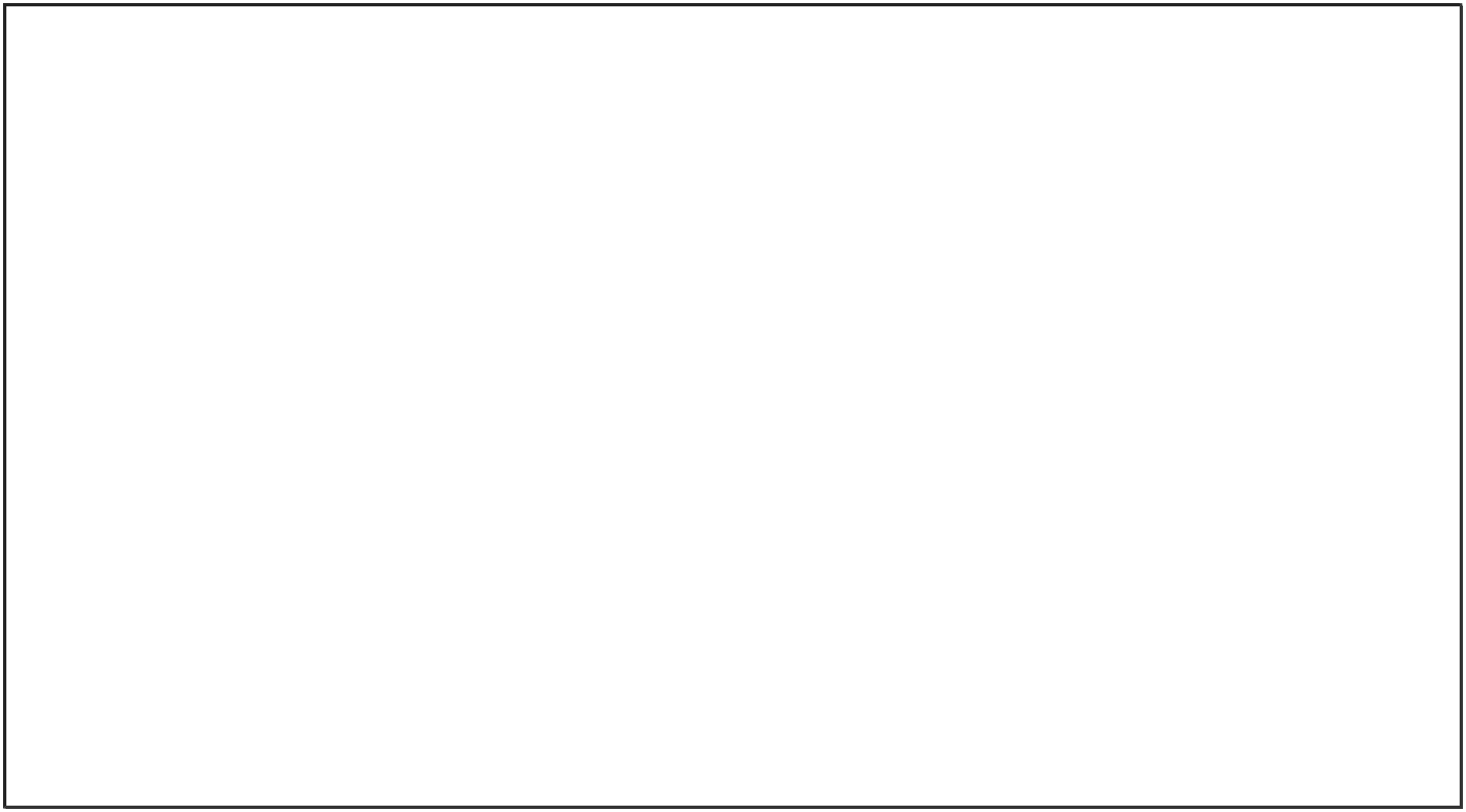
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“It is very satisfying to know that the tree and forest cover has increased in India. The report also touches aspects which are important in terms of climate change.

“We are entering second phase of the Green Mission, the ministry has taken several decisions for increasing forest conservation and people participation. To achieve India's aim of increasing additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes CO2 equivalent by 2030, Nagar Van Yojna has been introduced to increase the tree cover and joined with the second phase of

Green Mission in the next five years," Yadav said in his address.



He also said forest officials and frontline staff play a huge role in saving our forests and work under difficult circumstances so the environment ministry is working to provide them job security and help in their capacity building.

The minister stressed on the need for generous tree plantation by private sector to reduce the burden on forests.

"To reduce the burden on our forests, the private sector should ensure maximum tree plantation. For this, our department has

initiated a consultation process. Under the Forest Conservation Act, we invited suggestions from people and have received over 5,000 responses. Our biggest aim is to maintain the quality of forests and increase the green cover," he said.

According to the report, India's total forest and tree cover is now spread across 80.9 million hectares, which is 24.62 per cent of the geographical area of the country.

The top five states in terms of increase in forest cover are Andhra Pradesh (647 sq km), Telangana (632 sq km), Odisha (537 sq km), Karnataka (155 sq km) and Jharkhand (110 sq km).

"The gain in forest cover or improvement in forest canopy density may be attributed to better conservation measures, protection, afforestation activities, tree plantation drives and agroforestry," the report said.

Area-wise, Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.

The report also added that the north-east did not show positive results as the current assessment showed a decrease of forest cover to the extent of 1,020 sq km in the region.

Arunachal Pradesh lost the maximum forest cover of 257 sq km, followed by Manipur which lost 249 sq km, Nagaland 235 sq km, Mizoram 186 sq km and Meghalaya 73 sq km.
The report said 17 states/UTs have above 33 per cent of the geographical area under forest cover.

Out of these states and UTs, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have more than 75 per cent forest cover, while 12 states/UTs (Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Goa, Kerala, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Assam, Odisha) have forest cover between 33 per cent to 75 per cent.

The report also said in total 140 hill districts of the country, the forest cover reduced by 902 sq km in the last two years. In the 2019 report, the forest cover in the hill regions had increased by 544 sq km.

It also recorded an increase of 17 sq km in mangrove cover in the country as compared to the previous assessment of 2019. Total mangrove cover in the country is 4,992 sq km. Top three states showing mangrove cover increase are Odisha (8 sq km) followed by Maharashtra (4 sq km) and Karnataka (3 sq km).

According to the report, the total carbon stock in the country's forest is estimated to be 7,204 million tonnes and there is an increase of 79.4 million tonnes in the carbon stock of the country as compared to the last assessment of 2019.

The annual increase in the carbon stock is 39.7 million tonnes.

The Forest Survey of India (FSI), in collaboration with Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani, Goa Campus also performed a study based on 'Mapping of Climate Change Hotspots in Indian Forests' as part of the report.

The collaborative study was carried out with the objective to map the climatic hotspots over the forest cover in India, using computer model-based projection of temperature and rainfall data, for the three future time periods, that is, years 2030, 2050 and 2085.