



India's Green Cover Is Rising

Introduction

India's green cover has been steadily increasing, reflecting the country's growing focus on environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

According to the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, India's total green cover now stands at 827,356 square kilometres, which accounts for 25.17% of the country's geographical area.

This progress highlights the combined impact of government policies, conservation initiatives, community participation, and corporate support for environmental programmes.

Increasing forest and tree cover plays a critical role in addressing climate change, strengthening biodiversity, and improving ecological balance across regions.

A growing green cover also contributes to soil conservation, water regulation, and improved air quality, making it an essential component of sustainable development in India.

Key Environmental Gains (ISFR 2021–2023)

- Recent findings from the ISFR indicate measurable improvements in forest and tree cover between 2021 and 2023.

- Forest cover has increased by 156 square kilometres during this period, while tree cover has expanded by 1,289 square kilometres.
- These increases collectively strengthen India's natural carbon sinks.
- The country's forests currently hold an estimated carbon stock of 30.43 billion tonnes.
- A carbon sink refers to natural systems, such as forests, that absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it, helping to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases.
- Strengthening these natural systems is essential for climate mitigation and long-term environmental stability.

Top States in Green Cover Growth

- The rise in India's green cover is driven by significant contributions from several states.
Among them, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, and Rajasthan have recorded notable improvements in green cover.
- These states have benefited from a mix of afforestation initiatives, improved forest management practices, and community-driven conservation efforts.
- In many regions, government programmes and local participation have helped restore degraded land and encourage tree plantation activities.
- Such regional contributions collectively play a major role in improving the country's overall ecological health.

CSR Contribution to Environmental Sustainability

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is also playing an increasingly important role in supporting environmental initiatives.
- In FY 2023–24, environmental sustainability received ₹2,430 crore in CSR funding, accounting for around 7% of total CSR expenditure in India.
- This made it the third-highest funded thematic area under CSR spending.
- The sector also witnessed a 21% increase in funding compared to the previous financial year.
- This growing investment indicates that companies are placing greater emphasis on climate action, environmental protection, and sustainable development.
- CSR-supported initiatives often include afforestation projects, restoration of degraded landscapes, and community-based conservation programmes.

What CSR Is Doing

- CSR initiatives are increasingly focusing on long-term environmental impact rather than short-term plantation activities.
- Many programmes are now designed as multi-year initiatives to ensure sustained ecological benefits.

- Companies are supporting ecosystem restoration projects, including the regeneration of mangroves and degraded forest landscapes.
- Technological tools such as GIS-based monitoring systems are also being used to track plantation survival rates, growth patterns, and environmental outcomes over time.
- Additionally, CSR projects are prioritising the protection and regeneration of existing forests while complementing these efforts with need-based plantations.
- Community stewardship is another important aspect, where local communities are engaged to ensure long-term protection and sustainability of natural resources.

Looking Beyond Numbers

- While the increase in green cover is encouraging, it is important to recognise that not all green growth represents natural forests.
- Some portion of this increase comes from plantations rather than biodiverse ecosystems.
- For long-term environmental health, it is essential to focus on restoring natural forests that support diverse plant and animal species.
- Strengthening biodiversity-rich ecosystems helps build climate resilience and improves ecological balance.
- By combining plantation initiatives with ecosystem restoration and conservation,
- India can continue to strengthen its green cover while ensuring environmental sustainability for future generations.

Let us work collectively toward building a greener and more sustainable India.

Link to the original post:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ld4Frz_7WOMXO4JdAraIKRMCOinK8-q4