



Research Unit
Press Information Bureau
Government of India

India's Green Recovery

Forest and Tree Cover Grows, Fire Incidents Fall

(Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change)

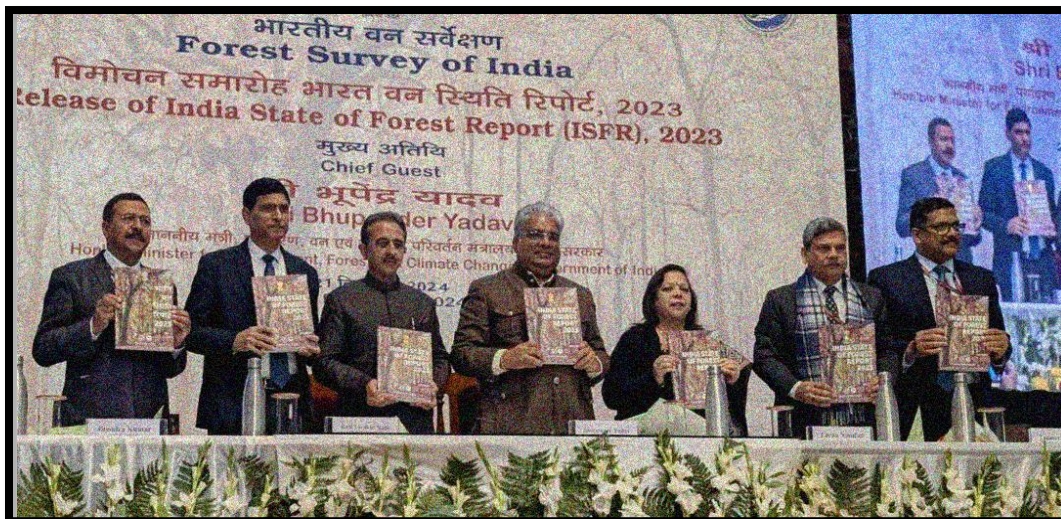
27th December, 2024

"We are blessed to be a part of a culture where living in complete harmony with the environment is central to our ethos. Let's ensure that even the smallest step we take in our daily lives will be an effort towards conserving nature and natural resources."

~ Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi¹

Introduction

Forests play a vital role in combating climate change by absorbing carbon, preserving biodiversity, and providing clean air and water. However, growing environmental pressures are challenging these essential ecosystems. In India, though, there is a positive shift. The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023 shows that the country's Forest and Tree cover now spans **827,357 square kilometers**, covering 25.17% of the nation's total land area. This includes **715,343 square kilometers** (21.76%) of forest cover and **112,014 square kilometers** (3.41%) of tree cover. This progress reflects India's successful efforts to balance development with environmental conservation.



ISFR 2023: A Snapshot of India's Forests

The **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023**, published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), is a biennial assessment of the country's forest resources using satellite data and field information. The first report was published in 1987, and the ISFR 2023 marks the 18th edition.

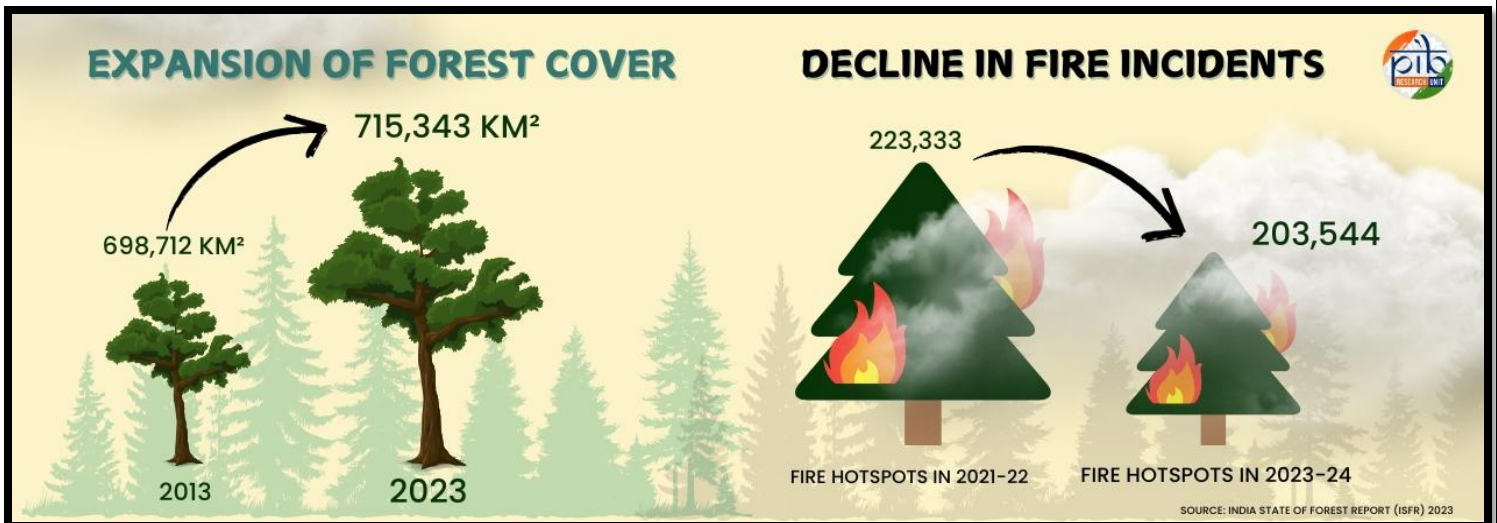
¹ <https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/image-2015/top-quotes-by-prime-minister-modi-on-environment/#gallery2392311-1>

The report is published in two volumes:

- **Volume-I** provides a national-level assessment, covering aspects like forest cover, mangrove cover, forest fires, growing stock, carbon stock, agroforestry, forest characteristics, and decadal changes.
- **Volume-II** offers detailed information on forest cover and field inventory data for each State/UT, including district and forest division-wise forest cover data.

Growth in Forest Cover

The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023 highlights positive growth in India's forest cover, **increasing from 698,712 km² in 2013 to 715,343 km² in 2023**. Fire incidents have also decreased, with 203,544 fire hotspots recorded in 2023-24, down from 223,333 in 2021-22. In line with India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) target, the country has achieved a carbon sink of 30.43 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. This represents an additional 2.29 billion tonnes of carbon sink in Forest and Tree Cover since 2005, nearing the target of 2.5 to



Key Highlights from

India State of Forest Report 2023

India's Progress on NDC Carbon Sequestration Target

- › India's carbon stock has reached **30.43 billion tonnes** of CO₂ equivalent
- › India has reached **2.29 billion tonnes** of additional carbon sink as against the target of **2.5 to 3.0 billion tonnes** by 2030 compared to the base year of 2005

Key Highlights from

India State of Forest Report 2023

- › Mangrove Cover: **4,992 sq km**
- › Bamboo Bearing Area: **1,54,670 sq km** (an increase of **5,227 sq km** in bamboo area from previous assessment)
- › Carbon Stock in Forests: **7,285.5 million tonnes** (an increase of **81.5 million tonnes** in carbon stock from previous assessment)

3.0 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent by 2030. These advancements in forest cover and the reduction in fire incidents highlight India's progress toward sustainable environmental conservation.

Govt. Schemes and Initiatives to Increase the Forest Cover

The Forest Survey of India (FSI) has been key in improving forest monitoring through better forest cover mapping, the creation of an upgraded Forest Fire Alert System, and the completion of the first five-year cycle of the National Forest Inventory, which has provided important data on forest growth and carbon stocks. Additionally, the digitization of forest boundaries in 25 States and UTs has significantly improved forest cover assessments. These initiatives, coupled with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's efforts to expand forest and tree cover and conserve mangroves and wetlands, have greatly contributed to the development of forest cover. Here are some schemes that have supported these advancements:²

- **National Mission for a Green India (GIM):** Launched in February 2014, this mission aims to enhance India's forest cover through protection, restoration, and expansion initiatives via Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs). The program has released Rs. 944.48 crore to 17 States and 1 Union Territory for plantation and eco-restoration efforts.
- **Nagar Van Yojana (NVY):** Established in 2020, this scheme focuses on developing green spaces in urban and peri-urban areas. The Ministry has approved 546 projects across 31 States/UTs, with Rs. 431.77 crore allocated for the initiative.
- **School Nursery Yojana (SNY):** Aimed at raising awareness about the importance of plants, this scheme encourages tree planting in schools across India. With an allocation of Rs. 4.80 crore, 743 projects have been sanctioned in 19 States/UTs.
- **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI):** This five-year initiative (2023-2028) seeks to restore and promote mangroves along India's coastline, enhancing coastal habitats' sustainability. Rs. 17.96 crore has been allocated to states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Odisha, West Bengal, and U.T. of Puducherry.
- Under the **National Coastal Mission**, through the "Conservation and Management of Mangroves and Coral Reefs" component, the Ministry has extended financial support to coastal States and Union Territories for the protection and conservation of mangroves. This initiative spans across 9 coastal states and 1 Union Territory, aiming to safeguard these vital ecosystems.
- **National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)** for conservation and management of wetlands in the country, on cost sharing basis between Central Government and respective State Governments
- **Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam:** Launched by the Prime Minister on 5th June 2024, this campaign encourages citizens to plant trees in honor of mothers, fostering a deep connection between nature and nurturing.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA):** This scheme compensates for the loss of forest cover and ecosystem services caused by the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes, in line with the Van Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan Adhinyam, 1980.
- **Afforestation Targets under the Twenty-Point Programme:** The Ministry sets annual afforestation targets for States/UTs, utilizing a mix of Central Government schemes, State Government plans, and efforts by NGOs, private organizations, and civil society.

²[https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2078356#:~:text=The%20Nagar%20Van%20Yojana%20\(NVY,431.77%20crore%20under%20the%20scheme.](https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2078356#:~:text=The%20Nagar%20Van%20Yojana%20(NVY,431.77%20crore%20under%20the%20scheme.)

- **Awareness and Mass Plantation Drives:** The Ministry promotes tree planting through events like International Day of Forests, World Environment Day, Van Mahotsav, and Wildlife Week, alongside conferences, workshops, and informational campaigns.
- **Indian Forest Management Standard:** A part of the National Working Plan Code – 2023, this standard establishes criteria and frameworks for monitoring sustainable forest management and supports the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme, particularly benefiting small-scale timber producers.
- **National Action Plan on Forest Fire-2018:** This plan provides measures to prevent forest fires, build resilience, and enhance community capacity for fire control and prevention.
- **Joint Forest Management and Eco Development Committees:** In line with the National Forest Policy of 1988, the Ministry has promoted community involvement through Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) for better forest and wildlife protection, ensuring local participation in management and conservation activities.

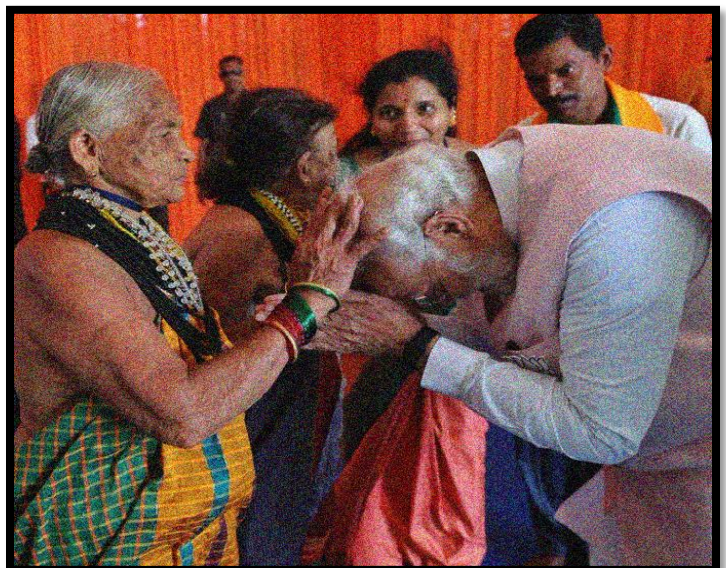
Additionally, the conservation of forests, mangroves, and wetlands is ensured through strict enforcement of relevant Acts, Rules, Regulations, and Court orders.

Legal Framework for Forest and Wildlife Protection³

In India, the protection and management of forest and wildlife resources are governed by a strong legal framework designed to ensure conservation and sustainable use. Key laws include the **Indian Forest Act, 1927**, the **Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980**, and the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, aimed at protecting wildlife species and their habitats, including the creation of protected areas like national parks and sanctuaries. Additionally, State Forest Acts cater to forest management specific to each state, while Tree Preservation Acts and Rules focus on protecting trees in both urban and rural areas. The enforcement of these laws is primarily the responsibility of State Governments and Union Territories, which take necessary actions to ensure the protection and management of forests and wildlife as per these legal provisions.

People's Connection with Nature⁴

Laws, schemes, and acts alone cannot drive the change we need; it takes dedicated individuals to truly make a difference. **Padma Shri Tulsi Gowda, also known as the "Mother of Trees,"** dedicated over 60 years to planting and nurturing lakhs of trees in Karnataka, transforming barren land into lush forests. Her work has left a lasting legacy in environmental conservation. Tulsi's passing serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for more individuals like her—those who selflessly dedicate their lives to nurturing and protecting the Earth, ensuring a greener, more sustainable future for generations to come.



³<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2086125#:~:text=There%20are%20legal%20frameworks%20for,Acts%20and%20Rules%2C%20etc%2C>.

⁴<https://x.com/narendramodi/status/1868875490523501052>

Conclusion

India is making remarkable strides in its journey towards environmental sustainability. The 2023 India State of Forest Report showcases impressive growth in both forest and tree cover, a significant decline in fire incidents, and the flourishing of agroforestry. These achievements reflect the country's dedication to balancing development with conservation. Through innovative government initiatives and the involvement of local communities, India is not just protecting its natural resources but actively restoring them. With continued commitment and collective action, India is paving the way for a greener, healthier future for all.

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