

# INDIA RANKS THIRD GLOBALLY IN FOREST AREA GAIN: SURVEY

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues relating to Growth & Development - Public Finance, Taxation & Black Money incl. Government Budgeting

India has increased its forest area in the past decade and ranks third globally in average annual net gain in forest area from 2010-2020, the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) said in the annual Economic Survey. India annually added an average 2,66,000 hectares of forest area over the period.

Forests covered 24% of India's geographical area, accounting for 2% of the world's total forest area in 2020, the department said.

The top 10 countries account for 66% of the world's forest area. Brazil (59%), Peru (57%), Democratic Republic of Congo (56%) and Russia (50%) have half or more of their geographical area under forests.

"Much of India's increase in forest cover from 2011-21 is attributed to enhancement in very dense forest cover, which rose by approximately 20%," the DEA said. "Open forest cover also improved by 7%... Going forward, there is need to further improve forest and tree cover. Social forestry could also play a significant role in this regard," it added.

The latest biennial 'India: State of Forest Report' has elicited criticism from independent experts, who have questioned the methodology used to count forests. Officials in the environment ministry, while asserting that India's definitions of 'forest' and 'tree cover' were consistent with global definitions, acknowledged that most of the increases had occurred outside areas traditionally marked as 'forest' and included plantations and orchards.

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