

Current Affairs of the Day

Forest, tree cover in India up by 2,261 sq. km in two years

1. Forest and tree cover in the country has increased by 2,261 square kilometres since the last assessment in 2019, according to the India State of Forest Report-2021.
2. The total forest and tree cover was 80.9 million hectares, which accounted for 24.62% of the geographical area of the country. The report said 17 States and Union Territories had more than 33% of their area under forest cover.
3. The report found that there had been a 1,540 sq. km increase in forest cover and a 721 sq. km increase in tree cover since the last report in 2019.

Five Indian states where total forest area has decreased

State	Total Forest Area 2021	Total Forest Area 2019	Decrease (in sq km)
Arunachal Pradesh	66,431	66,688	257
Manipur	16,598	16,847	249
Nagaland	12,251	12,486	235
Mizoram	17,820	18,006	186
Meghalaya	17,046	17,119	73

Top 3 States

1. An increase in forest cover has been observed in the open forests followed by very dense forests. The top three states showing an increase in forest cover are Andhra Pradesh (647 sq. km) followed by Telangana (632 sq. km) and Odisha (537 sq. km)
2. Madhya Pradesh had the largest forest cover, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
3. The top five states in terms of forest cover as a percentage of their total geographical area were Mizoram (84.53%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.33%), Meghalaya (76%), Manipur (74.34%) and Nagaland (73.90%).



Five Indian states where total forest area has increased

State	Total Forest Area 2021	Total Forest Area 2019	Increase (in sq km)
Andhra Pradesh	29,784	29,137	647
Telangana	21,214	20,582	632
Odisha	52,156	51,619	537
Karnataka	38,730	38,575	155
Jharkhand	23,721	23,611	110

Mangrove cover

1. The total mangrove cover in the country had increased by 17 sq. km, to reach 4,992 sq. km. The total carbon stock in forests was estimated to be 7,204 million tonnes, an increase of 79.4 million tonnes from 2019.
2. The Ministry said the survey used mid-resolution satellite data, followed by "rigorous ground-truthing" and information from other sources.

Forest Cover:

1. FSI defines 'forest cover' as all lands of a hectare or more with tree patches with a canopy density of more than 10 per cent.
2. This covers all lands, irrespective of legal ownership and land use. 'Recorded forest area' includes only those areas recorded as forests in government records and includes pristine forests.

The Forest Survey of India has listed four categories of forests. They are

1. Very Dense Forest (with tree canopy density of 70 per cent or above)
2. Moderately Dense Forest (tree canopy density of 40 per cent or above but less than 70 per cent)
3. Open Forest (tree canopy density of 10 per cent or above but less than 40 per cent)
4. Scrub (tree canopy density less than 10 per cent)

Forest Survey Report 2021: Overall decadal decline in forest cover in India's 52 tiger reserves, Gir

1. There has been an overall decadal decline in forest cover across India's 52 tiger reserves as well as its sole Lion Conservation Area (LCA) of Gir in Gujarat, the latest report of the Forest Survey of India (FSI).



2. Some 20 of the 52 tiger reserves have shown an increasing trend. These range from 1.28 sq km in Pakke (Arunachal Pradesh) to 238.80 sq km in Buxa (West Bengal).
3. Buxa, in fact, has recorded the highest decadal growth in forest cover in the country. It is followed by Anamalai in Tamil Nadu (120.78 sq km) and Indravati in Chhattisgarh (64.48 sq km).
4. But the 32 remaining reserves have shown a declining trend, ranging from 0.06 sq km in Orang in Assam to 118.97 sq km in Kawal in Telangana. Bhadra (53.09 sq km) in Karnataka and Sundarbans in West Bengal (49.95 sq km) have also witnessed sharp declines in forest cover.

Tiger Corridors:

1. The Sundarbans Tiger Reserve has the largest area under wetlands at 2,549.44 sq km. This means 96.76 per cent of its area is a wetland. The Kanha Tiger Reserve has the highest number of wetlands at 461, most of which are less than 2.25 hectares (ha) in size.
2. The Kanha to Navegaon-Nagzira-Tadoba-Indravati tiger corridor that passes through Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra have the largest forest cover at 2,012.86 sq km.
3. It is followed by the Pench-Satpura-Melghat corridor in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh (1,195.79 sq km) and the Similipal-Satkosia corridor in Odisha (810.23 sq km).

Every northeastern state reports loss in forest cover: State of India's Forest Report 2021

1. The northeastern states of India — Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Sikkim — have lost 1,020 square kilometres of forest during 2019-2021, according to the biennial India's State of Forest Report 2021 published by the Forest Survey of India.
2. The eight states account for 23.75 per cent of the country's total forest cover.
3. Among the eight states, Manipur recorded the largest loss in forest cover (249 sq kms), followed by Nagaland (235 sq kms) and Mizoram (186 sq kms). The report attributes this loss in forest cover to shifting cultivation, which is practised in many northeastern states.



4. The northeastern states have been losing forest cover consistently, as the last report published in 2019 also indicated. Between 2011 and 2019, the forest cover of six states, excluding Assam, had decreased by nearly 18 per cent between 2011-2019. The region lost nearly 25,012 sq km of forest cover in the preceding decade.

Forest Survey Report 2021: India's mountainous states, already facing climate change, lose forest cover

The report has attributed the loss of forest cover in the Himalayas and North East to an increase in developmental activities as well as agriculture.

Highlights:

1. There has been an increase in forest loss in India's mountainous states along its Himalayan frontier, which are already in the throes of climate change, according to the latest report by the Forest Survey of India (FSI).
2. The Union territory (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir, which had very dense forests of 4,270 square kilometres (sq km) area in 2019, had 4,155 sq km of the same forest category in 2021. This is the highest loss of very dense forests anywhere in India.
3. Jammu and Kashmir have lost very dense forests but gained open forests, according to the report. This has led to an increase in UT's total forest area to 21,387 sq km in 2021, from 21,358 in 2019. The increase in open forests is led by commercial plantations.
4. The total forest area of Himachal Pradesh, another mountainous state, has increased by 9 sq km. But there has been a loss of open and Moderately Dense Forest (tree canopy density of 40 per cent or above but less than 70 per cent). Moderately dense forests are usually close to human habitations.

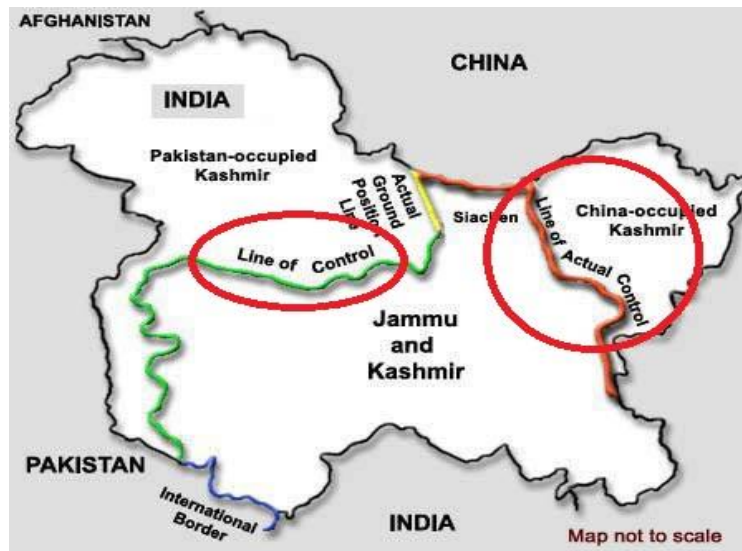
Climate change hotspots in Indian forests

1. The report has also mapped climate change hotspots in Indian forests, based on projections for 2030, 2050 and 2080.
2. It predicted that Himalayan states and UTs like Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand will record the maximum increase in temperature and also possibly experience a decrease in rainfall.
3. Extreme rainfall may also increase in the states of the North East.



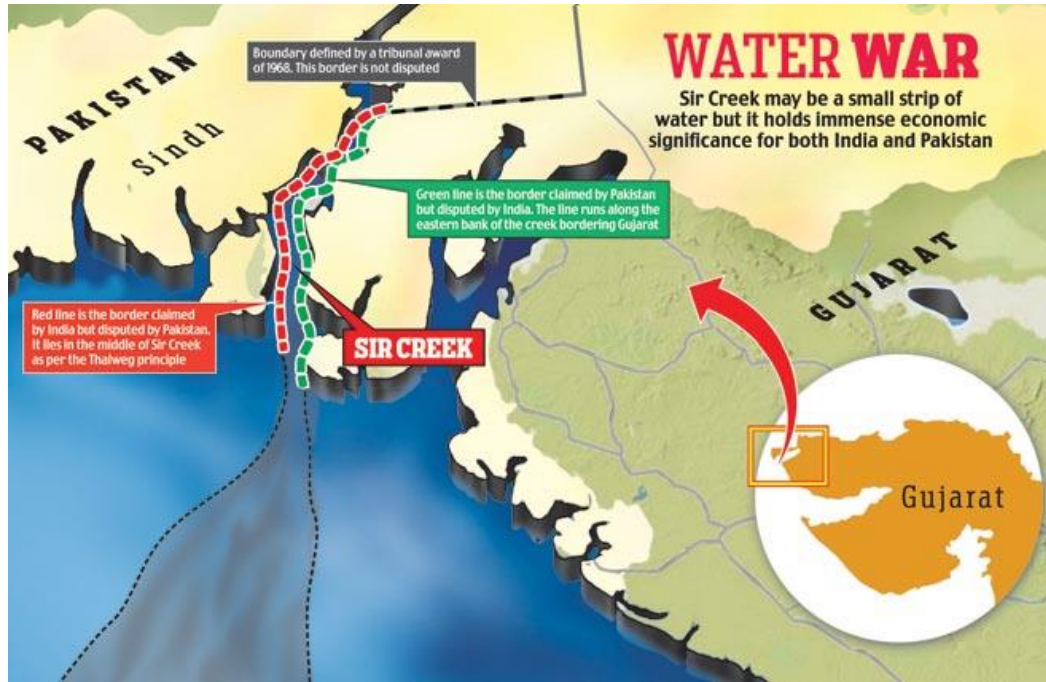
Not possible to demilitarise Siachen

1. We are “not averse” to demilitarisation of the Siachen glacier but the pre-condition is Pakistan has to accept the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL), Army chief General Manoj Naravane said, raising a fresh debate over the world’s highest battlefield, with experts saying it may not be ideal in the backdrop of the stand-off in eastern Ladakh and the Chinese build-up.
2. In contrast to the present comments, the Army chief had two years ago termed Siachen as a point of “collusive threat” between Pakistan and China and so “we should keep control”.
3. However, with the stand-off in eastern Ladakh and massive build-up and expansion by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in sub-sector north which is very close to the Karakoram range and Soltoro ridge, several serving officials and experts noted that it would not be possible for India to vacate the crucial positions on the glacier.
4. The Line of Control (LoC) had been delineated to a point called NJ 9842, and thereafter, the understanding was that it will remain unoccupied. But Pakistan had made an attempt to occupy territory and we were forced to take our countermeasures.



Low hanging fruits:

1. Siachen and Sir Creek have long been termed “low hanging fruits” in the past for resolution between India and Pakistan and the two countries have held 13 rounds of Defence Secretary-level talks on Siachen, the last one in June 2012.
2. The Indian Army has not been averse to disengagement at Siachen but it has not happened due to a reluctance by the Pakistan Army to accept the positions that are occupied by the Indian Army.



**MAINS
DAWP**

Q. Account for the decline of forest cover in Northeast India. Discuss its impacts and remedies.

MCQs

Q. Which of the following are correctly matched?

	Boundary	Guarded By
1	International Boundary	The Border Security Force (BSF)
2	Line of Control (LoC)	Indian Army
3	Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL)	The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3