

## **Comprehensiveness in Forests Restoration**

### **What is the issue?**

\n\n

\n

- ‘India State of Forest Report 2017’, which was released by Environment Ministry, shows that there have been some positives.

\n

- We must refine the strategy to further revive forests in totality - which requires moving away from monoculture plantations.

\n

\n\n

### **What is the cause for concern?**

\n\n

\n

- The environmental policy that envisions raising forest cover to 33% of the geographical area in the long term has yielded some dividends.

\n

- Based on satellite imagery, ‘India State of Forest Report 2017’, and shows that 24.4% of India’s land area is under some form of forest or tree cover.

\n

- This means that the forest and tree cover together registered a 1% rise over the previous estimate two years ago.

\n

- However, these estimates are mere remote sensing data don’t really provide deep insights into the integrity of the green areas.

\n

- Notably, the qualitative difference between “very dense, moderately dense, and scrub forests” needs further scientific pondering.

\n

- Also, mere tree cover is not the same as having biodiversity, and monoculture plantation cater more to commercial industrial needs than to nature.

\n

- Recreating forests akin to the previously undisturbed assemblage of plants, trees and animals, is what would constitute a comprehensive revival.

\n

\n\n

## What are the glitches in the present approach to development?

\n\n

- \n
  - **Economics** - Some have come to regard the calculation of national income accounts (GDP), wealth generation and development as weak.
  - \n
  - This is because the degradation of forests and the consequent loss of their natural services such as climate moderation aren't accounted for.
  - \n
  - Notably, forest degradation erodes the gains made by many communities, because lost natural capital eventually contributes to material losses.
  - \n
  - Hence, developmental activities need to be environmentally sensitive.
  - \n
  - **Compensating Losses** - The Ministry's report has calculated a cumulative loss of forests in Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal of nearly 1,200 sq km.
  - \n
  - The impact of such a terrible loss must be seen against the backdrop of the Northeast representing a global biodiversity hotspot.
  - \n
  - Hence, remediation programmes elsewhere, like in Odisha, or Himachal cannot adequately compensate for biodiversity losses in the Northeast.
  - \n

\n\n

## What is the way forward?

\n\n

- \n
  - India must move away from monoculture plantations that are presently favoured by even forest development corporations in many States.
  - \n
  - Scientific reviews to bring true natural forests with its biodiversity intact are needed, which is more than merely increasing the number of trees.
  - \n
  - Presently, more than 300,000 sq km of area is open forest with a tree canopy of 10-40%, which can be capitalised to drive the revival program.
  - \n
  - Such actions, combined with a policy against open cast mining, and efforts to protect the precious Northeast forests can bring about a forest renaissance.
  - \n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n

