Haryana Forest Census

Why in News?

According to the first state-wide tree census there are around **4.1 crore trees outside designated forests in Haryana,** with **neem, shisham, pipal, bargad and eucalyptus** being the most common species.

Key Points

- Approximately 150 surveyors, taxonomists, and technical staff were engaged in the project for a duration of 13 months to assist authorities in making well-informed decisions regarding **green cover management in the state.**
    - It provides **data on the number of trees in each district outside forest areas**. The **highest tree counts** were found in Yamunanagar, Ambala, Sirsa, Bhiwani, and Hisar.
    - Faridabad had the **lowest count,** with Kurukshetra, Palwal, Gurgaon, and Rohtak following suit.
- Covering only 6.7% of its total area, **Haryana has the smallest forest and tree cover in India**. The National Forest Policy aims for a 20% coverage for each state.
    - Out of 22 districts in Haryana, 21 have less than 20% forest and tree cover.
    - Karnal ranks the lowest with 1.8%, Panchkula tops the list with 47.4%, and Gurgaon stands sixth at 12.9%.
- The state is witnessing a rapid decline in tree cover too, as reported by the Forest Survey of India, with a 140 sq km reduction in the tree cover (excluding forest area) from 2019 to 2020.
    - Forest department officials are planning to enhance conservation efforts using census data.
    - They are advocating that the government earmark at least 25% of panchayat and common lands for plantations, institutions should have 33% of their area under tree cover, and urban local bodies should focus on developing green spaces in cities, drawing inspiration from Hyderabad's initiatives.
    - Emphasizing the importance of high-quality seedlings, officials stressed that using them is crucial for ensuring the survival and growth of trees.

National Forest Policy

- India's forests are currently governed by the **National Forest Policy, 1988**
- It has environmental balance and livelihood at its centre.
- **Salient Features and Goals:**
    - Maintenance of environmental stability through preservation and restoration of ecological balance.
    - Conservation of Natural Heritage (existing).
    - Checking Soil Erosion and Denudation in catchment areas of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs.
    - Checking extension of sand dunes in desert areas of Rajasthan and along coastal tracts.
    - Substantially increasing Forest/Tree Cover through Afforestation and Social Forestry.
    - Taking steps to meet requirements of fuel, wood, fodder, minor forest produces, soil and timber of Rural and Tribal Population.
    - Increasing the productivity of Forests to meet National Needs.
    - Encouraging efficient utilization of Forest Produce and Optimum Use of Wood (Timber).
    - Generation of Work Opportunities, the involvement of Women.

Forest Survey of India

- The **Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun** has been conducting **biennial (once every two years)** assessments of **forest cover since 1987**, and the findings are published in the **India State of Forest Report (ISFR).**
- As per the latest assessment in **ISFR 2021**, India's total forest and tree cover stands at **8,09,537 square kilometers, which accounts for 24.62%** of the country's geographical area.
- Notably, this represents an **increase of 2261 square kilometers compared to the ISFR 2019 assessment,** indicating positive strides in forest conservation efforts.

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