

# Bengal's forest cover grows by 3810 sq km

Krishnendu Mukherjee@  
timesgroup.com

**Kolkata:** Bengal has recorded a phenomenal growth in its forest cover in last two years.

Quoting the India State of Forest Report, 2013, released in New Delhi by Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar on Tuesday, a Forest Survey of India (FSI) official said the state's forest cover has risen by a "whopping" 3810 square kilometres. In the report released in 2011, Bengal recorded only 1 square kilometre growth in its forest cover.

He said the growth was driven mostly by the increase in tree cover outside forest, commercial plantation, new plantation and open forest areas. He said various afforestation programmes undertaken by the government bore the fruit.

What's more, Bengal constitutes almost 64% of total growth in the forest cover in the entire country. "In India, the forest cover has grown by 5871 square kilometres, of which Bengal recorded a growth of 3871 square kilometres and Odisha 1444 square kilometres," he said.

According to him, in Bengal, the growth rides on the back of

## GOING GREEN

► Bengal's forest cover has grown by **3810 square kilometres**, compared to only **1 square kilometre** growth the state registered in 2011

► In India, the forest cover has grown by **5871 square kilometres**. Apart from Bengal, Odisha, too, has recorded a good growth of **1444 square kilometres** in its green cover



► But, there is a decline in very dense forest cover and medium dense forest cover inside the reserve forest areas in Bengal

rise in green cover outside the reserve forest areas and in tea garden areas. "This is due to the social forestry work undertaken by the government. In North 24-Parganas and Malda there has been a rise in the tree cover outside forest areas. This data was not available when the report was released in 2011," he added.

He also said the coppice growth has contributed to the rise in Bengal's forest cover. Coppicing is the traditional method of woodland management which takes advantage of the fact that many trees make new growth from the stump or roots if cut down. In a coppiced wood, young tree stems are repeatedly cut down to near ground level. In subsequent

growth years, many new shoots will emerge, and, after a number of years the coppiced tree, or stool, is ready to be harvested, and the cycle begins again.

But, there's a decline in the green cover in reserve forest areas. While very dense forest cover inside the reserve areas has dipped by 13 square kilometres, the loss in medium dense forest cover is 200 square kilometres.

In the 2011 report, India had lost 367 square kilometres of its forest cover with Andhra Pradesh recording the maximum loss. The FSI releases the report every two years. State wildlife advisory board member Joydip Kundu said government's plantation drives have contributed in a major way to the growth.