

# India records modest rise in forest cover

## But NE States Show Net Decline Of 627sqkm

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**New Delhi:** India recorded an increase of 5,871 sq km in its forest cover in the past two years with West Bengal contributing over 60% of the total rise in green area. Odisha, Kerala, Jharkhand and Bihar were the other states which contributed to this marginal increase.

Hilly and tribal districts of the country registered an increase in forest cover of 40 sq km and 2,396 sq km, respectively. The northeastern states, which account for one-fourth of the country's forest cover, recorded a net decline of 627 sq km in 2013 compared to the assessment of green cover in 2011.

Among bigger states, Andhra Pradesh lost the maximum 273 sq km of forest cover whereas Madhya Pradesh lost 178 sq km of green patch in two years.

These facts emerged out of the latest 'India State of Forest Report' (ISFR), which was released on Tuesday by environment and forests minister Prakash Javadekar. Though India continues to be far behind its target of having 33% of its geographical area under forest, the marginal increase is a positive sign.

Javadekar said, "Decline of forest cover in our northeastern states is, however, a matter of concern. We



**GOOD NEWS, BUT MILES TO GO:** At present, the total carbon stock in forest is estimated to be 6,941 million tonnes. Tuesday's forest report says there is an increase of 278 million tonnes in the carbon stock of country between 2004 and 2011

should not allow this to happen." Assuring that his government would work hard to further increase the forest cover, he said, "We will make it a mass movement where people would come forward to not only protect the existing green cover but also plant more and more trees across the country."

While there is an increase in total forest cover, there is a decrease in the 'growing stock' both inside and outside forest area. The report said even in the 'moderately dense' forest section, the net change in forest cover between 2011 and 2013 assessments shows a decline 0.62%.

Forest Survey of India (FSI) has been assessing the forest and tree resources of the country on a biennial ba-

sis since 1987. The results of the assessment are published in its ISFR. The latest survey is the result of assessment using satellite imagery during the period October, 2010 to January, 2012.

Although survey is primarily based on satellite data and its authenticity is widely debated, the FSI director general Anmol Kumar on Tuesday claimed, "The satellite interpretation is followed by extensive and rigorous ground truthing".

Environmentalists and conservationists, however, invariably question such method. They also, time and again, pointed out that the FSI reported increase, taking refuge in definition of 'forest cover' and the green patch of 'open area' (mainly outside forest area).