

# Green cover went up, but UP also lost over 41sq km forest

TNN | Jan 15, 2022, 04:11 AM IST

Lucknow: The state of forest report (SoFR) 2021 has shown an increase of 91sq km in the green cover of Uttar Pradesh but, at the same time, the state has lost over 41sq km of forest cover of moderate density. While the green cover includes both the forest cover and the tree cover, the tree cover means trees lying outside the forest area.

The districts that show loss of forest cover are Pilibhit, Mirzapur, Kheri, Maharajganj, Chandauli, Bijnor, Azamgarh, Sonbhadra, Sultanpur and Muzaffarnagar. The reasons, said sources in the forest department, may vary as forests are cleared not only for development projects, but also as per working plans of the forest divisions.

Besides, at places like Kheri the forest cover also gets lost due to the Sharda that keeps on changing its course. The total loss of moderately dense forest in the state as per the report is 51 sq km. But, it is the gain of 10 sq km in the very dense forest area which shows that not all 51 sq km of moderately dense forest was lost, but 10 sq km of it got upgraded into a very dense forest in the state.

“Moderately dense forest gets upgraded into very dense forest over a period of time. At the same time, when it degrades it leads to an increase in the open forest,” said sources.

The SoFR categorizes forest into Very Dense Forest (VDF), Moderately Dense Forest (MDF) and Open Forest (OF) depending on the density of the canopy. The VDF has canopy density of more than 70%, MDF varies from 40% to 70% canopy density and open forest has less than 40% canopy density. In the 2021 report, OF has shown an increase of 53 sq km, which is also because of the plantation exercises taken up by the state government besides degradation of MDF. The 2021 report is based on the satellite data from October 2019 till February 2020. In that case, the rise in the green cover reflects the result of the plantation exercises done by the state governments till 2014-15.

“The tree varieties that have been planted in the present regime like peepal, banyan & pakar take at least a few years to attain canopy density that can be recorded in the satellite data,” said sources.