

NEWS TODAY

GLOBAL FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT 2020 RELEASED BY THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)

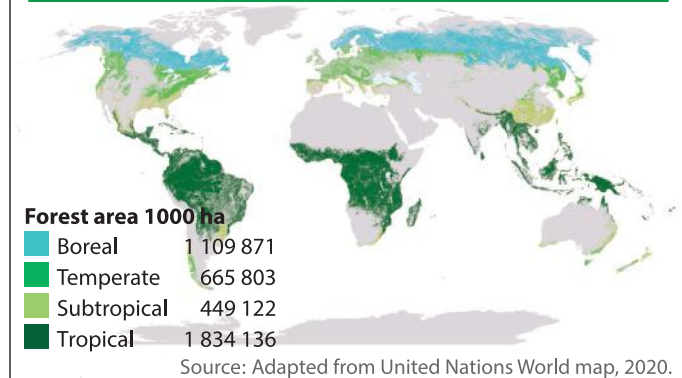
• **Assessment is done every five years since 1990.** This report assesses the state of forests, their conditions and management for all member countries.

➤ FAO is a **specialized agency of the United Nations.**

Key Findings:

- World has a total forest area of 4.06 billion hectares, which is **about 31% of the total land area.**
- An **estimated 420 million ha of forest has been lost worldwide through deforestation** since 1990, but the **rate of forest loss has declined substantially**
- While highest **net gain of forest area in 2010-2020** was found in Asia, **Africa has the largest annual rate of net forest loss** in 2010-2020.
- **93% of the forest area worldwide is composed of naturally regenerating forests** and 7% is planted.
- **India has ranked third among countries that have gained in forest areas** in the last decade. Top 5 countries are China, Australia, India, Chile, Vietnam.
 - Report has **credited India's Joint Forest Management programme** for the significant increase in community-managed forest areas.
 - Globally, **12.5 million people were employed in the forestry sector.** Out of this, **India accounted for 6.23 million, or nearly 50%.**
 - India accounts for **2% of total global forest area.**

The global distribution of forests, by climatic domain



GOVERNMENT ISSUES ORDER FOR PERMANENT COMMISSION (PC) OF WOMEN OFFICERS IN ARMY

- Ministry of Defence has issued the **formal Government Sanction Letter for grant of PC to Women Officers in the Indian Army** in all ten streams of the Indian Army like Army Air Defence, Signals, Engineers, Army Aviation, etc.
 - Earlier, Women were eligible for PC in **Army Education Corps and Judge Advocate General Department.**
- This follows Supreme court judgement in February 2020, which declared that **Short Service Commission (SSC) women officers were eligible for PC** and command posts in non-combat areas in the Army irrespective of their years of service.
- **Significance of move**
 - This order will pave the way for empowering **Women Officers to have larger roles in the organisation.**
 - **PC will allow officers to serve in the army till they retire**, unlike the SSC, which is for a specific period of 10 or 14 years.
 - They will be able to **qualify for government pension**, which starts only after 20 years of service as an officer.
- Currently, **percentage of women in the Indian Army is only 3.89%**, Navy 6.7% and Air Force 13.28%, excluding the medical corps, dental corps and Military Nursing Service.

PRIME MINISTER (PM) PUSHES FOR OIL PALM CULTIVATION IN NORTH-EAST

- PM **appealed to North-East States to take up oil palm cultivation** and also **recommended State governments to set up oil palm missions** to promote cultivation of the oilseed.
 - **North-East region has about 2.18 lakh hectares (ha) of land potential for oil palm plantations** but only 30,000 ha are covered.
 - **Hot and humid climate** of North-East is conducive for the oil crop.
- India **imports nearly 68% of its annual edible oil requirements** of about 22 million tonnes. Of this, nearly 60% is palm oil.
 - Palm oil consumption **has increased by about 230% over the last two decades** and India is responsible for about 17% of global palm oil consumption.
- **Constraints in oil palm cultivation:** long gestation period, small holdings of farmers, high seed cost, erratic monsoon leading to shortage of water, low productivity, variation in import duty on edible oils etc.
- **Government efforts so far:**
 - **National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm** which aims to bring 125,000 hectares of area under oil palm cultivation through area expansion.
 - **Technology Mission on Oilseeds & Pulses.**

COOLING EMISSIONS AND POLICY SYNTHESIS REPORT BY UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME AND INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

- It is based on assessment of development and climate **benefits of efficient and climate friendly cooling.**
- **Key findings**
 - Increasing **demand for cooling is contributing to emissions** of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), CO₂, and black carbon.
 - Without policy intervention, **direct and indirect emissions from air conditioning and refrigeration are projected to rise 90% above 2017 levels** by the year 2050.
 - Coordinated international **action on energy-efficient, climate-friendly cooling** could avoid as much as 460 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Key suggestions**
 - International cooperation through **universal ratification and implementation of the Kigali Amendment.**
 - **Kigali Amendment to Montreal protocol** aims the phase-down of HFCs (used as refrigerants) by cutting their production and consumption.
 - HFCs do not affect the ozone layer, but they are **potent greenhouse gases.**
 - Adoption of **National Cooling Action Plans** that accelerate the transition to climate friendly cooling.
 - **India Cooling Action Plan** was launched in 2019 to provide for sustainable cooling.
 - Promotion of **building codes and integration of district and community cooling** into urban planning.

WHO REPORT FLAGS SPIKE IN CASES OF VACCINE-DERIVED POLIOVIRUS (VDPV)

- According to WHO, a total of **149 immunodeficiency VDPV cases had been reported** between January 1961 and December 2019.
 - Of this, 66% were detected between 2010 and 2019, with 59% occurred in **children aged less than two years**.
- Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease which **invades the nervous system**, and causes paralysis.
- **Two types of vaccines are given against polio:**
 - **Inactivated poliovirus vaccine** is made up of inactivated (killed) polio virus and will provide immunity from all strains of polio.
 - **Oral poliovirus vaccine** which contains a live, attenuated(weakened) vaccine-virus. When a child is vaccinated, the weakened vaccine-virus replicates, triggering a protective immune response in the child.
 - However, in some cases, the **vaccine-virus is genetically altered during replication. This is called a VDPV.**
- VDPVs are **extremely rare and found in children with immune-deficiency** and among populations with low immunity levels.

ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Government tightens bidding regulations for border countries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citing grounds of defence and national security, Government has amended General Financial Rules, 2017 to impose restrictions on public procurement from bidders of countries that share a land border with India. • Bidders from these countries will be eligible only if they are registered with Registration Committee constituted by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. • They will also be required to take mandatory clearance from ministries of External Affairs and Home Affairs.
<p>Special Window for Affordable and Mid Income Housing (SWAMIH) fund</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, 81 stressed housing projects were approved under SWAMIH which will enable the completion of almost 60,000 homes. • SWAMIH fund was established to provide priority debt financing for the completion of stalled housing projects that are in the Affordable and Middle-Income Housing sector. • Government acts as the Sponsor with the total commitment up to INR 10,000 crore. • Fund is set up as Alternate Investment Fund registered with SEBI.
<p>First ever Indian Scholastic Assessment (Ind-SAT) Test 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ind-SAT is an exam for grant of scholarships and admissions to foreign students for studying in select Indian universities under the Study in India programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Study in India programme, launched in 2018, targets foreign students by branding India as an attractive education destination. • It is an online test conducted by the National Testing Agency, under Ministry of Human Resource Development.
<p>National Transit Pass System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was launched by Ministry of Environment for issuing transit permits for timber, bamboo and other forest produce. • It generates Pan India Transit Passes facilitating seamless movement of forest produce across India and improving ease of doing business. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Earlier transit passes issued by one state were not honoured in other states. • It will replace manual paper-based transit system by online transit system.
<p>Lonar lake</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, color of Lonar lake turned pink due to a large presence of the salt-loving 'Haloarchaea' microbes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Haloarchaea or halophilic archaea is a bacteria culture which produces pink pigment and is found in water saturated with salt. • Lonar lake is the world's largest basaltic impact crater, formed when a meteorite hit Earth around 56,000 years ago. • It is located in Buldhana district, in Maharashtra.
<p>Vriksharopan Abhiyan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is Tree Plantation Campaign recently launched by Ministry of Coal. • It was conducted at more than 130 locations in 10 coal/lignite bearing States.
<p>India's first In-orbit Space Debris Monitoring and tracking system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will provide global real-time earth coverage by deploying a constellation of cost-efficient nanosatellites in LEO (Low Earth Orbit). • It will help international space agencies to track and map the space debris and minimize the major threat to the future space explorations. • It has been developed by Digantara, India's first air and space surveillance company.
<p>Tianwen 1 or Quest for Heavenly Truth 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is China's first Mars probe aiming to complete orbiting, landing and roving in a single mission. • It will be orbiting Mars for comprehensive observation, landing on Martian soil and sending a rover to roam the landing site.

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