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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Bhopal tree cover to go down to 4.10% by 2030

TNN | Mar 30, 2016, 12.18 AM IST

Bhopal: Bhopal's tree cover has shrunk from 66% to 22% over a two-decade span, says a new study by Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. By 2018, it will be 11% of city's area and might go to just 4.10% till 2030. This is the most rapid degeneration of green cover among four cities chosen by the institute for its study — Modelling and visualization of urban trajectory in four cities of India.

The study was conducted by satellite-borne sensors, which compared images over decades and modelled past and future growth to reveal rate of urbanisation in cities. It was conducted by Prof T V Ramchandran and his team at Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences.

Kolkata's tree cover fell from 23.4% to 7.3% over 20 years; Ahmedabad's fell from 46% to 24% over 20 years and Hyderabad's cover fell from 2.71% to 1.66% in the same period.

Shocked by statistics, Bhopal's environmentalists agree to facts detailed by Indian Institute of Science. "If I relate my study of rise in temperature to 8% in 12 years, where parameters were same, I think if they are saying tree cover will shrink to 11% by 2018, it's shocking and very much possible. There are four reasons. Unplanned urbanization, encroachment of natural water bodies in city, depletion of ground and surface water and this shows the plan of sustainable developments has failed," said Subhash C Pandey, environmentalist, who is fighting to get back lost green cover of city.

Researchers classified land use into four groups — Urban or built-up area, which includes residential and industrial areas, paved surfaces and mixed pixels with built-up area. This means built-up areas contain areas from any of the other three categories — water, which includes tanks, lakes, reservoirs, drainages, vegetation, which includes forests and plantations; and others, including rocks, quarry pits, open ground at building sites, unpaved roads, cropland, plant nurseries and bare land.

Researchers say Bhopal still remains one of India's greenest cities, 16th largest by population with 1.6 million people. Bhopal is better off than other cities, but the concretising trend is clear.

Adding voice to the study, Amitabh Pandey, associate professor for sociology and community development, Indian Institute of Forest Management, said, "Unplanned urbanization is behind shrinking greenery of Bhopal. We can see green in pockets. But we can save Bhopal even now. The city is greener than other cities, but builders and town planners need to be given the target to retain this greenery in their project, instead of depending upon initiatives by authorities."

GFX:

Predicted landscape dynamics for Bhopal

Years Builtup Water Vegetation

2018 11.51% 2.41% 11.10%

2022 25.09% 2.12% 4.71%

2026 43.77% 2.12% 4.10%