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Green cover at risk in Mumbai: experts

THE ASIAN AGE. | [SONALI TELANG](#)

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Mumbai: The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has said that there is a 20 per cent rise in the tree cover in the city as per its latest tree census when compared to the figures of the last census, in 2008, which recorded around 19 lakh trees.

The BMC has owed the increase in tree cover to the regular plantation drives and stringent tree cutting laws over the years. “We had consecutive plantation drives that have seen crores of saplings and trees planted on a yearly basis. Moreover, the tree authority has also become strict with allotting permissions for tree-cutting,” said Kishor Kshirsagar, deputy municipal commissioner, BMC.

Sources from Garden Department said that since last tree census, around 10,000 trees are planted every month. The BMC has also been planting trees inside the residential plots along with NGOs.

However, experts said there is a need to address the issue of present trees that are at risk of being cut. “As the city’s major area has been exposed to the urban development, there is no policy to make sure that the trees that are uprooted and transplanted during construction projects are managed by the builders,” said Ronita Bardhan, Assistant Professor at Centre for Urban Science and Engineering, IIT Bombay.

The Indian Institute of Science’s (IISc) 2014 report stated that the green cover declined from 53.63 per cent in 1973 to 33.76 per cent in 2009. There was a net loss in the green cover of up to 62.79 per cent in the past 40 years.

“The built-up area has significantly increased by 155 per cent at the expense of non-forest land in the region,” said Dr TV Ramachandra, Professor at IISc, Karnataka.

Vertical garden

Experts have asserted that in addition to the much-needed trees, the city should also promote vertical gardens to combat pollution. In a vertical garden, structural or columnar trees and plants are used to create a room of trees. “Apart from being ornamental, vertical gardens with the right kind of plantation could help in purifying the air,” said Subhajit Mukherjee, Founder of NGO Lets Green Foundation. “The vertical garden could help in adding to the oxygen in the air. It could be used as an addition to the trees but not as a substitute,” said Zoru Bhatena, Mumbai-based tree activist.

Tree cutting laws

Under the Protection and Preservation of Trees Act, Maharashtra 1975, for any complaints related to trimming, pruning and cutting of trees, a written application has to be made to the Ward officer or the Garden Department of the BMC or the municipal commissioner, seeking permissions.

Tags: [brihanmumbai municipal corporation](#), [tree census](#), [garden department](#)

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