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Western Ghats lost 5% evergreen forest cover, shows analysis

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Source: The post is based on the article “**Western Ghats lost 5% evergreen forest cover, shows analysis**” published in **The Hindu on 14th July 2023**

What is the News?

According to Western Ghats Spatial Decision Support System(WGSDSS), Western Ghats, which is among 36 global biodiversity hotspots, has seen a loss of 5% evergreen forest cover.

What is Western Ghats Spatial Decision Support System(WGSDSS)?

Launched by: Indian Institute of Science’s Energy and Wetlands Research Group

Purpose: It is a web portal that has been designed as part of the ongoing ecological research in the Western Ghats.

What did this web portal find about the Western Ghats?

Loss of Forest Cover: Western Ghats has seen a loss of 5% evergreen forest cover with an increase of 4.5% built-up cover, and 9% agriculture area.

– The interior forest constitutes only 25% of the forest landmass, depicting the fragmentation pressure, impacting local ecology.

Ecological Sensitivity or Fragility: Ecological sensitivity or fragility refers to permanent and irreparable loss of extant life forms or significant damage to the natural processes of evolution and speciation with the alterations in the ecological integrity of a region.

– Researchers have classified the vulnerability of the regions in the Western Ghats into four categories of Ecologically Sensitive Regions (ESR) – very high ecological fragility, high ecological fragility, moderate ecological fragility, and low ecological fragility.

– The ESR analysis of the Western Ghats depicts 63,148 square km area under very high ecological fragility, 27,646 square km under high ecological fragility, 48,490 square km as moderate, and 20,716 square km as low ecological fragility.

Recommendations: Western Ghats region witnessed large-scale land cover changes during the past century due to unplanned developmental activities with industrialisation and globalization.

– This necessitates implementing mitigation measures involving stakeholders to address the impacts through location-specific conservation measures.

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