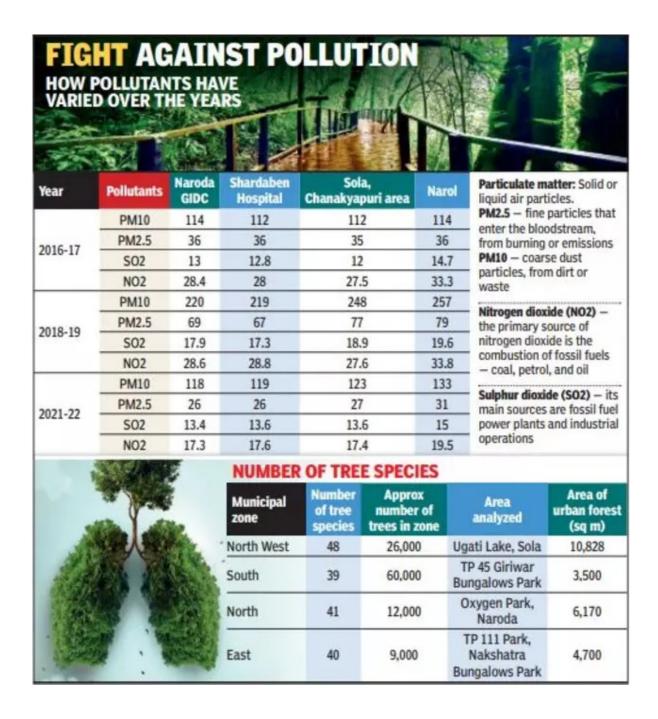
'Urban forests' not enough to end pollution: Study

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AHMEDABAD: It's quite known that Ahmedabad's dismal green cover does not shield its citizens from the rising particulate air pollution. It was in 2019 that the municipal administration had for the first time adopted the concept of developing certain areas as green clusters called 'urban forests'-that was to act as lungs for nearby neighbourhoods and even filter dust from city's air.



By 2021, though these clusters helped in reduction of pollution in neighbouring areas, a recent study of four urban forest clusters - Sola-Chanakyapuri, Narol, Naroda and Nakshatra Park - by researchers of Institute of

Architecture and Planning at Nirma University (IAPNU) revealed that more plantations and green cover will be required to meet rising pollution levels owing to rising construction activities and new vehicles added.

Fine particulate matter (PM2.5) levels increased in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, but then decreased in 2019-2020, when urban forests were introduced and the Covid-19 pandemic hit. PM2.5 levels have risen since then, but they are still lower than they were in 2018-2019.

A similar trend can be seen in PM10 and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) levels. Sulphur dioxide (SO2) levels, on the other hand, rose until 2019-2020, but then fell in 2021-2022. "Air quality monitoring stations within 4km of the urban forests showed a decrease in pollutant concentration after the forests were planted," states the study by Shweta Suhane, Rujvi Polara, Avni Gajjar, Ritu Agrawal and Utpal Sharma of IAPNU.

The study found that Ahmedabad has only 1.52 square metres of green and open space per person, which is significantly below the WHO and URDPFI guidelines of 9 square metres and 10-12 square metres per person, respectively.