



Why have mangroves got a Budget push?

05 February 2023

How do mangroves help?

Mangroves are salt-tolerant plant communities found in tropical and subtropical intertidal regions. They are important refuges of coastal biodiversity and also act as bio-shields against extreme climatic events. With the threat of climate change and frequent tropical storms looming large, planting more mangroves is a welcome development for India which has a coastline of about 7,500 km.

Where do mangroves grow in India?

The 'State of World Mangroves 2022' report by the Global Mangrove Alliance puts the total mangrove cover of the world at 1,47,000 sq km (14.7 million hectares). India has about 4,992 sq km (0.49 million hectares) of mangroves, according to the Indian State of Forest Report (IFSR) 2021. Mangroves in India are distributed across nine States and three Union Territories with West Bengal having the highest mangrove cover of 2,114 sq km. The IFSR report also points out that there has been an increase in the mangrove cover from 4,046 sq km in 1987 to 4,992 sq km in 2021. However, like most other countries, in India too the mangrove ecosystem faces constant pressure due to increasing population in coastal areas and the rising demand for land, timber, fodder, fuel-wood and other non-wood forest products like fisheries. The tree species that form a mangrove forest or ecosystem are broadly classified as true mangroves and mangroves associates. True mangroves are the ones which display morphological adaptations for a high saline mangrove ecosystem such as pneumatophores, vivipary or crypto vivipary germination and salt-secreting cells. Botanists put the number of true mangrove species in India at about 42 and mangrove associates at 68. A stable and resilient mangrove ecosystem requires a number of species to exist side by side. Experts believe that trial and testing with field experience and monitoring for years may be required to create a new mangrove ecosystem along the coastline.

What is the ecosystem of these forests?

Mangrove forests are formed when there is intertidal flow and where adequate sediments are available for the trees to set down roots. Experts say aquaculture or fisheries along the coast obstructing tidal flow is one of the biggest threats to the mangrove ecosystem. In the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the country, several instances of clearing mangroves for fisheries have come to light. Along the country's coastline, land reclamation for agriculture, aquaculture and industrial activities have occurred in areas which are under the Coastal Regulation Zone. Restoration of the land and allowing intertidal flow is crucial for plantation and survival of mangrove forests.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/explained-why-have-mangroves-got-a-budget-push/article66472109.ece>