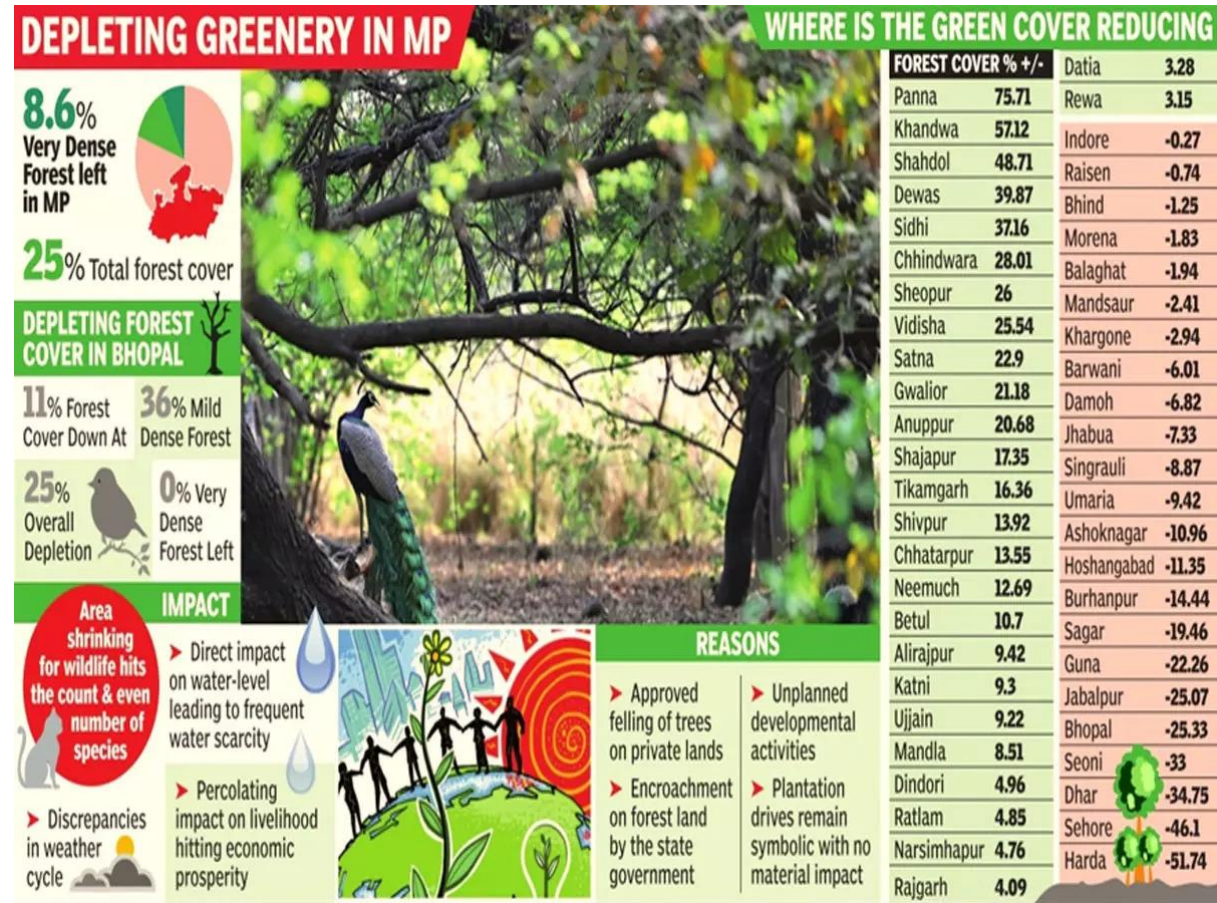


Madhya Pradesh: Green turning grey in India's heartland

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BHOPAL: Forest cover has depleted in Bhopal by shocking 25% in the past two years alone. The same holds true for Vidisha district. However, the real dip has been reported from Sehore district where forest cover has declined by 46%, according to the biennial assessment study of the union ministry for environment, forests and climate change.

Forest cover has been squeezed to about 11% of Bhopal's geographical area. Once boasting of its greenery, the state is left with no 'very dense' forest, 36% 'mild dense forest' and the rest open forest. Forest cover geographical area is only 20% and 10% in Sehore and Vidisha districts respectively.

Put together, the three districts including Bhopal have lost one third of the forest cover between two assessments, with a gap of two years.

The loss is being attributed to unplanned developmental activities, approved felling of trees on private lands and encroachment on forest land by the state government. The assessment IRS Resourcesat-2 LISS III satellite data came a little ahead of the district administration's ambitious move to plant 11 lakh saplings under 'Green Bhopal, Cool Bhopal' programme in 2019. A number of drives remained symbolic and mere photo-ops leading to no material impact in protecting the forest cover.

Forest cover in Bhopal, Vidisha and Sehore districts has registered a decrease of 25.33%, 25.54% and 46.10% respectively compared to previous assessment in 2017. It has a direct impact on water and wildlife. Only recently, Sehore has been hit by a severe water crisis.

The decrease in forest cover has been reported from 23 districts of MP. The sharpest fall is from Harda with a 51% decrease in two years. Very dense forest in MP accounted for only 8.6% of the total area. Forest cover per se is about 25% of the state's geographical spread.

The government must understand the importance of forest cover and its impact on climate change and livelihood to safeguard economic prosperity, said an environmental studies expert and consultant to the government.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/green-turning-grey-in-indias-heartland/articleshow/90923043.cms>