

## No record of 25 mn hectares of forest: Sunita Narain

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Warning Indian forests are “not in good shape”, noted environmentalist **Sunita Narain** today said the increase in forest cover was “not something to boast of or even noteworthy”.

The “missing” forest is the real issue that the country needs to focus on, she said. “Otherwise our forests will be only ‘paper forests’ — forests only on paper and not real,” Narain, who is the Director General of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), said in an analysis on India’s “missing” forests.

Picking holes in government’s assessments, Narain said the recently released Forest Survey Report made no mention of 25.87 million hectare of forests.

“There is no record of whether they exist or what condition they are in. Between 2019 and 2021, India’s forest cover has grown by a mere 0.2 per cent. Most of this growth has been in open forests — on land outside recorded forest areas. The recorded forest area, as per the Indian State of Forest Report, 2021, is 77.53 million hectare. But the forest cover on this land is said to be 51.66 million hectare,” she said.

### Gaps in govt assessment

- There are states where over 30-50 per cent of the land classified as forests is “missing” from the government’s assessment
- Picking holes in the assessment, environmentalist Sunita Narain says the recently released Forest Survey Report has made no mention of 25.87 million hectare of forests

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