

62% Delhi land degrading: Report

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NEW DELHI: Nearly 62% of Delhi's total land is under degradation, giving it the dubious distinction of being the third in the country -- after Jharkhand (68.77%) and Rajasthan (62.06%) -- with areas seeing a decline in productivity of land in terms of both biodiversity and agricultural cultivability, according to 'State of India's Environment 2022: In Figures' report released by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on Thursday.

The report, released ahead of the World Environment Day on Sunday, also finds the Capital is currently off-track on six out of the 15 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) set by the United Nations for 2030. It further said that the Capital continues to record alarmingly high pollution levels, with the annual PM10 level (particulate matter below 10 micrometres size) reported at 243 micrograms per

A cause of concern

61.73%

Degraded land in Delhi, indicating that a large chunk of the overall quality of land is reducing, in terms of biodiversity, forest resources and agricultural cultivability. This makes Delhi third worst after Rajasthan (62.06%) and Jharkhand

metre cube ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), which is nearly four times the national annual standard of $60\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, placing Delhi behind only Ghaziabad ($245\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) and Dhanbad ($264\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).

The report notes that there has been a 25% increase in

FARING POORLY IN OTHER AREAS TOO

Waste management

80.75%

Amount of Delhi's municipal solid waste left treated

20.07%

Households practising segregation at source

230,000 tonnes

Amount of plastic waste generated in 2019-20

Air pollution

243 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

Delhi's annual PM10 reading for 2021-22. This is four times

the national annual standard of $60\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

3

Delhi's position among most polluted cities in India, behind Ghaziabad

($245\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) and Dhanbad ($264\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)

degraded land in Delhi between 2003 and 2019, it says, attributing it to erosion, waterlogging, mass movement of people or long-term loss of vegetation.

While Delhi government spokespersons did not respond to requests seeking a comment,

officials have earlier said that the government has been actively looking to increase the city's green cover, which has risen to 23.06% of the total geographical area as per the India State of Forest Report 2021. It was 21.88% of total geographical area in 2019 and 20.6% in 2017. This year, the Delhi government has set a target of planting 3.5 million saplings.

Kiran Pandey, programme director at the Environment Resources Unit of CSE, said the assessment shows that for Delhi, Rajasthan and Jharkhand, a large chunk of the land is facing degradation, meaning the overall quality of land is going down or worsening over time.

"This will affect agricultural productivity, forest resources, the biodiversity across the city and in turn the livelihoods dependent on it. This is also important because agricultural lands account for around 46% of India's degraded land and forests 22%," she said.