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## Hyderabad: Tree count high, but only in select pockets

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GHMC says 4 trees for every resident; experts feel greenery is not evenly spread.



**HYDERABAD:** Tree lovers in the city can breathe easy. The city's lungs are doing well. There are over four trees for every single resident of Greater Hyderabad region, say GHMC's latest records. The tree-human ratio in the city comes as a welcome surprise at a time when most other cities are faring poorly on this front, according to recent tree censuses conducted across the country. Mumbai, for instance, has only one tree for four of its inhabitants which is an inversion of the Hyderabad ratio.

Environmental experts say that although the tree-human ratio is good in Hyderabad, the ideal ratio is seven trees per person, according to the standard set by Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore in 2014. A balance between humans and trees is sought not just for high oxygen levels

but also because a good tree cover controls solar radiation as also the electromagnetic radiation emanating from mobile phone towers.

Prof. C. Srinivasulu, of zoology, says, “Trees are important for carbon sequestration, which is the processing of carbon dioxide that is emitted by burning of fossil fuels and things like that and converting them into much needed oxygen for humans and animals. Trees purify the air. A good human-tree ratio can make up for the negative impacts of urbanisation by being a good solution for air pollution and even noise pollution.”

A senior official from GHMC said, “The city extends over 65,000-odd hectares. On our part, we have been trying to plant about 1,000 trees per hectare, and therefore although our tree population should be 6.5 crore by now, it is slightly lower as some have not survived. The Haritha Haram drive has been a boon, but we normally count trees which are at least 30 cm in girth. It should definitely bear fruit in the next few years and expand the green cover.”

Mr P. Srinivasa Rao, senior official in the forest department, says, “We have been working hard to ensure that even trees outside forest areas are taken care of to get the benefit of a large green cover. For the plantation drive, we picked trees that grow faster. However, more in-depth planning is required to ensure that more trees continue to be planted in the city at periodic intervals.”

Environmentalists too feel that tree cover does not extend uniformly in the city, with only a few pockets seeing a nice and thick concentration of tree.

Environmentalist Swathi Nambiar says, “There are certain areas in the city which have an abundance of trees, but most parts are like a concrete jungle. Parks and gardens and some reputed institutions in the city have a thick tree cover, which contribute to the high overall tree count in the GHMC records. There needs to be an adequate green cover throughout the city.”