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Govt aims to bring two-third geographical area of JK under forest cover: Sinha

'UT's green cover at 55% higher than national average of 24.56%'

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Jammu, July 30: Lieutenant Governor (LG), Manoj Sinha on Friday launched “Green J&K Drive-2021” from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu.

During this year, as many as 1.30 crore saplings are proposed to be planted across the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

The LG planted a ‘Cupressus’ sapling in the IIT Campus to mark the launch of this mega plantation drive.

The Green J&K Drive initiative is in consonance with the National Forest Policy, 1988 & the JK Forest Policy, 2011 which envisage afforestation on all degraded & denuded lands in the UT within & outside forests.

Speaking on the occasion, the LG observed that the ‘Green J&K Drive’ aims at creating a people’s movement at a massive scale with the involvement of all stakeholders,

particularly village panchayats, women, students, Urban Local Bodies, institutions, NGOs, and civil society.

“Our aim is to bring two-third geographical area of J&K under the forest and tree cover. The forest and tree cover in Jammu and Kashmir is about 55%, which is substantially higher than the national average of 24.56%,” he said.

The LG added that it is a matter of pride for us that while the present circumstances are posing a difficult challenge to the people at many places, the government machinery and the people of Jammu and Kashmir are discharging their responsibility towards the coming generation by preserving and strengthening our natural wealth.

Sinha underlined the importance of taking science and ecology together on the path of development. It is vital to ensure balance between development and conservation of our environment. There has never been a more urgent need to revive ecology than today, he remarked.

He expressed satisfaction over the initiation of Green Jammu and Kashmir campaign by Forest Department targeting to plant 130 lakh plants this year, in collaboration with schools, Non-Governmental institutions, Village Panchayat Plantation Committees (VPPCs) to mark the completion of 130 years of dedicated service of the department, which will contribute significantly in increasing the green cover in the UT.

“I am happy that the Green India Mission is being implemented in Jammu and Kashmir in the spirit of public participation which will bring economic benefits apart from improving the quality and quantity of forests in 320 villages,” said the LG.

The LG urged that every citizen should come forward to play an important part in the restoration of ecology.

“Scientific findings show that this decade matters most in preventing catastrophic climate change and reducing biodiversity loss. The United Nations on 5 June 2021 launched a major ambitious program – the “Decade of Ecosystem Restoration”, which is an important step towards restoring the destroyed ecology.

“If we fail to restore our ecology in the next ten years, at least one million species may become extinct in the coming times. As long as the ecological system is protected, we will be able to conserve our forests, rivers and lakes, mountains, meadows, fields and urban landscapes, which are also a source of wealth and health for the society,” said the LG.

The LG appreciated the Forest Department and the IIT Jammu for aiming at planting 10,000 trees in the IIT Jammu campus in this monsoon, besides working on Greening and Eco-restoration of forest land diverted for the purpose of creation of this august institution.

He asked the IIT Jammu administration to put dedicated efforts in taking eco-friendly initiatives so that this reputed institution can join the Green Metric World Colleges

competition on the basis of its Green Campus and Sustainability and can make its place in the top 50 ranking.

He said that under the guidance of our Prime Minister, the whole country is making headway in exploiting solar power to reduce the carbon footprint.

We can also explore the same to prevent the increasing imbalance of environment, said the LG.

Sinha advised the IIT Faculty to install a bio-digester to convert the campus waste into energy. This technology can change the way we manage solid waste and help make the campus environmentally sustainable with economic benefits. Apart from this, setting up of Biodiversity Park in the campus on the lines of Visvesvaraya Technological University can also be considered, he added.

“Whatever measures we are taking today to restore ecology and reduce air pollution, plastic pollution, I believe that it will prove to be a boon for the coming generations whether it is in villages or in cities”, maintained the LG.

On the occasion, the LG handed over the cheques worth Rs 1.97 cr to various Village Panchayat Plantation Committees (VPPCs) as the proceeds of harvesting of mature trees.

Appreciating the role of Social Forestry, the LG exhorted the department as well as the PRIs to work with renewed zeal and coordination to scale up the plantation activities for all the more encouraging results, thereby making PRIs truly empowered and self-reliant.

Earlier, Dr Arun Kumar Mehta, Chief Secretary, in his address through video conferencing urged the Forest department and the Village Panchayat Plantation Committees to engage common people in the drive in a participatory mode to enhance the forest and tree cover. Even if each person plants one sapling, we will have sufficient green cover to surpass our target of taking J&K to the highest level of green cover, he added.

Dr. Mohit Gera, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, J&K, in his address highlighted the initiatives of Forests department in improving the ecology and green cover in the UT.

Sanjeev Verma, Commissioner Secretary Forest, Ecology and Environment spelled out the future action plan for making the initiative a grand success.

Dr Manoj Gaur, Director, IIT Jammu read the welcome address and Roshan Jaggi, Director Social Forestry delivered the vote of thanks.

Bharat Bhushan, Chairman DDC Jammu; Vice Chancellors of various Universities; senior officers from Civil Administration, Police and Forests department, Sarpanches and members of VPPCs from across the UT, besides the students and faculty of IIT Jammu were present on the occasion.

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