

To improve green cover, Telangana MP helms initiative to promote planting trees

03 March 2021

Santosh is planning to set up a Green India Foundation to take up the tree plantation programme extensively and also spread it to other parts of the country.



Joginapalli Santosh Kumar, a Rajya Sabha member of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi, had taken up the initiative called Green India Challenge (GIC) – three years ago to improve the state's green cover. (HT PHOTO).

Presenting a bouquet or a garland to a politician or a celeb on birthdays or at public events has become out of fashion these days in Telangana. Instead, celebrities prefer accepting a tree sapling.

On Wednesday, when Telangana home minister Mohammad Mahmud Ali celebrated his birthday, he appealed to the people not to come to him with bouquets, but plant trees. The minister himself planted a sapling at Anjuman Khadim-ul-Muslimeen, an orphanage in Amberpet in Hyderabad.

And the credit for encouraging politicians and other VIPs to take up tree plantation goes to 44-year-old Joginapalli Santosh Kumar, a Rajya Sabha member from Telangana Rashtra Samithi, who had taken up a unique initiative – Green India Challenge (GIC) – three years ago, to improve the state's green cover.

"Happy to plant a sapling on my birthday as part of #GreenIndiaChallenge initiated by @MPsantoshtrs Saab. Request everyone to take part in this noble initiative. #GIC," the deputy chief minister tweeted.

Unlike other politicians who keep themselves busy indulging in power politics, Santosh, as the MP prefers being called, is focussing on promoting tree plantation among people in a big way.

“My objective is to see that there is greenery everywhere – whether it is a small house, or a street or a colony or a township. At a time when even the villages are turning into concrete jungles, there is every need to develop greenery in whatever little space we have, in order to make a better living,” says Santosh.

The idea of the Green India Challenge came to Santosh in July 2018, when people were being carried away by fancy challenges on social media like “Ice Bucket Challenge” and “Rice Bucket Challenge.” He said instead of wasting time on such publicity programmes, he thought he would do something that was useful to society.

“After discussing with my friends, I came up with this idea of challenging the people to plant tree saplings, which would go a long way in improving the green cover in the state. The inspiration for me was my uncle, chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, who took up this tree plantation programme in a big way in Siddipet when he was an MLA in ‘90s,” he said.

The Green India Challenge – with “Hara Hai Toh Bhara Hai” slogan, tags people to plant a sapling, challenging three others to do the same to continue the chain. “Within no time, the challenge has got tremendous response. Politicians, officials, sportspersons, celebrities from film industries in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Bollywood, also took up the challenge and planted trees in their respective areas and posted the pictures on their respective social media platforms, which led to the campaign going viral,” Santosh said.

The GIC has now emerged as one of the largest campaigns initiated by an individual, as more than 13 crore trees have been planted in different parts of the country.

Taking the campaign to the next level, Santosh has been requesting corporate groups to take up the afforestation on a larger scale in as many as 88 forest blocks in and around Hyderabad.

“In an attempt to encourage industrialists, I adopted 2,400 acres of reserve forest area at Keesara in Medchal-Malkajgiri district, two years ago and took up planting of 30,000 trees. The entire area has been fenced and now, there is a tremendous growth in the forest area,” he said.

Inspired by him, chairman of Hetero Pharma B Parthasarathy Reddy adopted 2,543 acres of forest land at Narasapur to improve the green cover. “Popular actor Prabhas (of Bahubali fame) has also responded to adopt 1,650 acres of forest land at Kazipally. Another big industrial group has agreed to spend nearly ₹70 crore to take up tree plantation at Rachakonda forest area on the outskirts of the city,” he said.

In an attempt to highlight the importance of afforestation, Santosh brought out a coffee-table book titled “Vriksha Vedam” which comprises slokas and literary renditions from various ancient scriptures like Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Sanskrit literary works and Buddhist literature that preached the importance of trees for the welfare of mankind.

Santosh is planning to set up a Green India Foundation to take up the tree plantation programme extensively to all parts of the country. “I am planning to invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be part of this campaign. His message will go a long way to inspire many generations to come,” he said.

On the occasion of KCR's birthday on February 17, Santosh gave a call for "Koti Vriksharchana" (worshipping trees with planting of one crore saplings). "It was a huge success. An unprecedented number of 1, 05, 25,625 tree saplings were planted in less than an hour on a single day," he said.

Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/to-improve-green-cover-telangana-mp-helms-initiative-to-promote-planting-trees-101614775628491.html>