

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2828**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 07.08.2023

**Land Degradation and Desertification**

2828. SHRI CHANDRA SEKHAR BELLANA:  
DR. SANJEEV KUMAR SINGARI:  
SHRI RAMALINGAM S.:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that issue of land degradation needs urgent attention;
- (b) if so, the steps taken to tackle the issue of land degradation and desertification;
- (c) the progress made under the Bonn Challenge pledge to bring 13 million hectares of degraded land under restoration by 2020;
- (d) the details of measure taken by the Government to reserve land degradation and deforestation in the areas of coastal districts of the Cauvery delta region especially in Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai, Nagapattinam districts; and
- (e) whether the Government has signed any MoU with any NGO to tackle the issue of land degradation, if so, the details thereof and subsequent action thereof?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
(SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY)

(a)to(c) In consonance with National Forest Policy (NFP), 1988 that envisages the national goal to have a minimum of one- third of the total land area under forest or tree cover, the Ministry has been taking several initiatives through various afforestation related schemes implemented by ministry and other ministries which aim at increasing and improving forest and tree cover and thereby combating desertification. The Ministry supports the States/Union Territories for carrying out various afforestation activities through Centrally Sponsored Scheme for conservation, development and promotion of forests under its major schemes namely, National Mission for a Green India (GIM) and Forest Fire Protection & Management Scheme (FFPM). Compensatory afforestation under CAMPA has also been used to increase forest cover across the country. State Governments also implement various schemes for tree plantation/afforestation.

Further, the promotional measures are being implemented through a Central Sector Scheme under National Coastal Mission Programme on 'Conservation and Management of Mangroves and Coral Reefs'. Under this programme, annual Management Action Plan (MAP) for conservation and management of mangroves are formulated and implemented in all the coastal States and Union Territories.

The Government has undertaken a number of measures to combat land degradation

and desertification in the country. These are as follows:

- (i) Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, published by Space Applications Centre (SAC) Indian Space Research Organisation, Ahmedabad, which provides the extent of land degradation and desertification in India, states that the land degradation and desertification in the country has been estimated to be 97.84 million hectares in 2018-19. It provides state-wise area of degraded land which is helpful in planning and implementation of schemes aimed at restoration of land by providing important data and technical inputs.
- (ii) An online portal has been developed with the help of Space Application Center(SAC), Ahmedabad for visualization of degraded area of land with the processes causing degradation.
- (iii) A Centre of Excellence has been envisaged at the Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) Dehradun for enhanced South-South Cooperation. It aims at knowledge sharing, promotion of best practices, sharing of India's experiences with cost-effective and sustainable land management strategies, developing ideas for transformative projects and programs and capacity building.
- (iv) International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - India, has been assigned for reporting India's progress on achieving Bonn Challenge target.

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP), 2015 in Paris, India joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge pledge to bring into restoration 13 million hectares (mha) of degraded and deforested land by the year 2020, and additional 8 mha by 2030. This pledge to restore of 21 m.ha by 2030 has been increased to 26 mha, during the COP14 to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 2019.

The area of land covered through afforestation is reported under the Twenty Point Programme, which is approximately 18.94 million hectares during the period 2011-12 to 2021-22. This includes the afforestation achievements under concerted efforts of the State Governments through various central and state specific schemes.

- (d) As informed by Tamil Nadu state, the Rehabilitation of Coastal habitat through the formation of bio shield is being implemented for three years (2023-24 to 2025-26) in all coastal districts of Tamil Nadu including the districts such as Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai and Nagapattinam, wherein the eco-restoration of existing Mangroves ecosystem to an extent of 11.25 Sq.km and new planting of mangrove to an extent 3.28 Sq.km has been envisaged. Further, the tree species which act as bio shield such as Casuarinas, Cashew, Mangrove spp, Palmyrah and other specialized species are being raised in these districts for planting as part of massive afforestation initiative. The training, awareness, local community involvement is also being carried out as part of this scheme.
- (e) The Ministry has not signed any MoU with any NGO to tackle the issue of land degradation. However, tree Plantation/Afforestation being multi departmental activity are also taken up cross-sectorally by various Departments, NGOs, Civil Society, Corporate bodies etc. under various Central and State Plan/Non Plan Schemes.

\*\*\*\*\*