

GREEN PROJECT TO ACT AS LIFELINE FOR DESERT NATIONAL PARK

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

A view of the Desert National Park.Special arrangement.

A green agriculture project, funded by the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Global Environment Facility, will act as a lifeline for the Desert National Park (DNP) in western Rajasthan with the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes.

'Develop grasslands'

Action plans for each village in the region are being prepared with the involvement of the local rural communities.

The environmentalists in the State have called for developing grasslands on vast tracts in the DNP area for grazing of animals, saying their neglect and conversion into irrigated and cultivated land would further endanger the rare species. The DNP is situated near Jaisalmer and Barmer, covering an area of 3,162 sq. km, while sand dunes comprise about 20% of the park.

The village-wise action plans will support the rural population's traditional methods of water management and agriculture. Chief Secretary Usha Sharma said at a meeting of the State Project Steering Committee here over the week-end that the activities under the project would be taken up in consultation with the villagers and skilled and qualified persons would be selected for the project management units.

To cost Rs. 31 crore

The project, which will be completed by March 2026 at a cost of Rs. 31 crore, is expected to evolve an intersectoral mechanism, involving agricultural and allied sectors and forestry and natural resources management for ensuring the economic development of the DNP and adjoining 52 village panchayats. The activities will bring resilience to the agriculture sector beyond the project's conclusion.

Principal Agriculture Secretary Dinesh Kumar said the activities under the project would include conservation of the DNP's native flora species, effective management of traditional forests, known as *Oran*, and grazing areas, and revival of water harvesting structures such as *khadin* and *tanka*.

The process for the appointment of project management units, which is underway, will be completed by next month.

In addition to the protection of the natural ecosystem, the project will lay emphasis on strengthening people's livelihood through sustainable agricultural practices.

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