

**“Government remains committed to afforestation and increase green cover”: Dr. Harsh Vardhan**

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

## **“Government remains committed to afforestation and increase green cover”: Dr. Harsh Vardhan**

### **Allocations to environment sector increased in Budget 2018-19**

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Reiterating the Government's commitment to afforestation and increasing the green cover, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that for a restructured National Bamboo Mission, an outlay of Rs. 1290 crore has been made to promote bamboo sector in a holistic manner. Recently, the Government has also removed bamboo grown outside forest areas from the definition of trees. He said that Rs. 160 crore have been earmarked for the Green India Mission (National Afforestation Programme), which marks an increase of 48.8% over the previous allocation. Briefing mediapersons on the increase in allocations made to the environment sector in Budget 2018-19 here today, the Minister added that Green India Mission will contribute to the Nationally Determined Contribution for the period 2021-2030 to intensify the efforts for achieving our Nationally Contribution on Forestry to sequester additional 2.5 to 3.0 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in the forestry sector by the year 2030. “This year's Budget has also allocated Rs. 67.50 crore for Eco-Task Force, which is a whopping 125 % increase”, Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated.

The Minister also pointed out that an initiative has been drawn up to tackle the challenges posed by Climate Change. The plan envisages planting 1000 crore saplings over a period of 10 years, from 2021 to 2030. The plantation will be carried out in different parts of the country under programmes like CAMPA, Green India Mission, National Afforestation Programme, as well as plantation along highways and railway tracks.

Highlighting the importance of spreading awareness on environmental issues, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that the total budget allocation for the Environmental Information Systems (ENVIS) in Budget 2018-19 is Rs. 24 crore, which marks a 33% increase compared to 2017-18, out of which the training courses under Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP), will be funded, apart from the regular functions of the ENVIS Centres located across the country. GSDP is a recent initiative under the ENVIS scheme for skilling the youth in the country. An estimated 80,000 people under various skilling courses will be trained during 2018-19. The Minister added that a total of 5 lakh 60 thousand people will be imparted training between 2018-19 and 2020-21.

**Target for next three years (Green Skill Development Programme)**

Year	Targets
2018-19	80,000
2019-20	1,60,000
2020-21	3,20,000
Total (2018-19 to 2020-21)	5,60,000

The first GSDP course was formulated for skilling Biodiversity Conservationists (Basic Course) and Para-taxonomists (Advance Course) of 3 months duration each, on a pilot basis in ten select districts of the country (covering nine bio-geographic regions). The Environment Minister launched the GSDP and released the training course Modules on June 4, 2017 on the eve of World Environment Day. Under the pilot scheme of GSDP, 94 Trainees successfully completed the basic course qualifying as skilled Biodiversity Conservationists and 154 students are enrolled for the Advance Course on Para-taxonomy, which is expected to conclude in March, 2018. BSI and ZSI are the nodal centres for the pilot programme. With the success of the pilot, the scope of the programme is being extended to an all-India level, covering other green skills, with identification of 35 such courses including - pollution monitoring (air/water/noise/soil), Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) operation, waste management, forest management, water budgeting & auditing, conservation of river dolphins, wildlife management, marine taxonomy & coastal biodiversity, mangroves conservation, bamboo management & livelihood generation.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan also underlined that Rs. 20 crore has been earmarked for the Centres of Excellence, which is an 11% increase over the previous year. He said that on the wildlife front, funds to the tune of Rs. 175 crore have been earmarked for Development of Wildlife Habitat, i.e a 10% increase and Rs. 66 crore have been set aside for conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems, an increase of 10%. The Minister also added that Rs. 175 crore have been earmarked for development of wildlife habitat, marking a 10% increase, while funds to the tune of Rs. 350 crore have been allocated for Project Tiger in Budget 2018-19. Project Elephant has been allocated Rs. 30 crore, which makes for a 9% increase.

Highlighting the Government's efforts to tackle air pollution in 94 non-attainment cities in the next three years, the Minister stated that it is proposed that each of the cities will reduce pollution levels by 35% in the next three years and 50% in the next five years under the National Clean Air Programme. The programme will include expanding the monitoring network, conducting air pollution health impact studies, setting up of air information systems, certification of monitoring institutions, air quality forecasting systems, awareness and capacity building drives, networking of technical institutions who specialize in this area, carrying out source apportionment studies, support for strict implementation of identified actions for abatement of air pollution from all sources

in furtherance of management plans, and increase international cooperation and learn from the best practices of other countries. Similarly, to make our rivers clean and perennial and to enrich forests in the river basins through Catchment Area Treatment Plan, the River Basin Catchment Area Treatment Plan will be taken up to tackle Climate Change.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan also stated that some allocations made in the Budget 2018-19 to other ministries that may indirectly help environment include –

1. Namami Gange
2. Fund for Stubble burning
3. Higher target for Ujjwala scheme (LPG)
4. Saubhagya (Power connection to all).

#### [List of 94 non-attainment cities](#)

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