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Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation

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Posted On: 19 JUL 2018 3:24PM by PIB Delhi

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is running “Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan” in five main stem Ganga basin states – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The drive was launched on the 9th of this month, and the week upto 15th July was observed as ‘Shubharambh Saptah’. State Forest Departments of these states have been made the nodal agencies for the smooth and effective execution of the campaign. The participation from Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), Ganga Vichar Manch (GVM), NGOs and educational institutions has been encouraging. The involvement of District Ganga Committees, of which District Magistrates are the Chairpersons, has given strength to the programme. Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) have been designated as the district level Nodal Officers and Chief Conservator of Forest (CCF) at the State level for organizing the events.

The campaign, which has been initiated as part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) component of Namami Gange programme, is significant as it aims to bring greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation. A number of schools, colleges and departments have been requested to “Adopt a Plant” for turning this campaign into a people’s movement. Various seminars, workshops, lectures, drawing and painting competitions etc. are being organised.

Plantation activities are being carried out with great enthusiasm all along the banks of the River Ganga with participation of local people. Formal events to mark the campaign have been held at over 100 locations. In Uttar Pradesh, the programme is dovetailed with the Ganga Haritima Abhiyan. Some of the plants which are being sown during the campaign are Kanji, Sheesham, Farmis, Jamun, Arjun, Gutal, Siras, Chhitvan, Mango, Neem, Semal, Jungal Jalebi, Gulmohar, Kadam, Sagwan, Saal, Mahogni, Ber, Bamboo, Karaonda, Ashwagandha, Curry Patta, Jathrofa, Beheda, Dhatura, Sarpagandha etc.

Getting Forest Research Institute (FRI) on board

In order to implement the afforestation project in a scientific manner, Forest Research Institute (FRI), Dehradun was assigned the project to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) on the basis of which the State Forest Departments would carry out their plantation activities. In the DPR a riverscape covering an area of 83,946 km² (1,13,751 *hectare*) has been delineated along the five main stem Ganga basin states for afforestation over a period of 5 years at a cost of Rs. 2293.73 crore.

The FRI report provides a multi-disciplinary approach with potential plantation and treatment models. Considering the type of natural ecosystem, identification of native vegetation, soil conditions and agro-climatic zones, potential models of various types

have been developed. The implementation plan aims to contribute towards the Clean Ganga Mission, particularly AviralDhara and NirmalDhara besides maintenance of the ecological and geological integrities, by improving the base flow and filtration of the ground water pollution.

Why is Afforestation in Ganga Basin important?

Forests cause higher rainfall and raise water level in the rivers. Through their foliage, craggy bark and abundant leaf litter, trees and forests decrease the speed of water dispersion and favour slow but greater infiltration of rainwater to ensure smooth functioning of the hydrological cycle. Moreover, presence of healthy forest cover along the river provides self-cleaning ability to the river. Thus, afforestation and augmentation of existing forest along the Ganga holds the promise to strengthen the riparian ecosystem thereby contributing to the overarching cause of Ganga Rejuvenation.

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(Release ID: 1539232) Visitor Counter : 259

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