

DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN FORESTS WILL CONTRIBUTE TO INDIA'S DECISION TO SEQUESTER 2.5 TO 3 BILLION TONNES OF CARBON DIOXIDE EQUIVALENT IN THE COUNTRY'S FORESTS, THEY WILL ALSO FUNCTION AS URBAN LUNGS: ENVIRONMENT MINISTER PRAKASH JAVADEKAR

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: New Delhi/ Mumbai, June 5, 2020

We have forests in rural areas, but not much in urban areas of the country. In many major cities and urban centres in the world, there are forest areas. But we need more. There are gardens in cities/urban areas, but not forests. Stating this, Union Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and Information and Broadcasting Minister Shri Prakash Javdekar called for planting and growing more trees which will be our oxygen bank, in a virtual celebration of World Environment Day 2020 today. He referred to PM Modi's similar message in the recent Mann Ki Baat programme and said, PM has always emphasized on environment.

Shri Javadekar said, development of Urban Forests will contribute to India's decision to sequester 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in the country's forests. They will also function as urban lungs, he added. In this connection, he spoke about the Warje City Forest in Pune, which is a good example of Private-Public Partnership for developing urban forests and can act as a model for building urban forests under MoEFCC's Nagar Van scheme in 200 cities across the country. Assistance under CAMPA Fund will be provided for this initiative.

Shri Javadekar appealed to the municipal corporations to map forest and degraded land in cities and to reserve them for development of urban forests, making it a people's movement. The Environment Ministry is also thinking of introducing prizes for good city forests created by public participation, announced the Minister.



Shri Javadekar said, India has 16% of world's human & cattle population, both require land, water & food. But we have only 2.5% of world's landmass & 4% of natural water resources. Still, we are able to preserve 8% of world's biodiversity. This is no small feat, said the Minister. He also stated, it is Indian culture to protect biodiversity despite constraints. Our lifestyle is such that it is connected with nature and all species and animals are a part of our lives. In our unique culture, people worship trees, animals and all kind of lives. 300 people of Rajasthan gave their lives in order to protect forests, he mentioned. In every village we have a forest in the name of God where tree felling and clearing forests does not happen. Invoking a sanskrit shloka, the Minister said, nature protects those who worship nature.

Speaking on the occasion, MoS, MoEFCC Shri Babul Supriyo said, nature is letting us know and reminding us through the COVID-19 pandemic that we need to take more careful and concerted efforts in protecting nature. Stating that World Environment Day reminds us about our commitment to protecting the environment and biodiversity and conservation, he said, the Centre has decided to make tree plantation a people's movement. He urged that if all of us plant at least one tree in our vicinity, it will help the cause of climate change and reduce carbon emission. The Minister said, we should pledge to protect and preserve the forest areas in the cities. He further said, with a view to enhance biodiversity in urban landscapes, MoEFCC has chosen Nagar Van as the theme of World Environment Day this year.

Shri Babul Supriyo also stated, we should make a conscious and concerted effort to minimise the use of natural resources and feed all living creatures on the earth, including wild animals with compassion. This year, MoEFCC, in coordination with state governments, has planned to enhance the target for tree plantation to 145 crores, which can be achieved with people's participation. The Government has also decided to take up the regulation of major river basins in the country, with forestry interventions, tree plantations and soil moisture conservation, further stated the Minister.

Speaking on the occasion, DG, Forests and Special Secretary, Shri Sanjay Kumar said, a large part of our world population lives in urban areas today. So, unless we cater to them and understand nature and biodiversity in urban areas, our goals of sustainable development will not be successful.

On this occasion, Warje Urban Forest in Pune has been showcased as it can become a role model for the country in implementation of the Nagar Van scheme. Warje Forest Area within Pune Municipal Limit, has been

developed over about 22 hectares of forest land amounting to about 9000 acres. It bears 6,500 trees as on date and about a thousand people visit the place everyday.

Warje was once located outside the limits of municipal corporation, but with the expansion of urbanisation and population explosion, this area has now come almost at the centre of the city. Warje is one such area where people were settling earlier and lot of filth was strewn around.

Speaking about Warje Smriti Van, Shri Vivek Khandekar, Chief Conservator of Forest in Pune, said, in the 25 acres of Warje, the forest department pioneered a project to develop the forest area into an urban forest park in 2015. A stake of local people was developed in this forest land by converting the area into a recreational, ecological and environmental green spot for the people around, which also helped to take care of their physical and mental health. This can be replicated all over India to secure and protect the forest lands within the limits of a city to provide them with green areas.

Warje City Forest gives pure air to Pune-kars. This is the first step towards fighting climate change. I exhort everyone to grow forests and walk and get pure air everyday, said Dr. Vinitaa Apte, TERRE Policy Centre. The CMD of Persistent Systems, Dr. Anand Deshpande expressed delight about Warje turning into a beautiful biodiversity spot. He said, it is really commendable to see officials set up an urban forest within Pune city and it is our privilege for them to play a part in it.

Warje, situated on the bank of the Mutha river has a catchment area in the western hills that brings along fertile soil and sufficient water. The Union Government took a significant and ambitious step to increase the green cover on barren lands. The project 'Urban Forest' was then started by Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Control (MoEFCC) with assistance from the Forest Department, Government of Maharashtra. The total area of the hill is about 16.8 hectares and until some years ago, it was totally barren and used as a dump yard by the residents in the vicinity. Stressing on the need for creating a balance between development and environment conservation, big corporates like Tata Motors, Persistent Foundation and Terre Policy Centre, a Pune based NGO extended their support. Public Private Participation as seen in Warje is one of its best examples. A number of residents have planted and adopted trees in memory of their loved ones at Smriti Van in Warje. A total of 9500 trees were planted in the area under CSIR initiative between 2015 to 2017. The neglected land has now been transformed into an area of rich biodiversity of various species of plants, birds, butterflies, reptiles and mammals. The project also helps in absorbing approximately 129,000 Kg carbon-dioxide and producing about 5,62,000 Kg oxygen per year. Presently, water is supplied from five water ponds located within the project area and with water tankers which supplement water supply in the dry season. However, the ground water level in the area is on the rise and the surplus will be useful for others also in the near future. Undoubtedly, Project Urban Forests is helping in maintaining the ecological balance, serving both environmental and social development goals.

This is the beginning of creating 200 forests under the Nagar Van scheme, within the next couple of years.

Also read: [Warje Urban Forest in Pune now a role model for the country](#)

Here is [the brochure released on Urban Forests](#), released by the Ministers today.

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