

9,000 hectares of degraded forest to be restored by 2021

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The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has set an ambitious target to restore about 9,000 hectares of degraded forests by 2021 and take the help of remote sensing satellites to make officials accountable.

Afforestation programme in the erstwhile J&K state was riddled with corruption charges and despite crores of rupees pumped in the revival of forests, much of the plans had failed to achieve their intended targets.

Under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), a target has been set for 2020-21 fiscal to improve the quality of forests and to rejuvenate degraded forest areas by utilisation of funds received for Compensatory Afforestation on the diversion of forestland for non-forest purposes.

The planning for compensatory afforestation started in September, when DFOs of the Forest and Allied Departments were given tentative financial outlay for the preparation of plans.

“From the next year, projects will be formulated in consultation with panchayats to meet specific needs of local communities. Field-level forest infrastructure and capacity building for frontline staff has also been given a priority in the plan,” said Dr Mohit Gera, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, J&K.

Major focus will be laid on achieving targets by officials and using satellite and drones to check progress.

As per a study conducted in the erstwhile J&K state, 7,000 sq km of forest area had degraded out of total 20,230 sq km forest area, which covers J&K. Jammu region has a forest cover of 12,050 sq km, Kashmir 8,115 sq km, while Ladakh has forest cover of just 17 sq km. In J&K UT, forests account for 47 per cent of the geographical area.

However, the Revenue and Forest Departments have constantly remained at loggerhead over jurisdiction issues creating hurdles. Sources said not a single Forest Division has been demarcated completely in the past seven decades leaving the field open for encroachment and destruction of trees.

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Source: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/9-000-hectares-of-degraded-forest-to-be-restored-by-2021/871990.html>