

Chandigarh's green DNA keeps it ahead

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CHANDIGARH: In this city where green spaces were mapped out from the start and planned on the ground, the green picture has been vibrant. From tree along avenues, open spaces, green belts around building complexes and on rotaries, the greening is visible. It has also helped in combating curbing air pollution to a certain extent

The greening agencies like the UT's forest and horticulture departments and the municipal corporation contribute in developing, maintaining and monitoring the green cover of the city. The UT administration has also formed a Greening Chandigarh Task Group which had been coordinating with green agencies and other citizen groups to improve the existing greenery in the city.

As per report of Forest Survey of India of 2017, total forest cover of the Union Territory of Chandigarh has decreased by 0.1 sq km. According to Abdul Qayum, deputy conservator of forests, the small decrease in forest cover was recorded as some forest land has been diverted for developmental projects, but overall, there has been an increase in green cover outside the forest area over the years. Chandigarh has a forest cover of 47.56 sq km and trees over a 10 sq km area.

TC Nautiyal, member secretary of Chandigarh Pollution Control Committee said, "The sharp increase in number of vehicles from 2.59 lakh in 1991 to 10.9 lakh in 2016 has added to air pollution. Even then, the quality of ambient air in Chandigarh is far better than neighbouring cities of Punjab and Haryana. The SO₂ and NO_x levels are also within permissible limits. However, PM 10 and PM 2.5 levels do cross the permissible limits at times."

There is no denying the fact that trees play a key role in creating healthy urban environment, improving air quality and counteracting greenhouse effects by absorbing pollutants and intercepting harmful particles.

How Greening

Chandigarh Action Plan has worked

As per official data, during the year 2017-18, the greening agencies have exceeded their collective target of planting 2,35,000 saplings by planting extra 4,39,126 saplings. Forest department also achieved its target of planting 1,50,000 stem cuttings of Arundo-donax (a soil binder plant) along the choe banks to stabilise it against soil erosion in the catchment area of Sukhna lake.

Entities like Punjab Agriculture University, NGOs, resident welfare associations, education institutions and farmers also contributed by planting 10,200 saplings.

Qayum said all these agencies met the target of planting 2,43,000 saplings. As per the action plan for 2018-19, forest department has planted 63,000 saplings , combined wings of horticulture, municipal corporation, engineering department and Chandigarh administration 60,000 -- ornamental and fruit , flowering and fruit -- saplings. Apart from this, 1,20,000 saplings were distributed free of cost or sold at subsidised rates by horticulture, MC and engineering department.

Forest department planted saplings of fruit-bearing species in Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary, reserve forest and city forest areas for improvement of habitat. The seedlings of neem, jamun, arjun, mango, kusum, peepal, kachnar, medicinal and herbal plants were distributed to the institutions by the department. Under the action plan, plantation of hardy, shade bearing, long living and pollution-preventive species was undertaken at locations with more pollution, particularly roadsides.

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/chandigarhs-green-dna-keeps-it-ahead/articleshow/68983497.cms>