

Govt launches pilot project to increase forest cover in 5 states

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The projects seeks to put into place monitoring protocols to combat desertification. (Photo: Mint)

NEW DELHI: Reiterating its commitment to fight desertification, India has launched a pilot project to restore degraded forest landscapes in five states over the next 42 months.

In the first phase, the pilot will be conducted in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Karnataka.

The project launched in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) aims to enhance the capacity on forest landscape restoration (FLR) by developing and adapting best practices for sustainable land management and putting into place some monitoring protocols to combat desertification.

This project will eventually cover all such landscapes. “With about 30% of India’s total geographical area being affected by land degradation, India has high stakes. We as a country make targets not under any global pressure, but

for our own country's real sustainable development, and as in the past India will play a leadership role," said Union environment minister Prakash Javadekar, while launching the project on Monday.

The announcement comes ahead of the 14th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14) to be hosted by India this August.

The global conference scheduled to take place from 29 August to 14 September would review the progress made by countries to control and reverse further loss of productive land from desertification, land degradation and drought.

According to India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), submitted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), India has pledged to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

The project is also part of the Bonn Challenge pledge, which was undertaken by India in 2015, to restore 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020, and another 8 million hectares by 2030. This is one of the highest targets among all Asian countries.

The minister also unveiled the logo of COP 14. The upcoming conference, which will be held in Greater Noida, will be attended by over 5,000 representatives from over 197 countries to address the issue of combating desertification, land degradation and drought.

India will take over the COP presidency from China for two years until the next COP is hosted in 2021.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is one of the three Rio conventions adopted by United Nations, along with UNFCCC and Convention on Biological Diversity.

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