



HP forest dept's schemes proving boon to environment, people

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Himachal Pradesh Forest Department's schemes are proving beneficial in terms of increasing forest cover and environment protection. Besides, the new schemes launched by the state Forest Department are also helping in providing livelihood opportunities to the local people of the State.

Special plantation campaigns are being carried out to increase the state's green cover. As many 88,53,532 saplings were planted on 9785 hectares of forest land during the previous year, while 65,34,217 saplings were planted on about 7499 hectares of forest land under the special plantation campaign this year.

For the first time in the State, an extensive publicity campaign is being conducted in areas sensitive to forest fire and people are being made aware to save forests from fire by various means. A new manual has been created for forest fire prevention and immunization.

Apart from this, a Rapid Forest Fire Force has been formed by connecting the citizens of the state with the fire alert SMS service based on the satellite of Forest Survey of India so that the information about forest fire can be immediately reported and appropriate action could be taken.

Pine leaves are the main cause of fire. A new policy has been formulated to collect these leaves and remove them from forest land. Under this, a provision has been made to provide 50 percent grant (maximum Rs 25 lakh) on capital investment for setting up industry based on pine leaves.

The Van Mitra scheme has been started with a view to inculcate the spirit of conservation of forest and environment among school students. Under this, a fixed forest area is being allocated to plus two schools for plantation and looking after the saplings by the students. In 2018, 228 schools and 164.30 hectares of land were selected and 1,66,830 saplings were planted under this scheme. During this financial year, 146 schools and 131.5 hectares of land have been identified with a target of planting 1,30,100 saplings.

Also playing an important role in promoting eco-tourism, the Forest Department has allocated Rs 18.18 crore for Janjehli area of Mandi district which will be spent on the improvement of trekking routes, forest rest houses, public facilities and forest checks.

The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has provided Rs three crores each for Manali and Nachan for the development of natural parks and walking paths. Apart from this, camping sites have been started at 25 places to promote eco-tourism in the State.

The Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecology Management and Livelihood Improvement Project of Rs 800 crore, funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is being implemented in 18 forest divisions of state's six districts. Last year, Rs 11.58 crore was spent under the scheme aimed at increasing the forest area and providing local people with forest-based livelihood opportunities. A provision of about Rs 29.71 crore has been made for the project this year.

The State Government has also launched another scheme named Van Samriddhi-Jan Samridhi aimed to create employment opportunities by selling wild herbs and promoting their production from private land.

Another new scheme, 'Ek Buta Beti Ke Naam', has been launched by the Government aimed to make people aware of the importance of forests and the rights of girls by planting saplings in the name of a newborn girl.

Source: <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2019/state-editions/hp-forest-dept---s-schemes-proving-boon-to-environment--people.html>