

Non-forest agencies lagging in 33-crore plantation drive

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Nagpur: Though the state government managed to plant about 20.17 crore saplings till 7.30pm on Thursday in its ongoing 33 crore plantation drive, most of saplings planted were by the forest department and its agencies. There is lacklustre response from other departments and agencies like gram panchayats.

The forest department was to plant 12.25 crore saplings followed by social forestry (5.50 crore), Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra (1 crore), and other departments (6.25 crore) and gram panchayats (8 crore). Forest department portal showed that though 60% of the target has been met in one month, response from other agencies was less. When the drive was launched by chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, he said, "We would achieve the target in a month."

However, of the 20.17 crore saplings planted, forest department and its agencies, who were to plant 18.75 crore saplings had achieved 13.48 crore. Gram panchayats, which had to plant over 8 crore trees, has achieved only 50% target.

Thirty five government departments are part of the greening drive but forest portal shows non-forest departments including those damaging the environment like PWD, NHAI, and energy giving in a dismal performance. Chief minister's own home department is slow in taking up plantations. It was given a target of 7.85 lakh saplings but has so far planted just 1.82 lakh.

As per 'polluter pays principle', PWD and NHAI, the two agencies that fell most trees for road widening, should go an extra mile for taking up plantations but portal shows PWD achieving only 10.60 lakh saplings or 22% of their 45 lakh. NHAI, which was to plant 1.32 lakh saplings, has planted only 47,000 (11.5%). This is true with energy (3.27 lakh) and urban development (44.63 lakh) departments which have planted 1.10 lakh (35%) and 6.56 lakh saplings (18%) respectively. The agriculture department, which can play a key role to greening drive was to plant 1.79 crore saplings but has managed 63.67 lakh only.

The industries department too was tasked with planting 15.45 lakh saplings but planted only 6 lakh (39%). This is also true with the rural development department (RDD), whose target is 63.13 lakh but has planted 12.85 lakh (28%). Similar is the story with

other non-forest agencies.

Principal chief conservator of forests (PCCF) for production and management and nodal officer for plantations, Praveen Srivastava, said, “I agree there was slump in plantation drive owing to dry spell in July. If you see district-wise achievement, sizable numbers have been planted in eastern and western parts of the state where there were rains. There is shortfall in Marathwada due to scanty rainfall.”

Srivastava added, “The 33-crore target has to be achieved by September-end. We still have two months to go. The non-forest agencies too need to give a push.”

BOX I

Top 10 Greeners

District Planted

Nashik: 1.35 cr

Chanda 1.21 cr

Nanded 1.03 cr

Kolhapur 98.18 lakh

Gadchiroli 95.66 lakh

Pune 92.56 lakh

Satara 75.46 lakh

Jalgaon 71.35 lakh

Aurangabad 70.37 lakh

Ahmednagar 66.35 lakh