

**Punjab to launch massive afforestation at Rs 222.15 cr : CS**

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Punjab to launch massive afforestation at Rs 222.15 cr : CS Chandigarh, May 4 (UNI) Punjab would launch a massive afforestation plan by planting 53 lakh saplings on 692.645 hectares at the cost of Rs 222.15 crore in the state as this will help further greening of the highways with tall plants, habitat improvement in Bir Moti Bagh and development of Siswan community reserve during the current fiscal. This will be done under the annual plan operation (APO) for 2021-22 of the Punjab State Compensatory Afforestation Monitoring and Planning Authority (CAMPA) of the Forests and Wildlife Preservation department approved at the maiden meeting of the steering committee, chaired by Chief Secretary Vini Mahajan here on Tuesday.

The approved plan will be placed before the Union Government for funds allocation. Acting on the directives of Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, the committee approved purchase of the wood saving devices for forest fringe villages of kandi areas at the cost of Rs 408 lakh. Besides, a fully automated cattle pound would be constructed in Patiala district at the cost of Rs 210 lakh along with a demonstration plot of bamboo for farmers at an outlay of Rs 392.95 lakh would also be made. Sharing details of the plan, the Chief Secretary said an afforestation drive would be initiated to mitigate the impact of air pollution in 9 polluted NACs like Dera Baba Nanak, Mandi Gobindgarh, and Ludhiana at an outlay of Rs 307 lakh.

Besides, afforestation would be undertaken on the area of 5,401 hectares under the NPV component at the cost of Rs 9,970.25 lakh. Additional Chief Secretary (Forests) Anirudh Tewari, while giving a background information about the Punjab CAMPA, apprised the steering committee that the CAMPA funds were being judiciously utilised for compensatory afforestation, restoration of ecological services and other conservation activities in the forest areas for the purpose of management, conservation and development of forests and wildlife as per the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Rules, 2018. In the last five years, the department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation has contributed to greening and biodiversity management efforts in the state by planting 20,631 hectares of government forest land under the flagship programmes of CAMPA and 1,178 hectares of nonforest institutional lands under Green Punjab Mission in a mutually exclusive manner to enhance ecological health of the Punjab Landscape, he added.

Giving a comprehensive presentation on physical and financial progress under the scheme during the previous year, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Jitendra Sharma informed that during 2020-21, a total of 311.978 hectares plantation was done under compensatory afforestation, 7896.218 hectares of previous year's plantations were maintained besides undertaking maintenance of 104387 tall plants and 352414 plants at the cost of Rs 2007.61 lakh. He said under the NPV component, plantation of 4,458 hectares and maintenance of 8,606 hectares of previous year were successfully carried out under various plantation models at the cost of Rs 5,419.8 lakh. He said 7,481 cooking connections, 182 community solar cookers and 788 solar lights on village phirnis (boundaries) were provided in the forest fringe villages of the kandi areas, which has helped to reduce the biotic pressure on the forests. UNI DB PS1908 Tags: #Punjab to launch massive afforestation at Rs 222.15 cr : CS

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