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Desertification and Drought: The Big Challenge to the World

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DESERTIFICATION is the process of degradation and infertility of the land, in which the land of arid, semi-arid, and dehydrated semi-moist areas is turned into a desert due to many other reasons including climate change and human activities. Therefore, the productive capacity of the land decreases and decreases.

In his video message on 'World Desertification Prevention Day', UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that the world loses 24 billion tons of fertile land every year. He said that the poor quality of land could lead to a decline in national GDP by up to eight percent every year. Land erosion and its adverse effects are expected to deepen the climate crisis looming over humanity.

The Challenge of Desertification

Desertification, land degradation, and drought are major threats affecting millions of people worldwide, especially women and children. Such trends need to be reversed "immediately" as they can reduce forced displacement, improve food security, and boost economic growth. At the same time, it can help alleviate the "global climate emergency."

This day was started 25 years ago with the aim of raising awareness about international efforts to tackle the challenge of desertification, which is celebrated on June 17 every year. The United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification is the only legally binding international agreement that combines environment and development with sustainable land management.

Importance of the day

The slogan for this World Day in 2019 is 'Let's Grow the Future Together' and it focuses on three major issues: drought, human security, and climate.

The United Nations estimates that by 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will be living in water crisis conditions. They will also face some days when there will be a huge gap between water demand and supply. As a result of desertification, displacement is likely to increase and by 2045, more than 130 million people may have to leave their homes.

Notably, 29.3 percent of land in India is affected by erosion. Given the growing severity of desertification and drought, there was a need to spread awareness globally to combat it. It is noteworthy that the United Nations General Assembly proposed the prevention of desertification in 1994, which was approved in December 1996. On October 14, 1994, India signed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Desertification (UNCCD). After which this day started to be celebrated from the year 1995 to combat desertification.

There are several reasons for desertification

Reduces overgrazing, productivity, and biodiversity of hay among man-made causes. Between 2005 and 2015, India lost 31% of its grasslands. Deforestation increases the effect of greenhouse gases and at the same time, the earth loots its garments. Cut and burn 'farming method increases the risk of soil erosion. Excessive use of fertilizers and excess rainfall unbalance the mineral composition of the soil. Climate change can increase temperature, rainfall, desertification. Natural calamities like floods, droughts, landslides, water erosion, water erosion can displace fertile soil. Encroachment of sand by wind reduces the fertility of the land which makes the land susceptible to desertification.

Current Status of India

In the present perspective, desertification is becoming a major problem in India. In fact, this is because about 30 percent of the land has been turned into a desert. Notably, 82 percent of this is in the eight states of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana. "State of the Environment in Figures" According to the report of "2019", desertification in India has increased to 18.7 hectares between 2003-05 and 2011-13.

Of the 78 districts affected by the same drought, 21 are such that more than 50 percent of the area has been turned into desertification. 29.32 percent of India's area is affected by desertification. This has seen a change of 0.56 percent. It is noteworthy that there are four districts in Gujarat where the effect of desertification is being seen, besides 3 districts in Maharashtra, 5 districts in Tamil Nadu, 2 districts in Punjab, 2 districts in Haryana, 4 districts in Rajasthan, 4 in Madhya Pradesh. Districts, 1 district in Goa, 2 districts in Karnataka, 2 districts in Kerala, 5 districts in Jammu and Kashmir, and 3 districts in Himachal Pradesh are affected by desertification.

During the celebrations held on the occasion of World Desertification and Drought Prevention Day in 2019, India hosted for the first time the 14th session of the Conference of the Parties related to the 'United Nations Desertification Prevention Convention'. This meeting was held between August 29 to September 14, 2019, and in Delhi. Land erosion in India is affecting 30 percent of the total geographical area of the country. India is committed to achieving the goals as well as to this agreement. Various schemes of Government of India like Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Soil

Health Card Scheme, Soil Health Management Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, More Crops per Drop are working to prevent soil erosion.

Prevention measures-

Encouraging afforestation can be helpful in tackling this problem, using organic fertilizers instead of chemical fertilizers in agriculture reduces drought. Effective adoption of crop cycle and adoption of innovative and scientific methods of irrigation such as drip irrigation. Irrigation, sprinkler irrigation, etc. Raise awareness about desertification and plantation should be increased. Strict laws should be enacted to prevent the felling of trees for the protection of forest resources on earth. At the same time, on vacant land, roadside planting in parks and field mounds, tree planting programs should be run on a wide scale.

There is also a need to grow climate-friendly plants and trees in these places. Conservation of water resources and proper prudent use can play a very effective role in preventing desertification. For this, the use of dry farming systems in agriculture should be encouraged. Scientific measures should be given importance in reducing the salinity and alkalinity of the desert. In addition to controlling the deforestation of unplanned vegetation arising spontaneously in rural areas, proper human control should be established on animal pastures.

Way forward-

Desertification must be stopped to stabilize the effects of climate change, save wildlife species, and protect all mankind. Protecting the forest is the responsibility of all of us and people and governments around the world must fulfill it. Desertification, land erosion, and drought are major threats, affecting millions of people around the world, especially women and children. In such a situation, the immediate solution to this problem has become the demand of the time. As this solution will not only restore land conservation and its quality, it will also reduce displacement, improve food security, and promote economic growth as well as address the problems associated with global climate change.

World Desertification Prevention Day to combat desertification and drought is an attempt to spread public awareness globally in which cooperation is expected at the international level. Ensuring participation in this with the spirit of world brotherhood can prove to be a worthwhile endeavor to save the earth and the environment.

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