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APP

Exploring KP Forests Carbon Stocks Imperative To Mitigate Climate Changes

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Peshawar – Driven by high population growth and climate change vulnerabilities, Pakistan is losing about 27,000 hectares of forest per year mostly in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, making an adverse affect on carbon sequestration process, which resulted in an increase in temperature.

According to National Forest Policy 2015, the axing of forests mostly in community and private lands in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan owing to rapid population growth and poverty has increased chances of floods and glaciers' melting due to climate change susceptibility besides made negative effects on carbon sequestration.

“Carbon sequestration is very important for humans, animals and even aquatic resources as it help make our environment clean and control temperature,” said Dr Muhammad Mumtaz Malik, former Chief Conservator Wildlife while talking to APP.

He said it was the process of capturing, securing and storing carbon dioxide from atmosphere and makes our planet worth living. In case carbon sequestration process was affected then temperatures would become rise, chances of floods to increase due to fast melting of glaciers and heatstroke's case would substantial rise.

“Trees purify environment after absorbing carbons and produce oxygen,” he said, adding the international companies provide payment as carbon credits to developing countries due to extra discharge of fossil and fuels besides gas emissions.

KP and Gilgit-Baltistan are blessed with around 3,000 lakes out of which 33 were most vulnerable due to climate change. He said chances of Glacial Lakes Outburst Floods (GOLF) in Chitral, Swat and Gilgit-Baltistan have enhanced due to rapid melting of glaciers in down valleys of northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to deforestation.

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“The developed countries are earning millions of dollars due to industrialisation and economic projects and give low financial assistance to poor countries as carbon credits that needed to be enhanced,” he said.

Abid Majeed, Secretary Forestry, Environment and Wildlife Department KP disclosed that KP was blessed with ecological diversity and forest resources as 45 percent of the country's forest cover was here.

Highlighting KP's carbon potential stocks, he said 51% of the country's forest carbon stocks were present in KP. In Pakistan, he said most of carbon dense forests were temperate forests KP contains about 170 tons carbon per hectare. “Avoiding one hectare deforestation means emission reduction of 367 tons of carbon dioxide.”

Through natural forests and massive plantations on vast areas achieved under billion tree project having a potential of annual carbon sequestration ie 11.20 million tons and gets stock of 194.31 million tons including 67.60 million tons in Hazara division, 73.25 million tons in Malakand division, 3.87 million tons in southern belt and 49.60 million tons carbon in merged tribal districts.

The secretary said historically, there have been emissions of four million tons of carbon dioxide per year from deforestation and degradation before 2012, which have been reduced up to 50%, which resulted in emission reduction of two million tons per year.

He said protected areas have increased from 10% to over 15.6 % which has positive effects on emissions' reduction, adding due to forest conservation and improved forest management natural forests sequester about eight million tons of carbon dioxide per year.

He said afforestation projects have been implemented like BTAP and 10 BTTAP, which will result in carbon sequestration of five million tons of carbon dioxide.

He said forest department had conducted forest carbon stock assessment in all forest regions and developed carbon tables for 15 major tree species.

Besides establishment of satellite land monitoring system in collaboration with SUPARCO for continuous monitoring of forest cover changes, he said forest department was tasked to create a gateway for carbon offset buyers and for national and international investors to channel finance towards carbon sequestration projects.

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