

Kundian forest revival to create jobs: PM Imran

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Prime Minister Imran Khan has said the revival of Kundian forest will provide job opportunities as human resources will be required to guard, water and nurture plants.

Talking to the media after inaugurating tree plantation campaign here on Sunday, he said unfortunately, the huge Kundian forest, planted before the Partition, had been turned into a barren land owing to the apathy of the previous governments.

He said of the total 19,271 acres of forest area, around 5,000 acres had some green cover while the rest 5,222 acres are barren and would be turned into forest by massive forestation during the next four years under 10 billion tree tsunami project.

The prime minister, who planted a sapling, asked the locals to guard the forest against tree fellers and land grabbers.

Under the spring tree plantation drive, 250 million saplings would be planted across the country with 1.3 million to be planted in one day as part of 'Plant for Pakistan Day' observed on the day.

The prime minister said the young generation, particularly children, were required to be sensitised on the importance of trees and also called for its inclusion in the education curriculum. He said being rich with diverse weathers and water resources, Pakistan should be exporting food to the world instead of facing shortage.

He said biodiversity in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa had revived following the success of one billion tree tsunami project. He said a considerable number of berry plants would be planted in the forest which would help produce honey as many investors were awaiting to invest in honey production.

While assuring people to resolve the water issues of Piplan and Khattak Belt areas, he said the Punjab government was striving to improve schools and hospitals and the Punjab Police was apprehending big criminals, who earlier used to enjoy protection.

Defending the huge spending on neglected southern Punjab areas, the prime minister said no country could progress until it uplifted its backward areas. He said that the previous rulers had pushed the country into a quagmire.

He told the gathering that the Namal University was being developed as international university where the foreign students would also be coming for education.

Prime minister said the government was focused at developing Pakistan as an Islamic welfare state as had been envisioned by Quaid-i-Azam which should provide equal

opportunities of health, education and rights to all the citizens. He said that the youth are carrying books on Bill Gates and Donald Trump but they should understand that success lies in following teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

In pursuance of the very vision, the government was providing Kifalat Cards to poor, interest-free loans for business, 50,000 education scholarships, besides transferring assets to the poor in villages to boost their income.

Prime minister was also briefed on another project for improvement and restoration of Namal Lake of Mianwali. Costing around Rs188 million, the project would lead to the promotion of ecotourism, biodiversity and wetland research facility besides improving local livelihood and promoting architectural and cultural values.

The PM reiterated the government's resolve to make Pakistan a welfare Islamic state in line with the vision of founder of the nation Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

He said the theft could not be eradicated by apprehending the small thieves, adding that when big thieves are arrested the small thieves become scared. He said in our country it was used to happen that small corrupt people had been apprehended and big dacoits had not been held and that resulted in increasing theft and corruption.

The PM said that for the first time, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was apprehending big dacoits, which would result in decrease in corruption. The PM said he had directed IGP Punjab Shoaib Dastgir that big dacoits and absconders should be apprehended in every area.

He said that Namal University of Mianwali was going to become international level university, adding that students from whole Pakistan were studying in the university. He said that students from abroad would also come to study at Namal University.

He said the PTI-led government was working on the agenda of making Pakistan a prosperous Islamic welfare nation on the pattern of state of Madina.

Imran expressed his government's resolve to provide job opportunities to the youth to alleviate poverty and control inflation through prudent economic policies.

The PM said the government would provide six million health cards to people across Punjab out of which five million had already been issued.

He said the government would provide interest-free loans to 80,000 people per month while 50,000 scholarships would be provided to undergraduate students every year.

Imran Khan also appreciated efforts of the Punjab government in providing basic facilities of education, health and clean drinking water to masses.

"I want all people of Piplan, especially the youth, to listen to me carefully because your youth don't yet realise the importance of tree plantation for Pakistan.

"I want that the importance of this (tree plantation) for Pakistan's future is taught as a subject to children in school," he added.

He recalled that when he came to Mianwali in his childhood, there was a jungle in Kundian. But today when he viewed the area from his helicopter, he could see no trees. And the people of Pakistan don't know the importance of jungles, he added.

"We don't know the blessings God has given us. How many of you know that God has given Pakistan 12 seasons. How many countries have 12 seasons? Every sort of thing and fruit can grow in Pakistan."

He said that often commodities such as sugar and vegetables become expensive in Pakistan. He said: "In this country, such commodities should never become expensive as it has vast fertile lands, river of freshwater and different seasons.

"There should never be shortage of anything here. It is our fault that we did not make correct use of the blessings God has given us (Pakistan).

"I want all the schools across Pakistan to teach the importance of tree planting. Our youth still does not have any awareness about the importance of tree plantation," the prime minister said.

The forests that the English left behind have completely been destroyed today. There were forests on 20,000 acres of land in Kundian. "Today, while coming here via helicopter, I could not see any trees in the forests," the prime minister lamented.

The premier added that the nation did not know the importance of trees. "I want the youth to listen carefully and to know how planting trees is important for their future. Climate change will destroy our future," he added.

"In my lifetime, I have seen our forests and trees being destroyed and the land encroached upon," PM Imran Khan said. "I want the Punjab chief minister to take action against those who have encroached upon the land of the forests and to treat them as criminals, he added.

Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar said that 'Clean and green Pakistan' is dream of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of tree plantation drive in Mianwali, the CM hoped that the project would be successful. The programme would pave way for employment in the country, he added.

The plantation campaign is part of the PTI government programme. The government has pledged to plant 10 billion trees in five years to control challenges of global warming and deforestation.

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