



Take steps to protect environment: Experts

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PATNA: Even as the state government has, of late, taken several initiatives for conserving its natural environment and increasing its green cover, it is still far away from meeting the national standards. The vegetative cover of the state is less than 15% of its geographical area and a large segment of its population have not yet been provided with the minimum basic facilities of health and sanitation, say experts. They pleaded that necessary steps should be taken for protecting the urban environment from getting polluted and ensuring safe disposal of solid and liquid wastes. "Our old time-tested conservation practices should be brought back in practice for ensuring the sound health of all ecosystems," they said. State water resources minister Sanjay Jha observed that the state has already been successfully implementing its Jal-JivanHarilyali scheme for meeting the various environmental needs all over the state. "Pure drinking water is likely to be made available in water-scarce regions like Gaya, Rajgir and Nalanda under the Ganga Water Lift Scheme," Jha said, adding that work on intra-river linking projects is also going on in full swing and some projects are likely to come up soon. After the implementation of these projects droughts and floods problems would be solved.

Jha further pointed out that dead water bodies are being restored and unauthorised construction on river beds and encroachments of water bodies for the purpose of settlement are also being removed. "The entire wetland cover of the state will be rejuvenated and restored," he said. The principal secretary of state environment, forest and climate change, Dipak Kumar Singh, said that even though the state lacks adequate natural forest cover owing to its dense population and fertile agricultural land, steps have been initiated for providing scattered tree cover along road side and canals. Besides, the agro-forestry initiative of the government is also likely to increase the green cover of the state.

"The rainwater harvesting structures are being installed in all government buildings with a view to raise the groundwater table in different parts of the state. Owners of private buildings will also be motivated to construct these structures in their premises," he said. The Zoological Survey of India's (Bihar region) joint director Gopal Sharma said, indiscriminate sand mining on river beds has been posing a serious threat to the river ecosystem. This unscientific mining must be stopped and steps should be taken for ensuring only need-based sand mining. "Besides, proper awareness for the conservation of environment should be created among the children by organising mass rallies and workshops at regular intervals," he added. Patna University botany department teacher Birendra Prasad said, steps should be initiated for the restoration of all dead water bodies, including ponds, lakes, canals and wells and disiltation of dried rivers in the state. He also pleaded for an intensive bioprospecting of the entire state so that our indigenous plants could be saved from extinction. Social scientist Nawal Kishore Chaudhary said, facilities of clean water and sanitation should be provided to all, including the urban poor. In rural areas, every household should have a smokeless 'chulha' (stove) and a sound sewerage connectivity for leading a healthy life. "Smart city projects must also be implemented at the earliest and more cities of the state should be included under this scheme," he said.

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