

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF LAND RESOURCES**

**RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION No. 303
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.03.2026**

Reclamation of wasteland

*303. Shri Pramod Tiwari:

Will the **Minister of Rural Development** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether wasteland formation is a threat to India's economy and ecology;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the percentage of India's geographical area occupied by wasteland as per the Wastelands Atlas, 2019;
- (d) the rate of reclamation of wasteland area in recent years;
- (e) whether the reclamation performance has been slow and inadequate; and
- (f) if so, the steps taken to plug in policy deficiencies and overcome implementation weaknesses?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH CHAUHAN)**

(a) to (f): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement referred to in reply to parts (a) to (f) of Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 303 for answer on 20.03.2026

(a) & (b): Yes, Sir. Formation of wastelands poses a challenge to both the economy and ecology of the country. Wastelands result in reduced agricultural productivity, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, decline in groundwater recharge and deterioration of ecosystem services. These factors adversely affect rural livelihoods, food security and environmental sustainability.

(c): As per the Wastelands Atlas 2019, prepared by the National Remote Sensing Centre of the Indian Space Research Organization in collaboration with the Department of Land Resources, about 5.576 crore hectares of land in the country has been mapped as wasteland, which constitutes about 16.96% of the total geographical area of the country (32.872 crore ha).

(d) to (f): As per Wastelands Atlas of India-2019, total area under wasteland across the country has decreased from about 5.660 crore ha (2008-09 satellite data) to 5.576 crore ha (2015-16 satellite data). A net reduction of about 8.4 lakh ha has been reported.

As per Schedule VII to the Constitution of India, land and its management falls in the domain of State Governments and, therefore, it is for the State Governments to take suitable steps for reclamation of wastelands. However, Government of India supplements the efforts of State Governments through Centrally Sponsored Schemes including the Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, implemented by the Department of Land Resources. Under watershed development projects, activities such as soil and moisture conservation, construction of water harvesting structures, horticulture/afforestation, pasture development and livelihood interventions are undertaken to restore the productive potential of degraded lands.

Under WDC-PMKSY 1.0 (projects sanctioned during 2009-10 to 2014-15), DoLR supported implementation of 6382 watershed projects covering an area of 2.95 crore hectare in 27 States and UTs of J&K and Ladakh. Through the implementation of these projects, about 7.64 lakh water harvesting structures were created / rejuvenated, an additional area of about 16.40 lakh ha brought under protective irrigation and 36.34 lakh farmers were benefited. In addition to this, 1.62 lakh ha brought under plantation (Horticulture/ Afforestation), 3.36 lakh ha culturable wasteland treated in completed projects and 3.88 crore person-days employment were generated. The period of WDC-PMKSY 1.0 projects was over on 31 March, 2022.

On 15.12.2021, the Government approved the continuation of the scheme as WDC-PMKSY 2.0. Under WDC-PMKSY 2.0, a total of 1220 watershed projects covering an area of 52.95 lakh ha at a total cost of Rs. 12972.86 crore (Central Share ₹8,487.98 crore) have been sanctioned to all States and UTs of J&K and Ladakh. An amount of Rs. 6069.28 crore of Central share has been released to them from 2021-22 to 2025-26 (as on 16.03.2026). From 2021-22 to 2025-26 (upto 3rd quarter), 94000 Water Harvesting Structures have been created / rejuvenated, 1.90 lakh ha land has been brought under protective irrigation, 19.78 lakh farmers have been benefitted and 2.37 crore mandays of employment have been generated.

As per the information received from Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), it implements afforestation and ecological restoration programmes such as the Green India Mission, which seeks to increase forest and tree cover and improve the quality of forest ecosystems on degraded landscapes. Afforestation and regeneration activities are also supported through mechanisms such as the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and

Planning Authority (CAMPA), which provides financial support for compensatory afforestation, assisted natural regeneration and other forest restoration activities. Restoration of degraded forest areas is also promoted through participatory approaches involving local communities under Joint Forest Management and other landscape-based restoration initiatives.

In addition, ecosystem restoration is supported through programmes such as Nagar Van Yojana for the development of urban and peri-urban forests and MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes) for mangrove afforestation and restoration in coastal areas. Interventions such as soil and moisture conservation, assisted natural regeneration, agro-forestry promotion and watershed-based approaches are undertaken in coordination with concerned Ministries, Departments and State Governments to improve land productivity and ecological resilience.

Further, to strengthen development efforts and to address policy issues and implementation gaps, the Department has taken several measures, including:

- i. Implementation of WDC-PMKSY 2.0 with enhanced cost norms (increased from Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 22,000 per Ha in plain areas and from Rs, 15,000 to Rs.28,000 per Ha for hilly & difficult areas.).
- ii. Increase in the production system component from 10% to 15% of the project cost.
- iii. Springs Rejuvenation as a new activity in WDC-PMKSY 2.0.
- iv. Use of remote sensing and GIS-based technologies for planning, monitoring and evaluation of watershed projects.
- v. A mass outreach campaign “Watershed Yatra” to create awareness on watershed activities and to generate people’s participation in project areas.

These measures aim to improve the pace and effectiveness of watershed & wasteland development and ensure sustainable management of land resources.
