

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2742
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.03.2020

Land Degradation and Desertification

2742. SHRI MANISH TEWARI:

Will the MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether most parts of the country particularly Punjab, are facing problem of degradation of land and desertification due to various reasons including excessive use of underground water, excessive removal of sand from the riverbeds and deforestation, and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has formulated any stringent laws to prevent exploitation of natural resources such as sand and timber and if so, the details thereof ;
- (c) whether the Government plans to make India a land degradation neutral country by 2030 with a view to maintain and improve the condition of land resources;
- (d) if so, the details thereof along with the outcome achieved as a result of the steps undertaken to make India a land degradation neutral country; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government to curb desertification in the country?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)**

- (a) As per the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, prepared by the Space Applications Centre for the period 2011-2013, 29.32 % of the Total Geographical Area of the country i.e. 96.4 million hectares is undergoing the process of degradation. As indicated by this Atlas, 2.8% of total geographical area of Punjab State, i.e. 144653 hectares was undergoing desertification/land degradation in 2011-13. Significant process of desertification/land degradation in Punjab is rapid urbanization and vegetation degradation.

As per the assessment of the Dynamic Ground Water Resources of the country jointly carried out by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) and State Governments for 2017, out of the total 6881 assessment units (Block/ Taluks/ Mandals/ watersheds/ Firkas) in the country, 1186 units in 17 States/UTs have been categorized as 'Over-exploited' where the Annual Ground Water Extraction is more than Annual

Extractable Ground Water Resource. In Punjab, out of 138 assessment units, 79%, i.e. 109 have been categorized as 'Over-exploited'

- (b) Government has formulated various Laws and Acts such as the Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, and various State Acts and Rules for control, regulation and prevention of exploitation of forest and forest resources, including sand and timber, in the country. The responsibility of protecting natural resources in forest areas lies primarily with the respective State/UT Governments. Accordingly, the State/ UT Governments take necessary action under the relevant Acts and Rules.
- (c) Yes, India has committed to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) status by 2030. At the recently concluded 14th session of the Conference of Parties (CoP) of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held in India in September, 2019, India announced its ambition to restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.
- (d) and (e) National Afforestation & Eco-Development Board (NAEB) Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is implementing the "National Afforestation Programme (NAP)" for ecological restoration of degraded forest areas under which an area of over 2 million ha has been approved for afforestation at a cost of Rs.3874 crore. NAP also supports Soil Moisture Conservation activities to improve the soil moisture regime in the implementation area along with providing livelihood support for the locals. Various other schemes like Green India Mission, fund accumulated under Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), Nagar Van Yojana etc, also help in checking degradation and restoration of forest landscape, MOEF&CC also promote trees outside forests realizing that the country has a huge potential for increasing its Trees Outside Forest (TOF) area primarily through expansion of agroforestry, optimum use of wastelands and vacant lands.

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has taken up various programmes like the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture which includes interventions such as the Soil Health Card, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojna, Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North-Eastern Region, Rain Fed Area Development, National Agro-Forestry policy and the sub-Mission on Agro-Forestry, National Bamboo Mission, Prime Minister KrishiSinchai Yojna- Per Drop More Crop (PMKSY) etc.

The Integrated Watershed Management Programme (of the Watershed Management Division of the Ministry of Rural Development) was amalgamated as a Watershed Development Component of PMKSY in 2015-16 and an area of about 20.5 million hectares has been developed under completed and ongoing projects. Upto October 2019 an amount of Rs 17751.75 crore has been released to States as

Central share for implementation of Watershed Development Project. Between 2014-15 to 2019-20 (upto September 2019), total 6,08,384 water harvesting structures were created/rejuvenated, an additional area of 13,47,527 hectares has been brought under protective irrigation, and 27,25,587 farmers have been benefitted during the said period. Under afforestation/horticultural activities 92,000 hectares degraded and rain-fed lands have been covered during 2018-19 and 2019-20 (upto second quarter).

Studies have also been carried out under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research to combat desertification on various issues such as assessment of status of desertification in India's Arid Regions through satellite remote sensing and identification of field-based indicators; checking soil erosion, sand movement and control wind erosion through sand dune stabilisation, shelter-belt plantation and soil and water conservation; rehabilitation of mine spoil areas; methodology for reclaiming degraded land due to water logging and salinity-alkalinity etc.
