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Government reaches out to pvt firms to raise forest cover

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NEW DELHI: Faced with shortage of funds, the government on Tuesday called upon private firms to go the extra mile to increase forest cover so that an additional carbon sink of 2.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent is created by 2030. Going by the latest assessment, India's forest cover increased to 24 per cent of its geographical area in 2013, from 23.4 per cent in 2005. The long-term objective is to take it to 33 per cent.

"More private companies should take steps to develop forest in vacant areas. We need to encourage business houses to plant trees, adopt forests in cities and develop them," said S S Negi, DG, Forests, and special secretary with the environment ministry, at a CCI event. The government has come out with guidelines allowing public private partnership (PPP) to encourage afforestation and revive degraded forest in the country. India has a forest cover of 8 crore hectares, of which about one-third, or 2.5 crore hectares, stands degraded.

Negi pointed to the complex nature of forest management in the country as 300 million people are dependent on it for their livelihood. "Whatever way we manage forest, we need to keep in mind the interest of those people who are dependent on forest for livelihood are not affected," he added.

Ravi Singh, WWF-India Secretary General and CEO, said PPP in afforestation comes with great responsibility and suggested that private companies go for planting of indigenous varieties instead of exotic ones.

India, the fourth-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after China, the US and the EU as a whole, has pledged to rapidly increase its forest cover and cut down carbon emission by about 35 per cent by 2030.

Source: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/flora-fauna/government-reaches-out-to-pvt-firms-to-raise-forest-cover/articleshow/49814286.cms>