

Govt to kick off mega plantation drive

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India has 697,898 sq km (21.23% of the country's geographical area) of forests and 91,266 sq km (2.78% of the geographical area) of tree cover (outside forest area which includes urban green patches).

New Delhi: With Rs 38,000 crore set to be unlocked under a proposed law for increasing India's green cover over the next few years, the Centre is planning to launch a major plantation drive across the country on World Environment Day on June 5. Environment minister Prakash Javadekar has written to all state governments, requesting them to earmark land for planting trees wherever possible.

Under the proposed legislation, which was introduced during the budget session and is expected to be passed in the monsoon session during July-August, states will have to submit their annual audit reports on green cover, specifying afforestation and conservation activities. There will be 'state monitoring authority' in each state as part of an institutional mechanism to keep an eye on such activities round-the-year and send reports to a 'national authority'.

The bill will unlock Rs 38,000 crore for disbursement among states for carrying out afforestation activities. This fund is lying unused in the ad-hoc Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) fund, collected from different agencies for diverting forest land for non-forest use in the past over 10 years.

The plantation drive will supplement the work of the National Mission for Green India which is one of the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change for developing forests and their fringe areas in a holistic and sustainable manner.

Under the mission, the government has already approved perspective plans of six states -- Punjab, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh -- with a financial outlay of Rs 2,709 crore over the next six to ten year. The success of

these plans will be monitored using Remote Sensing and Geographical Information System tools.

Source:<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/the-good-earth/govt-to-kick-off-mega-plantation-drive/articleshow/47410365.cms>