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J-K government unveils measures to conserve forest cover

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Jammu and Kashmir government has unveiled a new blueprint to conserve the state's depleting forest cover, by encouraging people's participation in afforestation drives and identifying eco-tourism destinations.

"Taking the first big step towards revisiting the state's Forest Policy...Chief Minister **Mufti Mohammad Sayeed** unveiled a new blueprint to conserve the state's depleting forest wealth by encouraging people's participation in afforestation drives, identifying eco-tourism destinations and commercial propagation of highly-remunerative medicinal plants," an official spokesman said.

He said the chief minister directed the Forest Department to seek people's participation in protection and management of the forest cover during a high-level review meeting on the working of the department yesterday.

"I want people's active and voluntary participation in protection and management of forest wealth so that they realize its significance and become its guardians," the chief minister said.

Sayeed also directed the department to fully meet the timber requirement of people living in concessional zones in close proximity of forests.

The department has been asked to submit a comprehensive plan by July 31 for implementation of these directions, the spokesman said.

Asking the forest officers to change their mindset, Sayeed stressed upon the need for the department to take effective steps for people's involvement in protection, sustenance and growth of forests.

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