



HMEFCC Shri Bhupender Yadav Presides over Event to Mark World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought in New Delhi

India Brings 21.76 Million Hectares of Land under Restoration Efforts Against 26 Million Hectare Bonn Challenge Target For 2030: Shri Yadav

Aravalli Green Wall Initiative Surpassed Annual Targets During Financial Year 2025-26: Shri Yadav

HMEFCC Releases Special Issue of Indian Forester and India's Second Progress Report on the Bonn Challenge on World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2026

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The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year on 17 June under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The day serves as a global platform to raise awareness and promote action against desertification, land degradation and drought.

Addressing an event to commemorate the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2026 at Indira Paryavaran Bhawan in New Delhi today, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Bhupender Yadav said that India's approach demonstrates that the convergence of policy commitment, scientific innovation and public participation can make environmental restoration an effective pathway towards sustainable development.

Announcing that India has already brought 21.76 million hectares of land under restoration efforts against its target of restoring 26 million hectares by 2030 under the Bonn Challenge, the Minister said the country has consistently advanced sustainable land management as a Party to UNCCD.



Shri Yadav noted that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had announced India's commitment to restore 26 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030, one of the largest restoration commitments in the world. "Restoration activities have generated around 1.22 billion person-days of employment," he said.

The Bonn Challenge is a global initiative launched in 2011 to restore degraded and deforested landscapes, targets bringing 350 million hectares under restoration by 2030.

The Minister shared that more than 27 million hectares have been treated under the Watershed Development Component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and over 61.3 million geo-tagged natural resource management assets have been created.

Shri Yadav said greening and restoration activities have been undertaken across around 1.7 lakh hectares under the Green India Mission, while afforestation has been carried out over around 3.20 lakh hectares through CAMPA-supported activities during the past five years.

The Minister said Joint Forest Management covers about 81.53 million hectares and remains one of the largest community-based forest management systems in the world. He added that more than 1.21 lakh hectares have been brought under agroforestry, while bamboo plantations have been established outside forests over nearly 60,000 hectares.



Referring to the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, Shri Yadav said more than 266 crore saplings have been planted across the country. He also highlighted the role of platforms such as Bhuvan, VEDAS and Yuktdhara in enabling science-based planning and monitoring.

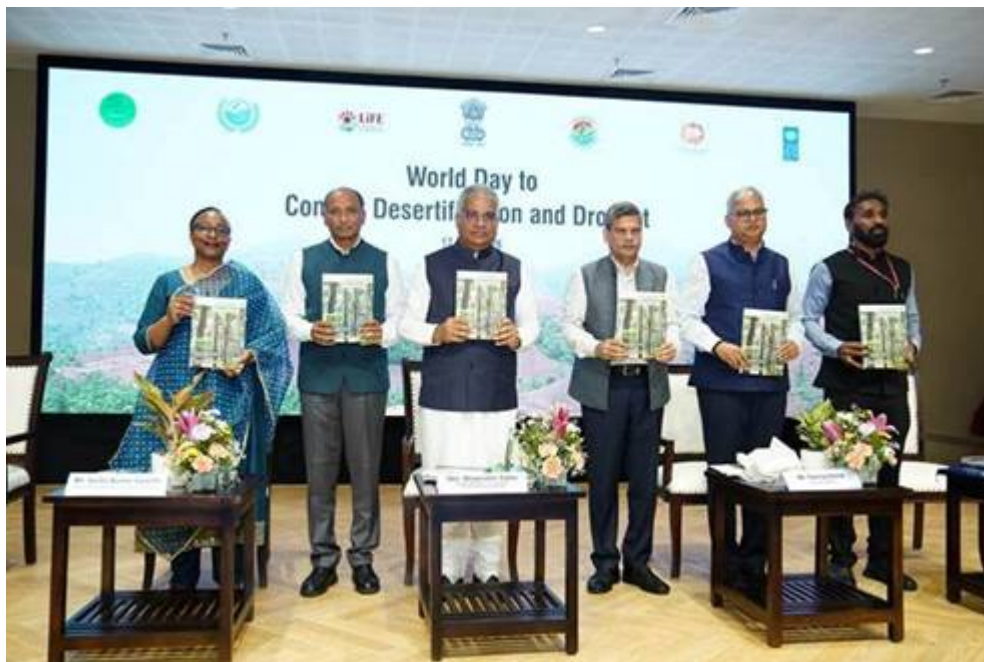
The Minister said the Aravalli Green Wall Initiative has emerged as an important landscape-level restoration programme and has surpassed its annual targets during the financial year 2025-26. He said that a target has been set to restore 54,000 hectares of mangrove area by 2028 under the MISHTI programme.

Shri Yadav said that under the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems, conservation and restoration of various wetlands, including Ramsar sites, are being supported. He further said that more than 260 million Soil Health Cards have been issued across the country, which will play an important role in preventing desertification.

Speaking on the theme of this year's observance, "Rangelands: Recognize. Respect. Restore.", Shri Yadav said rangelands and grasslands play an important role in biodiversity conservation, livestock-based livelihoods, regulation of the water cycle, carbon sequestration and climate resilience.

The Minister said India's drylands extend across around 228 million hectares and are critically important for agriculture, livestock rearing and rural livelihoods. Citing the India Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas, he said 97.85 million hectares of land, or 29.77 per cent of the country's geographical area, are affected by land degradation and desertification.

Shri Yadav said India's priorities include landscape-level restoration, drought resilience, science-based monitoring, community participation, nature-based solutions and innovative financing mechanisms for restoration. He emphasized that restoring degraded land not only revives ecosystems but also strengthens livelihoods, enhances resilience and secures the future for coming generations.



On the occasion, Shri Yadav also released a Special Issue of Indian Forester and India's Second Progress Report on the Bonn Challenge (2011–2020).

Prepared in the context of the forthcoming UNCCD COP-17 and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the Special Issue brings together scientific insights, policy perspectives and field experiences on sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration and Land Degradation Neutrality, with a special focus on rangelands and grasslands.

Prepared by MoEFCC in collaboration with IUCN, the Bonn Challenge report presents a comprehensive assessment of India's progress towards its restoration commitments. The report documents restoration efforts across States and Union Territories, highlights their ecological and socio-economic benefits and reflects India's continued efforts towards forest landscape restoration, land degradation neutrality and ecosystem resilience.

Speaking on the occasion, Director General of Forests & Special Secretary (DGF&SS) Shri Sushil Kumar Awasthi emphasized the importance of restoring degraded landscapes, promoting sustainable forest management and strengthening community participation to combat land degradation and enhance climate

resilience. Secretary, MoEFCC, Shri Tanmay Kumar highlighted the Government's commitment to ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management through coordinated efforts under various national missions and programmes.

Dr Angela Lusigi Resident Representative UNDP appreciated India's initiatives in landscape restoration and reaffirmed the support of the United Nations Development Programme in advancing nature-based solutions, fostering partnerships, and promoting inclusive actions to address desertification and drought while contributing to sustainable development goals.

The event brought together around 200 participants, including representatives of Central and State Governments, research institutions, international organisations, development partners, civil society organisations and technical experts. The technical session featured presentations on India's progress under the UNCCD framework, opportunities for advancing Land Degradation Neutrality and experiences in grassland restoration.

The deliberations underscored that achieving Land Degradation Neutrality and India's enhanced Bonn Challenge target will require continued collaboration among governments, local communities, research institutions, civil society organizations, and development partners.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment to accelerate restoration efforts, strengthen sustainable land management practices, and promote nature-based solutions to combat desertification, enhance ecosystem resilience, and secure a greener future for generations to come.

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