

L-G VK Saxena launches Indus River Green Corridor Eco-Restoration Plantation at Spituk Pharka on International Day of Forests

Around 1000 native saplings planted on 1 hectare land on Indus Riverbank

LG calls for cooperation of local community; says it's a "civilizational project" aimed at restoring ecological integrity of Indus River

Highlights ambition to increase Ladakh's green cover

Leh, March 23: Lieutenant Governor Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena today launched the Indus River Green Corridor Eco-Restoration Plantation at Spituk Pharka, an initiative aimed at restoring the ecological integrity of the Indus riverbanks and creating green buffers in the fragile desert landscape of Leh-Ladakh. This initiative is a one-of-a-kind Cold Desert River Bank Restoration Project in India.

As part of the exercise, nearly 1000 saplings of indigenous species like Oleaster, Sea buckthorn, Indian Willow, Black Poplar and White Willow were planted on the riverbank through collaborative efforts of civil administration, military, paramilitary, police, and local communities, especially Spituk Gonpa and its monastic fraternity, which gave 1 hectare of land for the plantation.

Apart from this, 1000 saplings of Cherry Blossom and Apricot were also planted along the roadside in Leh city, aimed at enhancing the green aesthetics of the city.

The event was organised by the Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment in collaboration with Spituk Monastery and the University of Ladakh. The initiative witnessed active participation from civil administration, defence forces, local communities and students, reflecting a model of convergence and collective action.

Describing the occasion as historic, the Lieutenant Governor stated that with the support of the local communities, this project would emerge as an instrument of resilience, stability and a global model for high-altitude river ecosystem restoration. He said that the launch of the Indus River Green Corridor in a fragile ecosystem like Ladakh represents a major step towards sustainable development. He emphasised that the initiative would not only enhance the aesthetic appeal of Leh but also help address pressing ecological challenges of Ladakh.

The LG underlined the need to recognise the deep interconnection between nature, development and culture, stating that forests and rivers in Ladakh are not merely ecological assets but integral to the region's identity and sustainability.

Highlighting the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Lieutenant Governor spoke about India's commitment to sustainable development and combating land degradation and desertification. He reiterated the national goal of restoring 2.6 crore hectares of degraded land by 2030 and expressed confidence that Ladakh can play a pivotal role in achieving this target.

Emphasising the importance of community participation, the Lieutenant Governor appreciated the contribution of Spituk Monastery for donating one hectare of land for the project, terming it a commendable example of collaborative governance. He shared his experiences of similar ecological initiatives undertaken in Udaipur and Delhi, including large-scale plantation drives and innovative urban greening projects, highlighting their success despite initial scepticism.

The Lieutenant Governor described the Indus River Green Corridor as not merely a government initiative but a "civilisational project" aimed at restoring the ecological integrity of the Indus River while ensuring a harmonious balance between development and environmental conservation. He also called for amplifying the Prime Minister's "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign in Ladakh and urged the Forest Department to identify suitable land for large-scale plantation.

Drawing attention to Ladakh's low forest cover—currently less than one per cent—he termed it a matter of concern and set an ambitious target of increasing it to five per cent in the coming two years. He highlighted the scientific benefits of plantation, including reduction in wind speed through shelter belts, prevention of soil erosion along riverbanks, improvement in biodiversity and micro-climatic stability, and enhancement of oxygen levels.

The Lieutenant Governor also stressed the use of scientific and innovative techniques, such as gravity-based solar submersible strip irrigation and drip irrigation systems, to ensure efficient water use in plantation activities.

Calling upon the youth to lead sustainability efforts, he urged them to adopt innovative practices and contribute actively to environmental conservation. He reaffirmed his vision of transforming Ladakh into one of the world's most sought-after tourist destinations by leveraging its natural beauty and ecological wealth.

On the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor released a special postal cover and felicitated individuals and organisations contributing to environmental conservation, including "Go Green, Go Organic", Range Officer Stanzin Gelek, and Shri Namgyal. Winners of a hackathon were also felicitated.

Among those present on the occasion were Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC Kargil, Mohd Jaffer Akhoun, Chief Secretary, Shri Ashish Kundra, GOC 14 Corps Lt Gen Hitesh Bhalla, DGP Ladakh Shri Mukesh Singh, District Principal and Sessions Judge Smt Spalzes Angmo, senior officials of the Indian Army, ITBP, Border Roads Organisation (BRO), former MP Ladakh Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Abbot of Spituk Monastery Ven. Lobzang Angchuk, and senior officials of the UT Ladakh Administration, apart from representatives of religious, political and civil society organisations, and a large number of school/university students.





