Restoring India's fading Green Cover

What is the issue?

According to **State of the World's Forests report 2020** released by UNEP and FAO, since 1990, around 420 million hectares of forest have been lost through deforestation, conversion and land degradation.

What is the need for forest restoration?

- Restoration is bringing back the degraded or deforested landscape to its original state by various interventions to enable them to deliver all the benefits.
- It helps to improve ecological functions, productivity and create resilient forests with multifarious capabilities.
- India has 10 bio-geographical regions and 4 biodiversity hotspots sheltering 8% of the world's known flora and fauna but nearly 18% of the global human population depends on it.
- To combat this, India joined the Bonn Challenge with a pledge to restore 26 MHA of degraded and deforested land by 2030.

The year 2021-2030 is declared as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

What are the key challenges in forest restoration?

- Planting without considering the local ecology and in wrongful places could be disastrous for local biodiversity.
- Nearly 5.03% of Indian forests are under protection area management needing specific restoration strategies after local research.
- Encroachment and grazing is linked to the livelihood of local communities as well as degradation of forests.
- There is an intricate link between poverty and environmental degradation as highlighted at the first UN global conference on human environment.
- Lack of adequate financing is one of the major concerns for the success of restoration.
- Conflict of interests among different stakeholders is even more

challenging.

What can be done to restore India’s fading green cover?

- Local research duly considering ecological aspects, local disturbances and forest-dependent communities is vital to formulate guidelines for locally suitable interventions.
- The participation of local communities with finances for incentives and rewards such as **Joint Forest Management Committees** (JFMC) is essential.
- Alternate ways of financing such as involving corporates in restoration activities with ongoing land-based programmes of various departments can help to make it easy for operation.
- An inclusive approach of active engagement of stakeholders including NGOs, awareness and capacity building of stakeholders is needed.

Source: The Hindu

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