

India drafts policy to fight dwindling forests fallout

Govt Seeks Expert Views By May 27

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New Delhi: Taking forward an agreed framework of the 2013 Warsaw climate conference, India has come out with a draft national policy on 'reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation' (popularly known as REDD+ initiative), which will enable local communities to get financial incentives for increasing forest cover.

The REDD+ initiative is a global mitigation mechanism under a UN body, linking deforestation, degradation, conservation of forest carbon stocks and sustainable management of forests with reduction of greenhouse gas emission.

It has provision of compensating developing countries for their efforts to increase forest cover under a result-based payment system. The money for this purpose is being collected through contributions from rich nations.

Although so far only three countries — UK, Norway and US — have pledged money to the tune of 280 million dollars for financing the initiative, the move is seen as a step in the right direction as deforestation ac-

counts for nearly 20% of the global emissions of carbon dioxide.

In order to tap this source to improve its forest cover, India now intends to make the country REDD+ ready by creating a 'national-level authority' and setting up 'supportive institutions' in three years.

Keeping this deadline in mind, the Union ministry of environment and forest (MoEF) had on Monday come out with a draft national policy and sought suggest-

ions from stakeholders and experts within May 27.

"Based on the comments of the stakeholders, the draft document will be finalized," said a ministry note.

It said the objective of this policy is to develop forest areas, safeguard rights and interests of local communities and to strengthen coordination among sectors and stakeholders having direct and indirect impact on land use and forestry.

"The objective is also to develop appropriate mechanism for channelizing REDD+ funding and transferring the accrued financial benefits to the communities in a fair, equitable and transparent manner", the ministry said.

Underlining the importance of increasing forest cover, the ministry took note of the fact that the present level of forest cover in India (69.20 million hectares) neutralizes 11% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions.