

# Nature protects, if she is protected and we have a responsibility

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The United Nations has recently warned the world that the pace of global warming is devastating and if it goes unchecked, the entire human civilization will have to pay the price. Globally, India may be the fourth largest emitter of carbon after China, US and EU, but our per capita emission is much lower than a lot of countries for which we need to act almost immediately to prevent a climate catastrophe. But this does not mean India can sit back and relax.

In fact, led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, India has taken some very bold steps, which are globally relevant to counter climate change. And within India, we completely understand the role and relevance of Uttar Pradesh in this context. Being the most populous state, we share significant responsibility. We have been taking relevant measures to

supplement the national efforts. Talking about rising temperatures, I can speak from my personal experience from my visit to Dudhwa forests in June last year where the temperature was almost 7-8°C lower than what it was in Lucknow. Impact of forests is clear and that's why the UP government has taken up forestry as a tool to mitigate the adverse impact of climate change. Every year, between the 1st and 7th of July, we celebrate the Forest Preservation festival.

In the first year, we first planted about 5.5 crore plants, mostly Eucalyptus and Poplar. But people needed indigenous varieties, so saplings like peepal, banyan, and neem, mangoes, jamun, and other medicinal trees like amla and drumsticks were introduced. The entire exercise aims at increasing UP's carbon sequestration capacity, provide livelihood, nutrition, and medicine. For long-term benefits and greater sustainability, we need to integrate our entire economy with the climate change agenda. We need to look at the crisis holistically. Also, we should consume only what we need and not what we want. If we work towards the welfare of nature and be in-sync with nature, we will receive much more in return. In 2019, we banned plastics with thickness of less than 50 microns and worked on developing alternatives. We also established the Pottery Craft Board (Mati Kala Board) as potters rued scarcity of clay and inability to get access to technology, due to which their products were costlier than the plastic alternatives.

So, we got them solar-powered turntables and allowed them to freely collect clay from all the rural water bodies. This eventually led to creation of a competitive alternative to plastics and thermocol. And, in the process we even managed to desilt a large number of water bodies. At times, in addition to modern solutions, we must also consider conventional wisdom. Compost is one such solution, which was quite popular in the past when every village used to have a waste pit, at a distance from population. All the waste dumped in it, would turn to fertile manure in a year's time and the entire village would get to use it as manure. Taking a cue from this best practice of the past, we have now ensured that every gram panchayat in UP gets a similar waste pit away from the population. Talking about energy sector, it is worth mentioning that in 2017 UP produced 250 MW of solar energy but the same has now increased to almost 2000 MW. And by March next, it will increase by around 1000MW.

Apart from renewable energy generation, we are also working on energy conservation as well. One such initiative is installation of over 16 lakh LED streetlights in UP. And amid all this, we have agencies like the judiciary and National Green Tribunal, which immediately point out if the government efforts require course correction. For instance, crop residue burning has also been a climate concern. If we manage to create conducive conditions for more production of biofuels, crop residue can become a resource for that. Farmers need to be sensitized about such solutions. We need to realize that as climate change is a multifaceted complex problem, its solution cannot be achieved solely by a single agency, like the environment department. It, in fact, needs a coordinated effort by all departments.

Likewise, we cannot only think of human beings while looking at the climate crisis. Nature has a lifecycle which also consists of all plants and animals. We need to respect that lifecycle if we want real sustainability and we also need to change our lifestyles and adopt naturefriendly options. Also, we are working towards Sustainable Development with inclusion of every section of the society and respect to all forms of nature. Only the development in conformity with nature's principle will be sustainable. (The writer is the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh)