

# Banko Janakari

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## Plantation campaign in Nepal

Plantation campaign is the plantation in an organized and active way towards a particular goal, typically a political or social one. Large-scale plantations have not been executed in the recent decades. Scattered plantations activities were conducted by frontline forestry organizations, community forestry user groups and individual farmers. However, the precise data about the number of plantations and their establishments are still missing. The government has recently declared the Fiscal Year 2019/020 as the “Year of Plantation” with an aim of accomplishing a massive plantation campaign through economic policies and annual programs by planting of 50 million trees in this Fiscal Year as part of a nationwide campaign, maintaining the current forest coverage and contributing towards reducing deforestation and impacts of climate change.

Forests cover 30.6% of the earth’s land surface. In Nepal, forests comprise 40.36% (5.96 million hectares) of the total area of the nation. Despite the sharp decline in the rate of deforestation in the past, pressure on forests for timber, fuelwood, fodder, grazing and infrastructure development has been increased tremendously in the recent years which adversely impacts delivery of forestry goods and services to the people.

Plantation of various species has a long history in Nepal dating back to the Vedic Period when saints used to plant religious, fruit-bearing and shade-providing trees in public places. Plantation is often carried out to minimize the pressure on forests and accelerate regular supply of the forestry goods and ecological services. It is the most convenient method to establish forests of desired characteristics in a shorter period. Planting trees provide numerous advantages- from providing nutritious food to the people to controlling soil erosion and balancing the ecosystem by improving environmental condition, yielding diverse range of wood, fiber, fuel and non-wood forest products. Besides, trees provide a number of social and environmental services ranging from rehabilitation of degraded land, combating desertification, soil and water protection, absorption of sewage water, carbon sequestration and storage, recreation, landscape amenity and many more. Furthermore, forests contribute towards sustainable development as well as disaster risk reduction, and also conserve genetic resources, provide shelter as well as shade for wild-lives and fodder for livestock.

In the recent years, the government has been focusing on afforestation programs by regularly allocating budgets for plantations and their establishment. As a result, several plantation programs have been regularly conducted throughout the nation. A number of afforestation and reforestation projects were carried out in the past. Some projects were successful in establishing plantations while many of them failed. The reforestation programs of many

hilly districts such as Kavrepalanchok and Sindhupalchok are among the few successful examples of established plantations.

The government has planned to establish high-tech nurseries in several parts of the nation to produce quality seedlings, especially fast growing and multipurpose tree species. Forest nurseries have been built and operated by the divisional forest offices, Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and private sectors. Quality seedlings of the demanding tree species have been produced and distributed free of cost for plantation. The government has also issued directives to plant at least 30% of horticulture species out of the total number of planted trees. As part of the plantation campaign, tree saplings will be planted in and outside the forest areas by with the provision of saplings and other resources from the government for the purpose. Trees will be planted in school, college and government premises, open spaces, river banks, fallow areas, community and collaborative forests, public lands, along the roads and canals. The act of planting fruit and herb saplings in degraded forest areas, river reclaimed areas, public land and private forests will be undertaken as part of the campaign. The massive campaign is being conducted by mobilizing civil servants, community leaders, local forest users, private land owners and volunteers.

The Ministry of Forests and Environment has established a 'Plantation Secretariat' within the Department of Forests and Soil Conservation by involving all major government, non-government and civil society organizations as the members. The major roles of the secretariat are to coordinate all stakeholders involved in plantations, record keeping and data management, reporting as well as resource leveraging. The government will maintain and strengthen data-base and records of the plantations. Participatory monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning approach would be the foundation for obtaining the results as expected within this 'Plantation Year'. The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers has urged all the stakeholders including CFUGs, NGOs, private sectors and volunteers, to actively participate in the campaign and make it a grand success

Establishment of a planted forest is a long-term investment that requires awareness and diligence not only in policy and planning but particularly in management practices. This includes selection of suitable germplasm, qualitative seeds and production of qualitative seedlings, site preparation, plantation of seedlings, tending, weeding and other silvicultural operations and harvesting. Unfortunately, planted forests have not always lived up to their potential. The causes of failure of the plantations in the past include inappropriate governance frameworks and insufficient application of established knowledge, technology and techniques.

The campaigns like this will have positive impression on our future generation as well. So, it is the duty of every citizen to contribute and play his/her effective roles by participating in these sorts of campaign. We, therefore, urge all the concerned stakeholders, civil society organizations, local people and volunteers to support government in making the 'Plantation Year' historic and successful in its mission. Together, we can make it possible.

**Editors**