TIME FOR DECISIVE ACTION

he Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir continues to grapple with deep-rooted terror networks that pose a persistent threat to peace, security, and the democratic fabric of the region. Despite significant progress in counter-terror operations in recent years, recent incidents suggest that sleeper cells, overground workers (OGWs), and cross-border handlers are still active and must be dealt with urgently and decisively. In the last few weeks, there has been a noticeable uptick in intelligence inputs regarding attempts to revive militant activities, particularly in south Kashmir and border districts like Rajouri and Poonch. Arms drops via drones from across the border, increased terror financing through Hawala channels, and the exploitation of social media for radicalisation are worrying trends that cannot be ignored.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in his recent statements, reiterated the government's firm commitment to eliminating terrorism from the region. "Zero tolerance for terrorism is not just a slogan - it is the policy. We will dismantle every network, arrest every sympathiser, and neutralise every threat," he said.

Security forces, including the Indian Army, CRPF, J&K Police, and intelligence agencies, have already intensified operations in high-sensitivity zones. In May alone, multiple successful encounters led to the elimination of high-value targets, many of whom were linked to banned outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and The Resistance Front

One of the urgent needs is a crackdown on the terror-financing networks operating under the guise of charities or NGOs. The NIA and ED have already launched several probes, but more coordinated efforts are required at the district level. Local law enforcement must be empowered with intelligence-sharing tools and legal frameworks to arrest individuals aiding and abetting terror. There is also a growing call to monitor and regulate religious institutions suspected of spreading extremist ideologies. Community leaders and clerics need to play a responsible role in promoting peace and countering the radicalisation of youth. Strengthening grassroots policing, investing in technology-driven surveillance, and involving village-level committees in security dialogues can foster trust and vigilance. The time to act is now. J&K stands at a crucial juncture where developmental gains must not be undone by renewed terror threats. A multi-pronged, firm, and sustained crackdown on all terror links - internal and external - is the only way forward to ensure lasting peace and sta-

Revive Our Earth, Rekindle Our Bharat: India's Sacred War for the Planet

■ MAHADEEP SINGH JAMWAL

n June 5, 2025, the world observes World Environment Day under the theme "Our Land, Our Future." For India, this is far more than an annual observance-it is a sacred battle cry. With nearly 30% of our land facing degradation and desertification, and millions already displaced or distressed, the crisis is not a forecast-it is our living reality. From parched fields in Bundelkhand to receding riverbanks in the northeast, from poisoned lakes in urban centers to shrinking forest belts in central India, the wounds of environmental neglect are bleeding across Bharat Mata.

In Indian tradition, land is not just an economic asset-it is an embodiment of divinity. The Atharva Veda reverently proclaims, 'M?t? bh?mi? putro aham p?thivy??"-the Earth is our mother, and we are her sons and daughters. This is not poetic sentiment; it forms the cornerstone of India's environmental philosophy. Nature is not meant to be conquered but to be coexisted with. The rivers we bathe in are sacred. The forests we walk through are sanctuaries of the divine. Even the air we breathe is invoked in our morning

From Hinduism to Sikhism, from Jainism to Buddhism, Indian religions have spoken in one voice when it comes to respecting nature. Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita says, "I am the taste in water, the radiance in the moon and the sun, the life in all living beings." Guru Nanak Dev Ji in his Japji Sahib praises the elements as manifestations of the Creator-"Pavan guru, paani pita, mata dharat mahat." (Air is the guru, water the father, and Earth the great mother.) Lord Mahavira's



principle of Ahimsa extends not only to humans but to all forms of life, including plants and soil. Even Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized environmental stewardship, saying, "The Earth is green and beautiful, and God has appointed you his stewards

The Isha Upanishad gives a timeless reminder: "Ten tyaktena bhunj?th?"-enjoy the bounties of Earth with restraint and detachment. This philosophy of limited consumption and harmonious coexistence was the way of life in ancient India-and must once again become our modern compass.

India's history is replete with grassroots

environmental guardians. The Bishnoi community of Rajasthan has, for centuries, given their lives to protect trees and animals. The Chipko Movement in the Himalayan region was led by rural women who hugged trees to prevent their felling. Today, our country continues that spirit through large-scale efforts like the Namami Gange Mission and revival of traditional water harvesting techniques in several states.

World-renowned environmentalists echo what Indian wisdom has always upheld. Mahatma Gandhi warned us, "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed." Jane Goodall reminded, "You

cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you." Chief Seattle's words-"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children"-mirror our own philosophies on generational duty and dharma.

But these truths must move from sacred texts and speeches into the soil of everyday life. What we need now is not awareness but action-rooted in our culture and led by the people. Planting a tree should be an act of prayer. Saying no to plastic should be a form of non-violence. Water conservation must become a collective spiritual discipline. Religious institutions can lead the way-temples organizing plantation drives, mosques promoting water responsibility, gurdwaras reducing waste, churches encouraging ecological sermons. From community kitchens to classroom teachings, every space in India must become green-aware and green-active.

Governments must wield policy as a shield and a sword-protecting forests, regulating industry, and empowering communities. Businesses must innovate sustainably. And the youth-bold, informed, and spiritually connected-must lead this renaissance of responsi-

World Environment Day 2025 must not be treated as a calendar date but as a national moment of reflection and renewal. This is our yajna, our sacred offering to the Earth. The land is not just our future-it is our duty, our dharma, our legacy.

India has always shown the world how to live with nature, not above it. Now, as the planet cries out for revival, it is time for Bharat to lead once again-not just with words, but with wisdom and will

indebted to his sacrifices, it is our bound-

Remembering unsung heroes, first war of freedom 1857

■ PURAN CHAND SHARMA

There is good chunk of people in our country having scant knowledge of Indian history holding the view that the war fought in the year 1857 was just a mutiny and a rebellion against the British empire and not a full scale first war of freedom for liberating India from the strong clutches of well established and powerful English empire. But this notion/ general impression is far from being the reality. Therefore, with a view to fully understand this proposition, holistic view has been taken and arrived at the conclusion that it was an all out first war of freedom which laid the rock solid foundation of the edifice of cherished freedom from the colonial rule in India. This highly significant first war of freedom was led by committed and dare devil revolutionaries. It is a matter of great pride for all of us to remember and pay them our heartfelt salutations and regards. They could not achieve their goal but inspired innumerable vouth to take a plunge into the ongoing grim fight for liberation. Let us have look at their daring deeds in the

and impactful contribution.

MANGAL PANDE

This aggressive revolutionary is famous for his huge contribution in the realm of sustained struggle for reaching out to the common masses and their adversaries. The first bullet for full fledged freedom was fired by Mangal Pande in Bairakpur which created not only fearsome panic in the British camp but generated a powerful current of fear psychosis which shook the invincible English empire from the roots. His significant contribution lies in daringly challenging the mighty British Empire and Major Heuson was his first prey of 1857. Pande was Sepoy No. 1446 of 34th Platoon. He was born to Diwaker Pande in the village Akbarpur Distt, Balia. He got too exercised and angered over remarks of few village women that British Rulers were clandestinely using Cow flesh in the bullets which had to be opened with the help of mouth and teeth and accordingly all Indian soldiers were eating cow flesh, being excessively provoked and enraged, killed Major Heuson, Lieutenant Bob and prematurely sparked off the revolutionary onslaught against the British Empire. He was sent to the gallows on 8 April, 1857 in Bairakpur and a memorial has been raised for his sensational Martyrdom with the remarks 'First bullet of 1857 revolution was fired from this place.

NANA ŜAHIB PESHVA

He was the principal strategist of 1857 revolution from Kanpur to the whole of India who disseminated the message of 1857 revolution across the National horizon. He took pains to spread the message and the Mantra of freedom from North to South and ruthlessly opposed the cruelties and injustice being perpetrated by the foreign rulers. Rani Lakshami Bai, Tantva Tope, Azimullah Khan, Nana Sahib Peshva were cohorts and outstanding warriors. They secretly visited all important places and prepared the incumbent rulers to join the ongoing war for freedom. Maharaja Gulab Singh from Jammu & Kashmir also agreed to join the struggle together with his Army and the profuse financial support. Nana Sahib himself undertook responsibility of Punjab for mobilizing massive support, generating awareness for acute urgency becoming active part of the freedom movement and Nana received huge positive response from Punjab. Soon after the martyrdom of Maharani Lakshami Bai, he mysteriously disappeared and is said to have moved to Nepal and became a Sanyasi for rest of rest of his life. Whatever it is, Nana Sahib Peshva was a beacon light for the revolutionaries, for whatever period he lived, he was blessed with tremendous courage, infinite energy and remarkable self pride. He fought for independence of the country staking everything he owned in this mortal life.

TANTYA TOPE

The real name of Tantya Tope was Ramchander. His father Pandurang Pant was respected member of the royal court of Peshva Bajirao Dwitva. He was born to Rukmabai (Mother) in 1814 in Yevla village near Nasik. He was the last Guerilla warrior Commander. He also mentored Manu (Lakshami Bai) and trained her in Horse riding and imparted weapons training to 20 year's younger Manu. Tantya Tope was a very disciplined, clever and belligerent commander. Though the first war of freedom had spread across the country yet Tope chose to remain in dormant state waiting for the accurate time to go for the impactful

assault. His area of operation was Kanpur and Bithoor. At the appropriate time he contacted Subedar Tika Singh in Kanpur and administered him oath for liberating the country from the clutches of British Empire. It was planned and resolved to launch attack on Kanpur in the midnight on 4th June, 1857, Nana Sahib was gracefully declared as Peshva. Resultantly Kanpur was liberated from British slavery on June 5, 1857 but unfortunately Kanpur was recaptured by the British forces. The quick witted and par excellent warrior, Tantya Tope did not give in and recaptured Kanpur from alien forces. Dare devil Tantya fought 150 battles in Guerilla Style living in Jungles mountains and the deserts for ten months, but he never suffered any defeat, never succumbed to any kind of horrible conditions and never retreated and bowed down before the towering challenges. Heartfelt salutations and Naman to the invincible Tantya Tope.

Azimullah Khan

Azimullah Khan is another unsung hero of 1857 whose outstanding contribution in the first war of freedom has remained hidden in the pages of our history, Being en duty to highlight his phenomenal services for enlightening the countrymen plus our most valued readers in terms of national duty. Azimullah khan , apart from being a freedom fighter, was a Writer, Journalist, strategist and a great warrior as well. He is also submerged in the history books, quite far from the public esteem and fame. He faced highly disturbing hardships in his childhood. The currents of his fame, bravery, fighting skills reached Nana Sahib, who invited him to Bithoor, got remarkably impressed with his personality, national bent of mind and revolutionary thought process. Veer Savarkar was very great admirer of cynosure revolutionary Azimullah. He also composed a patriotic song "Hum Hain Iske Maalik, Hindustan Hamara, Paak Batan Hai Kaum Ka. Jannat Se Bhi Piara," which became instrumental in uniting the whole Nation. There are numerous others who chose to be the foundation stones for comprehensive freedom of the beloved Motherland.

> (The Author is President Ved Mandir)

Jammu Urban Forests: Importance and Challenges

Challenges Facing Jammu's Urban

Urban forests in Jammu face a multi-

course of critical times and educate our

progeny about their exemplary sacrifices

tude of challenges that threaten their ecological balance and utility as community resources. Understanding these challenges is crucial for formulating effective strategies for conservation and sustainability. The key threats to Jammu's urban forests include pollution, encroachment, deforestation, and climate change.

Pollution

Air Pollution: Urban areas are heavily impacted by vehicular emissions and industrial activities, contributing to significant air pollution. Although trees can mitigate these effects by filtering pollutants, the increasing levels of smog and particulate matter can overwhelm even healthy urban forests.

Pollution: Soil and Water Contaminants from urban runoff and waste disposal can degrade soil quality and poison water sources that urban forests rely on. This pollution not only harms the trees but also disrupts the entire ecosystem, affecting wildlife and plant species dependent on clean soil

and water.

Encroachment Urban Development: As Jammu continues to expand, urban forests are often viewed as prime land for development. Encroachment by residential and commercial projects leads to the fragmentation of green spaces. This loss diminishes biodiversity and creates isolated patches of forest that struggle to support wildlife.

Illegal Logging: The demand for timber and land can result in illegal logging activities within urban forest areas. Such practices lead to a significant reduction in tree cover and disrupt the delicate balance of the urban ecosystem.

Deforestation

Loss of Green Cover: The ongoing urbanization has resulted in considerable deforestation, reducing the overall green cover in Jammu. Lowered canopy cover has far-reaching consequences, such as increased temperatures, soil ero-

sion, and diminished air quality. Habitat Loss: Deforestation not only leading species to lose their natural habitats. This can lead to population declines in various species, thereby reducing biodiversity and destabilizing local ecosystems.

Climate Change

Temperature Variability: Jammu, like many places across the globe, is experiencing the impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures and erratic weather patterns. These variations can stress urban forests, making them vulnerable to diseases and pests that thrive under changing conditions.

Increased Frequency of Extreme Weather Events: Climate change can lead to more frequent and severe weather events such as storms, drought, and flooding, which pose considerable risks to the health of urban forests. Trees that are not adapted to these extreme conditions may sustain severe damage or die off entirely

Threat to Biodiversity and Urban Resilience

The cumulative effects of pollution, encroachment, deforestation, and climate change threaten the biodiversity that urban forests support. Loss of biodiversity reduces ecological resilience, impairing the ability of urban forests to provide essential services like carbon sequestration, air purification, and habitat for wildlife. Furthermore, the degradation of urban forests diminishes their role as green infrastructure, which is vital for enhancing urban resilience against climate-related challenges.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes strong policies, public awareness campaigns, and active community participation in conservation efforts. The sustainability of Jammu's urban forests hinges on the collective commitment to protecting these vital green resources.

Conservation and Management Strategies

To ensure the sustainability of urban forests in Jammu, effective conservation and management strategies are needed. These strategies should incorporate community involvement, government policies, and a focus on restoration projects that enhance urban green spaces.

the conservation efforts for urban

Community Involvement

Community engagement is crucial for the success of urban forest conservation efforts. Encouraging local residents to participate creates a sense of ownership and fosters responsible stewardship. Here are some ways to enhance community involvement:

Tree Planting Campaigns: Organizing tree planting events can mobilize community members. These events not only increase green cover but also raise awareness about environmental issues.

Educational Programs: Workshops and seminars focusing on the benefits of urban forests and biodiversity can empower residents with knowledge. Programs that teach skills such as tree care and sustainable landscape management can help maintain urban forests.

Volunteering Opportunities: Establishing volunteer opportunities for forest maintenance activities-like removing invasive species or organizing clean-up drives-helps foster community bonds while directly benefiting the environment.

Government Policies

Supportive government policies are essential for urban forest conservation. Policymakers can implement the following strategies

Regulatory Frameworks: Establish regulations that protect existing urban forests from encroachment and illegal logging. Providing legal status can help preserve these biodiversity hotspots.

Funding Initiatives: Allocate government funding for urban forestry projects aimed at restoration and conservation. Financial support for planting initiatives or maintenance will encourage local governments and organizations to

Planning Integration: Urban Integrate urban forestry considerations in land use and urban planning. By prioritizing green spaces in development plans, the government can mitigate the impacts of urbanization on natural

Restoration Projects

Similar to community involvement and

impacts the trees themselves but also. Here are key components that can cuide government policies restoration proj. growth and innovation particularly as ecosystems permaculture ancourages ects play a significant role in enhancing urban forests. Proposed initiatives

> Biodiversity Corridors: Creating biodiversity corridors connecting fragmented urban forests can improve wildlife habitats. These corridors will facilitate species migration and improve genetic diversity.

> Species Management: Invasive Implementing programs to manage or remove invasive species will help protect native flora and fauna. Restoring indigenous plant species can enhance the resilience of urban forests.

> Sustainable Landscaping: Promoting sustainable landscaping practices in urban developments around forests can reduce runoff and pollution. Utilizing native plants that require minimal irrigation will create more resilient land-

Collaborative Efforts

To maximize the effectiveness of conservation strategies, collaborative efforts between various stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, NGOs, and academic institutions, are essential. This multifaceted approach will not only strengthen conservation initiatives but also ensure a shared vision for the enhancement of urban forests.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring and evaluation of urban forest health and biodiversity can inform adaptive management strategies. Establishing key performance indicators can help track progress and make necessary adjustments to conservation

Through comprehensive community involvement, robust government policies, focused restoration projects, and collaborative efforts, Jammu can ensure the sustainability of its urban forests. These strategies will not only preserve these vital green spaces but also enhance the quality of life for its residents, promoting ecological balance and community well-being.

Future Prospects for Urban Forestry

The future of urban forestry in Jammu holds immense potential for awareness of environmental sustainability increases. By integrating urban forests into urban planning and development frameworks, Jammu can transform its green spaces into vital ecologi-

cal and community resources. Growth Areas for Urban Forestry

Several key areas present opportunities for the growth and enhancement of urban forestry in Jammu:

Increasing Urban Green Spaces: The expansion of urban areas provides numerous opportunities for creating new green spaces. Parks, green roofs, and vertical gardens can be integrated into urban development projects, featuring a variety of native plant species that promote biodiversity and enhance

ecosystem services. Restoration Initiatives: Focusing on the restoration of degraded urban forest areas will be critical. Community-led initiatives can play a significant role in reviving these spaces and enhancing ecological resilience, with projects aimed at replanting native vegetation and

rehabilitating distressed landscapes. Community Urban Forestry Projects: Engaging local communities in urban forestry projects fosters civic pride and stewardship. Initiatives such as community gardens, educational programs, and volunteer-based tree planting campaigns can encourage active participation and investment in local green infra-

Innovative Practices in Urban Forestry

Innovative practices can play a significant role in shaping the future of urban forestry in Jammu:

Smart Urban Forestry: Utilizing technology and data-driven approaches can enhance urban forestry management. Geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing can be employed to monitor tree growth, assess biodiversity, and identify areas in need of restoration. This data can guide effective decisionmaking for urban forestry initiatives.

Permaculture Techniques: Adopting permaculture principles in urban forestry focuses on sustainability and ecological balance. By designing urban green spaces that mimic natural

biodiversity and decreases reliance on

chemical inputs, promoting healthier

urban environments. Integrating Urban Agriculture: Promoting the integration of urban agriculture within urban forests can yield dual benefits, enhancing food security and providing educational opportunities for local communities. Community-supported agriculture initiatives can enable residents to cultivate their own food while fostering deeper connections with nature.

Importance of Integrating Urban Forests in Planning

Integrating urban forests into broader urban planning and development frameworks is critical to create sustainable, livable, and resilient cities. This integration can be achieved through:

Comprehensive Urban Planning: Urban planners must prioritize the inclusion of urban forests in city designs. By considering green spaces alongside residential and commercial development, planners can ensure sustainable growth while addressing climate change and improving the quality of life for residents.

Connecting GreenNetworks: Developing green corridors that connect various urban forests can support biodiversity and enable wildlife movement across urban landscapes. Such connections can enhance the resilience of ecosystems, mitigating the impacts of urbanization.

Policy and Legislation Support: Enacting policies that prioritize urban forestry can reinforce commitments to sustainable development. Legislation aimed at protecting existing green spaces and promoting the creation of new urban forests can facilitate longterm conservation efforts.

By leveraging growth areas, adopting innovative practices, and integrating urban forestry into planning, Jammu can pave the way for a greener, healthier urban environment. Emphasizing the importance of urban forests will ensure they continue to serve as vital ecological and community resources for future generations.