

PRESS RELEASE



Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Conrad K. Sangma Launches GREEN Meghalaya Plus scheme to boost forest conservation

Shillong, October 1, 2024: Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Conrad K Sangma today launched the GREEN (Grassroot level Response Towards Ecosystem Enhancement and Nurturing) Meghalaya Plus scheme, a groundbreaking initiative to conserve and protect Meghalaya's natural forests.



The GREEN Meghalaya Plus scheme, based on the principle of Payment for Ecosystem (PES), supports villages, communities, clans, or individuals that commit to conserve and protect natural forests for a minimum period of 30 years.

Speaking at the programme, Shri Conrad K Sangma, Hon'ble Chief Minister, said, "It is beneficial for the people, the society, and the world that the PES programme should be taken up at the national and the international scale. It is the need of the hour. Let us protect the forests before it is destroyed, not rebuild them after it is destroyed. And that is really what Green Meghalaya is all about and we are really proud of this particular flagship programme. And that's why we are very keen to go into the 'Green Meghalaya Plus', which is the next stage of this very-very important programme."

One of the most significant changes in the PES 2.0 guidelines is the increased area coverage for participation. Where the earlier scheme required a minimum of 2 hectares of forest, the new guidelines now reduce this to just 1 hectare, allowing smaller landowners and communities to utilize. This ensures that the benefits of the scheme are more widely distributed and that more people can contribute to the conservation of our forest heritage. Under Green Meghalaya+, the annual reward per hectare increases from ₹15,000 per hectare to ₹ 20,000 per hectare, the base rate of compensation has been increased from ₹ 8000 per hectare to ₹ 10,000 per hectare per year to encourage wider uptake of the scheme.



Additionally, the Hon'ble Chief Minister stated, “*It is not only about the environment that we are talking here. Protection of the forests is very important for us even from the finance commission point of view. During the horizontal devolution of the tax that takes place , which is what the finance commission does, the forest cover plays the most importantly role in terms of the percentage of taxes we get from the direct tax collection that the government of India does. While we are giving money to increase or protect or conserve our forest cover, not only are we environmentally making sure we do this but is also impacting financially. It is a clear benefit and a win-win situation for everyone.*”

During the occasion, Hon'ble Chief Minister interacted with beneficiaries of GREEN Meghalaya+, CM ELEVATE, and FOCUS. A beneficiary from South West Khasi Hills shared his testimony and expressed gratitude to the Government of Meghalaya for the opportunity to impart awareness about tree planting and environmental conservation through the initiative. *A Village Headman from East Jaintia Hills stated that the Government of Meghalaya and MBMA's efforts under Green Meghalaya had significantly improved environmental conservation in the region, which had previously experienced rapid deforestation over the past 30 years.*

Shri R. S Gill, IFS, Principal Conservator of Forests stated that there are many great visionary projects all over the world, but this is a completely unique and visionary approach forward as this is a step involving landowners, with their own vision to take the state forward along with the state. *“There had been a gap earlier where we often found it difficult to mobilize the response of citizens in the great efforts of afforestation and preservation of ecosystem. The result is what we have seen today, which will take complete shape years ahead, when this will be reflected on multiple platforms.”*

Shri Gunaka DB, IFS, Executive Director, MBMA & Joint Secretary, Government of Meghalaya in his speech said, *“Today we’re launching the PES GREEN Meghalaya+. We are able to move from GREEN Meghalaya to GREEN Meghalaya+ due to the success of the first phase, were more than 3800 beneficiaries both community and individuals have been part of the program and more than ₹ 43 crores has been disbursed till date. Around 5100 hectares land has also come under the PES program which makes it one of the most successful programs that we’ve taken up.”*

During the programme, cheques and sanction letters were distributed to beneficiaries of FOCUS, CM-Elevate, and GREEN Meghalaya+. Notably, CM-ELEVATE Phases 1 and 2 benefited 2,281 individuals with sanctions totaling ₹ 60 crore, while FOCUS's second tranche supported 3,777 beneficiaries with ₹ 17.59 crore.





Dignitaries present at the event were Shri Conrad K Sangma, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Sampath Kumar, IAS, CEO, MBDA & Development Commissioner, Government of Meghalaya, Shri. R.S. Gill, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Head of Forest Force, Shri Gunanka DB, IFS, Executive Director, MBMA & Jt. Secy., Government of Meghalaya and other officials from MBMA.