



Government of Pakistan
Ministry of Environment

PRESS BRIEF
on
PAKISTAN'S ATTEMPT TO SET A NEW WORLD RECORD
for the
NUMBER OF TREES PLANTED IN A 24-HOUR PERIOD

The Government of Pakistan has declared 2009 as the *National Year of the Environment*. As you may be aware, a number of events are being organised throughout our country, according to the calendar of the *National Year of the Environment*. One of the most important of these is our attempt to set up a new *Guinness World Record* for the number of trees planted at a specific site in a single 24-hour period. This event has been planned with the objective of enhancing forest resources through healthy international competition. The event will, on one hand, achieve the national objective of increasing forest cover and, on the other, it will raise mass awareness, while promoting a softer image of the country to the world's community of nations.

In view of the global significance of mangrove forests, particularly in the context of the devastating South Asian Tsunami of 2005, the GWR attempt will be held at a site in the Mangrove areas of the Indus River Delta in Southern Sindh Province. The specific place that has been chosen for the event is a barren island close to Keti Bandar in the Thatta District, some 150 km Southeast of Karachi. The event is in line with the present Government's resolve to comprehensively rehabilitate the Mangrove forests of Pakistan's *Arabian Sea Coast*, working in partnership with leading government agencies such as the *Sindh Forest Department*, international and national NGOs and the private sector.

The GWR event is planned to be held on July 15th, 2009. Initially the target was to break an earlier record for the planting 3,48,493 trees by Mexico on August 29-30th, 2008. Quite recently, however, we have been informed that a unit of the Indian Army has set a new record by planting 4,47,874 trees on June 12-13th, 2009 in Assam. Pakistan will, consequently, be chasing a new target to plant at least 4,50,000 trees!

The morale of all our partners is, however, very high and we are ready to set a new World Record. Three hundred volunteer planters have been selected from the local communities and are being trained to plant at least 4,50,000 mangrove seedlings in 24 hours, during natural daylight and without using any machinery or mechanical aids. In reality, this means that one planter will have to plant an average of 1,500 seedlings between morning and evening. This is indeed a gigantic task and special arrangements are being made on the site.

The Sindh Forest Department has taken the lead in coordinating this historic event by arranging for an appropriate stock of mangrove seedlings and by training the 300 members of Pakistan's tree-planting team. For this, my Ministry is thankful to the Government of Sindh, in general, and the Sindh Forest Department, in particular. The enthusiastic support received from the Secretary Forests and Wildlife, Government of Sindh, to host this event in coastal belt of Sindh Province is praise-worthy.

The Ministry of Environment is also thankful to the *National Bank of Pakistan* for their generous, sole sponsorship of the event. The technical and logistical support of the *Pakistan Wetlands Programme*, the *Network for Human and Social Development*, the *International Union for the Conservation of Nature* and *WWF-Pakistan* is also recognised. The event will be monitored by an adjudicator, officially appointed by the *Guinness World Records Organisation*. In addition, the members of the media are invited to comprehensively cover the event so that Pakistan's public and, indeed the world at large, may bear witness to the record attempt. The Ministry and its partners are collectively motivated to secure this world record for Pakistan and I hope that we will definitely succeed in our endeavor with the guidance and blessing of Almighty Allah.

The awareness and motivation generated as a result of this *world record attempt* on July 15th, 2009, is linked to a second event to be held just over one month later on August 18th, 2009. This day has been declared as **National Forest Day** in Pakistan and all segments of society will be mobilised and encouraged to plant as many trees as possible throughout the country. The Provincial Forest Departments, *Capital Development Authority* and *National Highway Authority* will take the lead in organising certain key events associated with the occasion.

National Forest Day is a voluntary and participatory initiative involving all the provinces, territories, private sector organisations and individuals. I personally appeal to all national building departments, autonomous bodies, the armed forces, the private sector, academic institutions, NGOs, the farming community and people from all walks of life to actively participate in this event to plant, grow and protect as many trees as they possibly can. To stimulate public interest and boost active participation, a programme of “Best Planter Awards” is being introduced. In this scheme, the most productive participants in the programme in each segment of society will be identified, recognised and honored with an award from the President of Pakistan.

These two events: the *World Record Attempt* and the designation of *National Forest Day* are strong evidence of the commitment and resolve of the Government and the people of Pakistan to further the cause of environmental conservation and protection through tree planting. The trees planted during these two events will also collectively contribute towards the *United Nations Environmental Programme’s* global *One Billion Tree Campaign*.

It is also my earnest hope that these globally significant environmental conservation initiatives will, in these troubled times, project to the world a fresh, softer image of our country and its people.

Forest conservation is one of the economically significant challenges being faced by our nation: I appeal to the members of the print and electronic media, present at this briefing, to collaborate whole-heartedly with the Ministry of Environment in covering the launching of this campaign and the monitoring of its progress in the future. Jointly, we have the capacity to raise public awareness and harness the support of Pakistan’s people for vitally needed forest conservation. It is imperative that we establish a new culture of growing trees in our country to counteract the exploitive and unsustainable patterns of forest utilisation in the recent past.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at *Keti Bundar* on July 15th - Let us join hands in making Pakistan green!

Pakistan Paindabad!
