

Variety

For nature lovers, the sun may have just set in Japan along with Akira Miyawaki

Vinson Kurian | Thiruvananthapuram | Updated on August 03, 2021



MR Hari with legendary botanist Akira Miyawaki at the latter's residence in Japan in 2019.

Kerala too grieves the passing away of legendary botanist

The note in laboured English from Olympics-bound Japan a week ago was enough to leave MR Hari, Managing Director of the

Thiruvananthapuram-based Invis Multimedia, grief-stricken. It had announced the death of legendary botanist Akira Miyawaki who lived 'just half-a-world away.'

Hari runs a successful multimedia business, but he is also an avowed nature lover who popularises the Miyawaki Afforestation technique to grow micro forests even in urban areas. Hari recalls how he had hosted the nonagenarian for the last time online for inspecting a school project in Thiruvananthapuram.

The obituary note

The message from Kazue Fujiwara, student of Prof Miyawaki, who developed the eponymous afforestation technique that has caught the imagination of nature lovers worldwide, ran as follows. "Dear all, We have Olympic game now, but Covid-19 is now very heavy in Japan. I hope you are well even under Covid-19 situation. I will inform you a sad news. Prof Miyawaki passed away at the age of 93 on July 16. His family funeral finished on July 23. He was long time in hospital since March. Once he came back to medical rehabilitation home 10 days, but he got disability of not being able to swallow food. And again he went back hospital. Since then nobody see him because Covid-19. He passed away alone. May his soul rest in peace."

Dream trip to Japan

Hari realised a dream when he travelled to Japan in 2019 after being granted an audience with the wheelchair-bound Miyawaki. He praised Hari's efforts and advised him to 'grow more, plant more.' Miyawaki had not heard about Kerala but insisted that only native trees should be selected.

They brought the desert back to life

"The professor didn't approve my idea of planting fruit trees within the forest," Hari told *BusinessLine*, referring to his proposed plan for growing them to make it remunerative for homesteads here.

Other plants may be grown on the periphery but without disturbing the forest. The saplings grow ten times faster, Hari explains, saying that the emerging 'forest' would be 30 times denser than a natural one.

Precious carbon footprint

The saplings are planted close to each other to prevent sunlight from reaching the ground and keeping the soil moist. The plants grow vertically instead of horizontally.

This could be the best solution to the challenges of deforestation, land degradation and moisture stress and could also help us earn precious carbon footprints in the international market, says Hari.

MRPL to spend ₹1.45 cr on coastal afforestation

The micro forests create their own ecosystem comprising several birds, butterflies, and insects, as shown by Hari already in several of his projects. The Kerala Tourism Department invited Nature's Green Guardians Foundation (NGGF), an NGO, to grow a sample forest in the heart of Thiruvananthapuram.

A thousand projects on

"So far, we have developed 40 micro forests across the State, and my information is that there are at least a thousand such projects developed by individuals and organisations in various stages of growth."

The Miyawaki method might be slightly capital-intensive in the first three years but takes care of itself later. It will take a couple of years before the trees grow dense and self-sufficient. They help lower temperatures, reduce air and noise pollution, attract local birds and insects, and create carbon sinks.

Invis Multimedia plans to propagate it further among masses. The NGGF, headed by noted environmentalist and energy consultant VK Damodaran, looks after the research and methodology.

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