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Capital set to get its 1st Miyawaki forest

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Thiruvananthapuram: The state's first Miyawaki model 'urban forest', with trees, bushes and creepers, on government land is all set to flourish on the premises of Kanakakkunnu Palace in the capital city.

After a careful laying of tonnes of biomass, which was on for the last 15 days, around 800 saplings of indigenous medicinal trees and plants were planted on Wednesday on five cents behind Suryakanthi fair ground. The three-month-old saplings, which included that of flowering fruit trees besides creepers and bushes, are expected to grow above five feet in another three months' time.

This project under the state tourism department is being implemented jointly by the Nature's Green Guardian Foundation, an NGO headed by environmentalist V K Damodaran, and Invis Multimedia, the department's IT solution provider. And for Invis, this is their fourth Miyawaki model project, all the earlier three on private lands.

Besides, the earlier projects were on three different types of lands – on a high altitude land in Munnar, marshy land in Peyad and on a dry land in Puliarakonam. Here in Kanakakkunnu, they had to replace the laterite formation with suitable soil for cultivation and had to lay 15 tonnes of biomass for planting the saplings of 200 variety of species.

At Kanakakkunnu, it's a mixture of trees, shrubs and climbers, which will come up in different layers. Envisaged as a medicinal forest, most of the trees here are of medicinal value and they include Arayal (Banyan tree), Athi (cluster fig tree), Ashoka (Ashoka tree), Koovalam (Wood Apple), Palakappayyaani Malaveppu Elanji (West Indian Medlar), Kanjiram (Nux Vomica), Karingali (Cutch), Nenmeni Vaka (East Indian Walnut) Poovarshu or Sheelanthi (Portia Tree), Punna (Alexandrian Laurel), Chamatha or Plashu (Flame of the forest), Kadukkai (Harithaki), Marotti (Chaulmoogra), Nelli (Amla) and Veppu (Neem).

As already reported in these columns, the government has directed all departments to identify lands for growing miniature forests in urban areas using the method of afforestation introduced by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, and successfully implemented in different parts of the world for more than four decades. And this is the first one initiated by the state tourism department.

As per the model, no maintenance is required after three years, and the growth rate is very high. A 10-15 years old forest of Miyawaki method will have the characteristics of a 150-years-old forest, according to the project report.