

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

On a mission to develop mini-forests in urban areas



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, SEPTEMBER 14, 2019 09:30 IST

UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 14, 2019 09:30 IST

Miyawaki method being tried out by Forest Department

The Forest Department has set its sights on increasing the green cover in urban and semi-urban areas in the State as part of its strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The department has begun trial of the Miyawaki method of afforestation, developed by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, on five-cent plots at Neyyar, Nedumbassery and Mudikkode (in Thrissur). Besides enabling carbon sequestration, public awareness of afforestation is also targeted through the endeavour to develop mini-forests.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests P.K. Kesavan, head of the forest force, says inadequate tree cover in urban areas has driven the department to explore the planting technique. "Urban

forestry in Kerala has been largely confined to institutional planting. We are yet to evolve a blueprint to increase green cover in urban areas,” he says.

The Miyawaki method will be extended to other parts only after a thorough scientific assessment wherein various parameters, including air and soil qualities, will be continuously monitored. Since the technique is highly capital-intensive, the department will adopt the method for wider use only after studying its feasibility and long-term implications, he says.

CSR funds

The current initiative is undertaken by utilising the corporate social responsibility funds of the Thiruvananthapuram-based Invis Multimedia, with the department incurring no expense. Developing each cent of land under the Miyawaki method is estimated to cost around ₹1 lakh. Padma Mahanti, Chief Conservator of Forests, Eco Development and Tribal Welfare, says a protocol is being evolved to document the parameters to assess if they match up to those of natural forests. Depending on its success, the department will identify suitable spots in urban areas that could be easily accessed by the public.

In Neyyar, the intensive plantation is undertaken close to the Agasthya Crocodile Rehabilitation and Research Centre at Vlavatti. As many as 400 plants belonging to 183 species are being grown in the small tract of land, according to J.R. Ani, Wildlife Warden, Thiruvananthapuram.

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