

# 25 crore saplings will be planted in Karnataka in the next five years, says Forest Minister

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THE HINDU BUREAU



Minister for Forest, Environment, and Ecology B. Eshwar Khandre at a press conference in Mangaluru on Tuesday. | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Forest Department has set a target of planting 25 crore tree saplings at the rate of five crore saplings a year in the next five years, said Minister for Forest, Environment and Ecology Eshwar B. Khandre on Tuesday, July 2.

He was speaking after launching 'a million tree sapling plantation' organised by Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP) in association with the department at Kavalapadoor village in Bantwal taluk of Dakshina Kannada district.

Mr. Khandre said the department had planted 5.43 crore saplings last year and claimed that about 85% of the saplings have survived. A public audit too would be done to verify the survival rate. However, even planting 10 crore saplings might not be enough in the present situation where the forest cover is just 21% in Karnataka as against the prescribed 33%. Green cover is essential for sustainable development, he said.

The Minister noted that climate change is increasing global temperature following which different parts of the World are witnessing vagaries of nature. While many have died in North India due to heat waves, over one thousand people died during the Haj Pilgrimage. Protecting the green cover was essential for the survival of human beings as well as to prevent man-animal conflict. The department would make serious efforts to increase the green cover and provide suitable environment for wild animals with the help of people and organisations.

Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Pattadhikari and SKDRDP chairman D. Veerendra Heggade said protecting trees is as important as planting new saplings. Planting fruit-bearing tree saplings is also important for the survival of wild animals. SKDRDP has planned to plant 10 lakh tree saplings, including three lakh

fruit-bearing ones, across the State this year, Mr. Heggade said. The project would also desilt over 500 lakes.

Rajesh U. Naik, Bantwal MLA, former Minister B. Ramanath Rai and others were present.