



5 lakh seedlings in 5 minutes: Tripura sets new record amid bid to increase forest cover

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Tripura on Friday set a record by planting 5 lakh seedlings in 5 minutes to boost the forest cover in the tiny northeastern state. Chief Minister Dr Manik Saha led the state-level mass plantation drive in Agartala, while similar programmes were held in different districts of the state.

Saha joined a mass tree-planting event and distributed saplings at Taranagar in the Mohanpur sub-division of western Tripura as part of the mass plantation drive. He took to X and said, “Inspired by the Hon’ble PM Shri [Narendra Modi](#) Ji’s “Ek Ped (Tree), Maa ke Naam” campaign, today I participated in the state-wide programme organized by the Forest Department to plant 5,00,000 saplings in just 5 minutes”.

Forest, Science, Technology, and Environment Minister Animesh Debbarma stated that the Forest Department has distributed over 7 lakh seedlings among various stakeholders, including the public, students, clubs, social organizations, banks, and central and state security forces, to be planted across the state as part of the ‘5 lakh seedlings in 5 minutes’ initiative.

Speaking to reporters, the Forest Minister said the afforestation initiative would continue throughout the monsoon season and beyond, and would not be limited to Friday’s special event. He also mentioned that his department plans to plant over 50 lakh more saplings in different phases to boost the forest cover, in collaboration with other departments and organizations.

According to reports, Tripura now has 62 per cent forest cover, which is higher than the national average. However, the mass plantation initiative follows the forest minister’s concerns about the state’s forest cover, noting significant destruction.

On June 11 this year, Forest Minister Debbarma expressed his concern about the actual forest cover in the state. He pointed out that although official figures indicate over 60 percent of Tripura’s 10,486 sq. km geographical area is forested, much of it has been lost due to illegal tree felling and sawmills.

“In my assessment, the forest area in Tripura has been destroyed by 50-60 percent. If one were to go 0.5-1 km deep inside the forest from the highways, most of the forest areas would not be found there. But we say proudly that the forest area is 60 percent of the state’s area.”

“Officially, there is 22 per cent forest cover across the country. So, we are well above the national average. But in reality, the land is there but the forest is almost gone in Tripura. How it vanished, who did it — I don’t have information to answer all these since I have been the forest

minister for only three months. But we need a massive effort in afforestation and protection to ensure that 60-62 per cent of the state is covered by forests,” he said.

As part of the massive afforestation drive, 5 lakh plants were planted in 5 minutes across the state, involving schools, colleges, paramilitary forces, NGOs, police, the Indian Army, and all line departments as part of Vana Mahotsava.

In 2019, when former Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb was in office, the state government set a record by planting 6,500 trees in one minute along National Highway 08 as part of Vanamahotsava organised in Udaipur, Gomati district, 50 km from here.

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