Mass afforestation drive in Bengal: White and red sandalwood trees planted along Red Road

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Synopsis

Over the past decade, the forest area has witnessed an increase from 17.2% in 2011 to 21.6% in 2021. Additionally, the forest protected area network has risen from 4.5% to 5.2% of the state's geographical area. As part of ongoing conservation efforts, the state government secured a Rs 650-crore agreement under JICA assistance for forest and biodiversity conservation.
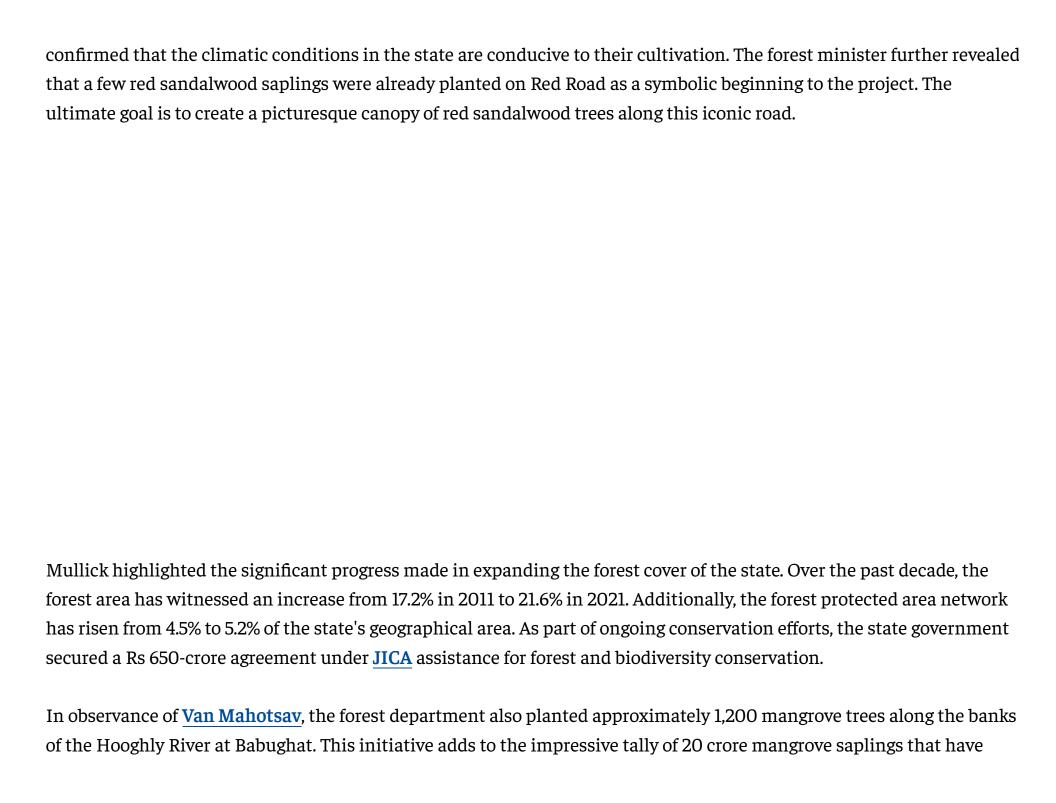
TOI.in

Mangrove saplings planted on the Hooghly banks

The **forest department** of **Bengal** has embarked on a significant endeavor to enhance the green cover of the region. A mass afforestation drive was recently organized, with the objective of planting white and red **sandalwood trees** along Red Road, one of the prominent thoroughfares in the state.

The main goal of the initiative is to successfully repopulate these specific trees in other states such as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and **Tamil Nadu**.

In an interview with TOI, Jyotipriya Mullick, the state forest minister, expressed his optimism regarding the growth of sandalwood trees in Bengal. Following consultations with experts, it was

confirmed that the climatic conditions in the state are conducive to their cultivation. The forest minister further revealed that a few red sandalwood saplings were already planted on Red Road as a symbolic beginning to the project. The ultimate goal is to create a picturesque canopy of red sandalwood trees along this iconic road.

Mullick highlighted the significant progress made in expanding the forest cover of the state. Over the past decade, the forest area has witnessed an increase from 17.2% in 2011 to 21.6% in 2021. Additionally, the forest protected area network has risen from 4.5% to 5.2% of the state's geographical area. As part of ongoing conservation efforts, the state government secured a Rs 650-crore agreement under JICA assistance for forest and biodiversity conservation.

In observance of Van Mahotsav, the forest department also planted approximately 1,200 mangrove trees along the banks of the Hooghly River at Babughat. This initiative adds to the impressive tally of 20 crore mangrove saplings that have

been planted in the three coastal districts adjacent to the Sundarbans.

In the same TOI interview, [Firhad Hakim](#), the mayor of Bengal, urged citizens to actively participate in the city's greening endeavors. Recognizing the importance of combatting climate change and improving air quality, Hakim called for the plantation of one crore trees in and around the city. Plans include the planting of debdaru trees along roadways and fruit trees within parks and gardens.

Highlighting the aftermath of cyclone [Amphan](#), the mayor emphasized the significance of replacing lost greenery. While approximately 20,000 large trees were uprooted during the cyclone, efforts were made to compensate for the loss by planting 50,000 new trees. However, it will take another decade for these saplings to fully mature.

The afforestation campaign witnessed the participation of numerous stakeholders, including school students, citizens groups, and police stations. Citizens groups undertook tree plantations of rainforest trees, medicinal plants, fruit-bearing trees, and flowering plants at Rangamati Udyan in [Rabindra Sarobar](#). Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate also organized plantation programs, planting saplings within police station compounds, residential complexes, and various other locations in and around New Town.

With these concerted efforts, Bengal is set to enhance its green cover and foster a sustainable environment for future generations.