

Forest department plans to map areas of 'Keeda Jadi' to benefit locals

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DEHRADUN: The forest department of Uttarakhand is planning to undertake a significant initiative to provide economic benefits to the high-altitude mountain communities by conducting satellite resource mapping and ground surveys of locations where the rare medicinal herb known as Keeda Jadi is found. Keeda jadi is harvested from April to June and is predominantly found in alpine pastures of the Himalayas.

Recognising that previous efforts in 2018 to regulate the collection, marketing, and royalty of keeda jadi for the benefit of hill villagers were not very promising, the forest department has now taken the approach of estimating the total production and mapping the locations first. Subodh Uniyal, the forest minister of

Uttarakhand, told media, "The villagers of the hills should be the primary beneficiaries since they live in challenging geographical areas under harsh climatic conditions."

Keeda jadi, also known as the caterpillar fungus, is renowned worldwide for its alleged aphrodisiac properties and commands a high price of Rs 20 lakh per kilogram in the international market. However, there is still ambiguity regarding its production, collection and transportation, which is now being re-addressed after almost five years.

"We will utilise satellite imagery to collect data on production. While we have information about the compartments where it is found, the actual production and potential are yet to be established. This comprehensive exercise will provide us with a clear understanding of the current status and future prospects of

keeda jadi for the greater benefit of our state. The objective is to ensure that there is no theft and that the communities involved in its collection receive a fair price. This is the rationale behind amending the earlier rules and regulations related to keeda jadi of 2018," explained Anup Malik, Head of Forest Force, Uttarakhand.