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Forest dept to soon initiate exclusive nursery for mangrove saplings in TN's Ramanathapuram

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Mangrove forest. Image used for representational purpose only. (File Photo)

By [Express News Service](#)

RAMANATHAPURAM: Considering how the success rate of the mangrove plantation drive has remained below 40% every year, the forest department has planned to establish the district's first mangrove nursery at Karangadu for growing better and healthier saplings for the development of mangrove forest in Ramanathapuram.

According to sources, the mangrove forests in Ramanathapuram are spread across some 600 hectares along the coastal areas. "Though the forests have expanded over the years, it is not a continuous stretch along the district's coastline. The forest department has been taking measures towards planting new saplings annually. One of the major challenges in sustaining the saplings is the salination of groundwater. Some areas in Ramanathapuram lack backwater sites, and the mangrove growth in these areas is much slower. Even the saplings that were planted two years ago in these areas remain at the same stage, whereas those planted in areas with proper backwater sources have grown up to 10 feet. Due to the severe climatic changes in the district, these plantation drives witness only a 40% success rate," sources added.

In addressing the under-management of the mangrove saplings planted in the district, the forest department has planned to carry out various measures, including setting up an exclusive nursery for mangrove saplings and proper management of the existing plantations, to improve the success rate of the plantation drives, sources further said.

Speaking to TNIE, wildlife warden Bagan Jagadish Sudhakar said usually plantation works are done after the monsoon season and the saplings are maintained throughout the year at the forest nursery in the district, which is managed by the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve Trust (GoMBRT). "In improving the success rate of the

plantations, this year under the Green Tamil Nadu Mission (GTM), the forest department has decided to open an exclusive mangrove nursery in the Karangadu mangrove forest area. This nursery will house more than 11,000 saplings, which will be maintained throughout the year till the plantation drive. By using the soil from the planned plantation site for the saplings, the saplings will be nurtured properly so that they can handle the harsh condition after planting them," he said.

He added that in handling the water salination issues, the nursery will first expose the saplings slowly and periodically to saltwater conditions so that they can adapt to the salinated water source where it is planted. "The saplings will be maintained in pots that are made out of palmyra leaves (made by SHGs), to reduce the use of plastic and, in turn, protect the environment and aid the SHGs who make them. This would also enable an integrated growth of people as well as the mangrove forest. The nursery will be soon set up in the Karangadu area. This year, about 25 hectares of additional land would be used for planting mangrove saplings grown at this nursery," he said.

Forest officials added that, on a trial basis, in view of Mangrove Day on July 26, college students were involved in planting seedlings in growth pots at the nursery in Karangadu.



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