

Govt plan to build mini-forest in city

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Guwahati: Assam's capital, which has lost around 0.17 sqkm of primary forest and around 11 sqkm tree cover in the last 20 years, will soon have a mini forest in the heart of the city as the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) is going to convert a hillock spread over 4 sqkm into a forest.

Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on July 25 shared a video of the hillock with a caption which reads, "We are planning to build a forest in the heart of Guwahati" on his Twitter handle.

GMDA secretary Manali Jain said a GMDA team has conducted a survey in the hillock for the project to convert it into a forest. "There are a few encroachments in the hillock. The matter will have to be discussed for clearing the encroachment to convert the hillock into a forest as planned. Landslides were also reported during the monsoon in the past. So, the plantation will prevent landslides as well as create a good environment helping in improving air quality as well," she added.

According to sources, around 1,400 saplings will be planted in the hillock located at Borbari, which is around 6 km east of Ganeshguri.

Conservationists said the city has witnessed rapid concretization and encroachment leading to extreme deforestation over the last few decades resulting in worsening urban floods and unprecedented fluctuation in maximum and minimum temperatures.

City-based conservationist Hemen Lahkar welcomed the state government's move to build a mini forest. "Reviving the forest in the hills as well as the wetlands will save the city," he added.

