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# Kerala Forest department all set to establish State's first sandalwood museum at Marayur

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Sandalwood stored inside the sandalwood depot at Marayur in Idukki. | Photo Credit: JOMON PAMPAVALLEY

The Forest department is all set to establish Kerala's first sandal museum at Marayur in Idukki soon. According to Forest department officials, the new museum will be a major

attraction at Marayur which has the country's only natural sandalwood forest. Last month, Minister of Forests A.K. Saseendran announced the museum project.

Sandal reserve divisional forest officer (DFO) M.G. Vinod Kumar told *The Hindu* that the department has initiated steps to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) for the museum project. "The Sandal Museum aims at providing comprehensive details about sandalwood. The museum will include information about the history of sandalwood, myths associated with sandal, its present status, distribution, protection methods, demand, sandal products, value and classifications as well as about the threats it faces," said Mr. Kumar.

"Apart from an opportunity to get to know about sandalwood through touch, smell and valuable information, visitors can purchase various sandal products from the museum. The DPR preparation is going on and we will submit it to the government soon for approval," said the official.

According to department officials, every year, lakhs of tourists visit Munnar, some of whom explore Marayur as well. "We hope a large number of tourists will arrive at Marayur to visit the museum," said Mr. Kumar.

The Marayur Sandalwood Reserve, which spreads over 1460.77 hectares, is a matter of pride for the State for the high-quality sandalwood derived from the place. Recently, the Forest department started a replantation drive to repopulate the dwindling sandalwood reserve at Marayur where sandalwood spike disease (SSD) poses a major threat to the trees.

In the 1980s, the number of sandalwood trees at the reserve was estimated to be between 1.5 lakh and 2 lakh. Now, the

A view of the sandalwood forests at Marayur in Idukki. |  
Photo Credit: JOMON PAMPAVALLEY

number has come down to about 55,000.

Marayur sandalwood is also renowned for its higher quantity of oil. The sandal division at Marayur is the only place to purchase sandalwood officially in the State.

In 2021, Karnataka set up India's first sandalwood museum at Aranya Bhavan in Mysuru.

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