

Allahabad: Seed balls of Ganga task force enhancing forest cover

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ALLAHABAD: If you are a visitor of the Ganga Gallery of the Magh mela area and after witnessing the exhibits, you decide to leave but on the gate, you receive a ball, made of soil, don't take it lightly.

You may play with the ball, but ensure to throw at a piece of land where you would like to see a tree growing in future. This is "seed ball" manufactured by the team of territorial army of the 137 Composite Ecological Task Force (CETF) Bn (TA) 39 Gorkha Rifles, also known by the popular moniker Ganga Task Force (GTF).

The Ganga gallery at the ongoing Magh Mela is attracting huge crowd these days and as the pilgrims return to their houses, they are gifted with 'seed ball'.

Since its raising on May 2019, the task force had manufactured over seven lakh seed balls out of which 6.4 lakhs have already been either broadcast (sprinkled on the selected land) or distributed among pilgrims, farmers, students, different organisations, army units etc. in Allahabad, Kanpur and Varanasi.

Detailing of the manufacturing of these "seed balls", Col Amit Pande, incharge GTF said, "We have four machines installed here at our unit, each unit having the capacity of manufacturing 10,000 seed balls per day". A combination of 2-4 seeds of indigenous trees are kept in the soil along with an equal amount of clay, humus and ash and the same is given a shape of a ball of a size of around Two inches in diameter.

"The ball is dried and ready to be broadcasted or distributed, each having a survival period of 11 months and as soon as it gets some moisture, it starts sprouting on the land ultimately forming a sapling", explains the officer, who has been decorated with Nau Sena medal.

He added that a combination of 26 species including Jackfruit, Guava, Bel, Arjun, Aola, Blackberry etc are used in these balls to give a variety of flora in the area where it is broadcasted. The team has distributed over 35000 seed balls in the month of January itself from Ganga gallery of magh mela which is having a footfall of more than 1000 people per day. On Wednesday, the team distributed over 10000 seed balls to army units of Kanpur and Varanasi and the same will be broadcasted in the coming days.

The team has been carrying out distributing exercises in the schools and colleges and in private organisations as well wherein the participants are administered an oath to protect the environment and take care of the seed balls.

The unit has also has a nursery with the capacity of 1 lakh saplings in Allahabad. A similar facility would be coming up at Kanpur and Varanasi. Likewise, the manufacturing of seed balls would be introduced at Kanpur and Varanasi in the coming time.

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