

Compensatory planting scheme nearing completion

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Thiruvananthapuram: The state's largest 'compensatory planting scheme' is getting completed on the premises of the Sainik School in Kazhakkootam. The social forestry department will hand over the forest to the school in May, said chief conservator of forests P K Kesavan here on Monday.

The saplings that were planted as a compensation for 4,500 trees, which were axed for the widening of Kazhakootam-Mukkola national highway stretch in 2016, have grown up, turning the area into a forest.

Kesavan and other senior forest officials visited the site on Friday. Forest officials said that it was the largest compensatory planting project in the state. The forest has rare varieties of fruit trees, medicinal plants, etc. Around 38 varieties of trees and plants are growing up in this area.

The trees include Lakshmitaru, Kambakam, mango tree, neem, tamarind, Malabar tamarind, red sandalwood, cassia fistula, mahogany etc.

As per the agreement for compensatory planting, NHAI had given around Rs 1 crore to the forest department. Ten saplings were planted as compensation for every tree felled. Forest officials said that initiative has also helped in replacing acacia trees in the area.

The forest department had divided the area into three segments and made large pits to plant saplings. Saplings suited for the local weather were selected. "Once we hand it over to the Sainik School, responsibility of the maintenance will be with them," said Kesavan.

Another compensatory planting scheme in connection with Vizhinjam port works is getting ready in 35 acres in the same campus. As many as 15,540 trees were axed for the works of Vizhinjam port. Already 1,250 saplings were planted in 12 acres in 2018.

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