

India's Largest Miyawaki Forest in Hyderabad Offers Eco-friendly Housing in the Lap of Nature

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Imagine living in the country's largest forest built on Miyawaki principles, and that too without compromising on a modern lifestyle. Spread over 18 acres at Kavaguda near Hyderabad airport, a real estate project aims to bring back the days when people lived close to nature.

Populated with 4.2 lakh trees and over 100 species of birds, the forest took around two years to grow. "We started just before the lockdown. We identified 213 native trees within a 50-km radius and planted them. In this method, the trees grow much faster than regular ones," Kirthi Chilukuri, the brain behind this project, told News18.

Chilukuri said to make the soil ready, they dug five feet into the ground and made a special mix consisting of red soil, river sand, coco peat and manure. Developed by Stone Craft group and named 'Woods', the project took help from the forest department and international agencies to understand the ecology of the area.

Chilukuri further said over 100 trees were transplanted. "The idea is not to do real estate the conventional way. When you look at housing colonies today, they look like a concrete jungle. Keeping in mind the growing climate crisis, we realised that we have to build a sustainable mode that can coexist with nature. We realised that planting trees is the best solution as any other material will eventually lead to the cycle of energy consumption and emission," Chilukuri said.

Two different levels were created inside the project – human and forest. The perimeter of the plot has been trenched 10 feet as a forest and there is a retaining wall to stop reptiles from entering the plot.

There are 76 eco-friendly houses that are being built inside the forest. To gain entry into any house, you have to cross a bridge laid across the forest. These structures do not need any fans due to the cooling effect of the trees.

"The method, pioneered by Akira Miyawaki, aims to imitate a forest. According to the model, trees that should be planted in a Miyawaki forest must be found within a 50-km radius of the place. Miyawaki's idea was that one must go to a nearby forest, collect seeds, plant them in a nursery and then plant the saplings in the forest. But nowadays, to save time, we identify trees growing within that radius and get them from the nursery," said PN Subramanian, who is a natural regenerative farming practitioner, while explaining how a Miyawaki forest is created.

Subramanian added: "In such a forest, the saplings are planted close to each other. In one sq m area, you plant three to five saplings. These trees do not have much commercial value because they grow only in height and not much in girth. These forests not only improve soil quality but also help build a healthy water table. They also support a large biodiversity of microorganisms and animals."

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