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Kerala: Students plant sandalwood tree saplings

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KOCHI: The students of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (SSUS), Kalady, celebrated the International Day of Forests by planting sandalwood tree saplings on the campus on Monday. The planting drive was organized by the students of MA museology department. The theme for International Day of Forests 2022 is 'Forests and Sustainable Production and Consumption', and sandalwood is considered apt for agro-forestry and its cultivation is promoted by the central government.

Moreover, sandalwood is considered a royal tree and museology students often have to study about the use of sandalwood for furniture and architecture in heritage buildings and palaces in olden times. That's why the students decided to plant sandalwood saplings.

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Around 10 saplings were planted on the varsity premises and it will be nurtured by the students. SSUS vice-chancellor P V Narayanan inaugurated the programme by planting a sapling. The department has held a session on 'Forests and Sustainable Production and Consumption' after the planting drive and it was led by the department coordinator M Satyan. Also, Anas Nazar, a first MA museology student and eco-entrepreneur, delivered a speech on the importance of sandalwood in agro-forestry and the legal sides regarding its cultivation.

Nazar, who is into the business of organic substitute of soil for growing plants, said that many people are not aware of the commercial aspect of growing sandalwood tree and many are scared to plant those fearing legal actions. However, the amended rules in Kerala Forest Act in 2010 allow people to cut sandalwood in their land with the permission of the forest department on fulfilling certain conditions.

“The forest department will auction the sandalwood and the full amount after deducting certain amount for various charges will be given to the land owner. The complete process will be under the supervision of the forest department,” Nazar said.

Sandalwood plant is extensively cultivated in Maharashtra and Karnataka as part of agro-forestry. It is an important component of agro-forestry systems but many in Kerala are unaware of it.