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# Mass afforestation drive begins on degraded forest land near Coimbatore

March 06, 2024 08:35 pm | Updated 08:35 pm IST – COIMBATORE

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Coimbatore District Collector Kranthi Kumar Pati (fourth right) inaugurating the afforestation drive on a degraded forest land at Pillayarpuram near Madukkarai on Wednesday. | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

An afforestation drive that started on Wednesday aims to increase tree cover on 27 acres of degraded forest land near Madukkarai in Coimbatore district.

Coimbatore District Collector Kranthi Kumar Pati launched the exercise at the land at Pillayarpuram near Madukkarai, which will be implemented by the Forest Department - Government of Tamil Nadu, ZF Wind Power Coimbatore Private Limited, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and Kovai Kulangal Padhukappu Amaippu (KKPA).

Funded by ZF Wind Power Coimbatore Pvt. Ltd., and coordinated by KKPA, the afforestation drive is aimed at planting 27,000 saplings of native trees in 27 acres of land, which was given to the forest years ago by a private company under compensatory afforestation scheme.

The site was selected with the permission of the Forest Department and the project is implemented in association with Mattathukkad Village Forest Council.

Invasive and non-native varieties of flora in the area will be removed completely for the afforestation drive. Saplings of native trees that support birds and animals in the region will be planted in the area. Fence will be erected around the land to control grazing animals and outsiders. A natural pathway will be established for the maintenance of the forest land, construction of a storage facility and a watchtower.

KKPA coordinator R. Manikandan said the saplings would be irrigated using borewell and drip irrigation facilities. Contour bunds would be

created in the land to capture rainwater within the area to enhance soil moisture. Two small ponds would be created in the low-lying area of the land to harvest the surplus water and store it.

Marukkarai forest range officer R. Arun Kumar said the voluntary organisations would take care of the maintenance of saplings for three years.

R. Chandrasekaran, District Environmental Engineer, Coimbatore south; Deepak Pohekar, Executive Director and Plant Head; Sreenivas Naidu K., General Manager (HR); Sasikala Sam, General Manager (EHS); and Vivek C., Senior Engineer (EHS) from ZF Wind Power Coimbatore Private Limited, were present. Students from Sri Krishna Arts and Science College, Hindusthan College of Arts and Science, PSG College of Pharmacy volunteered for the afforestation drive on Wednesday.