



Spraying seeds from the sky to raise forests

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A city based technology start up has come up with an innovative idea of aerial seeding campaign as solution for the re-forestation challenge.

Marut Drones, which had earlier deployed drones successfully in agricultural operations and for delivery of vaccines, is now using them for greening large swathes of denuded forest lands through its 'Hara Bhara' initiative.

Film actor Rana Daggubati flagged off the first 'seedcopter'-- drone with seed balls-- on Friday, kicking off the campaign in Telangana. The first payload of 1.5 lakh seed balls was delivered in the KBR National Park in the city.

"Loss of vegetation occurs in vast tracts of forest areas every year, due to fire and other causes. Our aim is to accelerate the target of 33% green cover throughout the country by dispersal of seed balls in the inaccessible forest areas, using drones," explained Prem Kumar Vislawath, Founder and Chief Innovator of Marut Drones.

Seed balls contain a variety of seeds rolled within a ball of clay, together with organic manure and fertilizer. The balls, after being dispersed in a barren area, are expected to dissolve when it rains, and result in germination of the seeds.

Marut Drones has engaged the services of local people, self help groups and NGOs in preparation of seed balls, and identified the locations for dispersal with aid from the Forest department.

"We have been given 12,000 hectares of forest land in 12 districts by the Forest department, where we aim to fire a total of 50 lakh seed balls. We will monitor their growth for the coming 10 years, and record the change in greenery annually through satellite monitoring," Mr.Prem Kumar said.

Depending on the success rate in Telangana, he wishes to replicate the experiment throughout the country to achieve the desired levels of forest cover.

"We wish to plant one billion trees in the country by 2030 through drones," Mr.Prem Kumar said.

The entire operation is being done on pro bono basis, with no funding from government. Due permissions for use of drone technology have been obtained from the Information Technology, Electronics and Communications department.

Source:<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/telangana/hyderabad-based-start-up-uses-drones-to-plant-forests/article36781070.ece>