

West Bengal Forest Dept formally launches drive to plant over 3 crore saplings

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Kolkata, Jul 14 (PTI) The West Bengal Forest department on Tuesday formally launched the "Regreening Bengal" initiative to plant over three crore saplings in the state, to replenish the green cover damaged by cyclone Amphan.

State Forest minister Rajib Banerjee said on Tuesday that local unemployed people and day labourers will also be involved in the massive exercise across different blocks in urban and rural belts as part of 100 days project.

He said over three crore saplings will be planted in different blocks including Sunderbans by the Forest department.

The plantation drive will be held in pockets having forests, jungles and shrubs as well as in localities having little tree cover or those areas having suffered loss of trees in the cyclone.

An estimated 16,500 trees were uprooted in the cyclone in Kolkata alone while several lakhs were destroyed in districts, he said.

"Not solely regreening we wish to increase the green cover from what was in past," Banerjee said.

Meanwhile, the forest department started planting mangrove saplings at Dulki area in Sunderbans which had suffered serious losses in tree cover in cyclone Amphan.

Director Sunderbans Tiger Project Sudhirschandra Das said 5 crore mangroves will be planted across 11 blocks spread over 2,500 hectares.

The mangrove saplings were being planted along empty stretches of land on the side of rivers and creeks and in sparse pockets inside the main forest, he said.

The total exercise will be over in two months time and will employ 8.12 lakh man days giving employment opportunities to farm labourers and migrants who have returned to their native villages in South 24 Parganas district, he said.

Das said the Forest department and Sunderbans Tiger Project would also distribute 1.5 lakh coconut saplings along with mango, jackfruit saplings in the villages.

The Forest department has identified blocks like Gosaba, Patharpratima, among others for plantation.

Meanwhile, an organization WE_WILD on Tuesday announced planting one lakh mangrove saplings in the Sunderbans area involving around 50 local women.

"We will also be distributing 15,000 other tree saplings and ensure their maintenance and upkeep with the help of forest department and locals," Rathindranath Das said on behalf of the voluntary organization. PTI SUS COR RG RG

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