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TWO years after the unique afforestation project was launched in a patch of land at Kanakakunnu Palace, the land has now flourished into a mini-forest, with tall and lush-green trees which bear fruits and have medicinal properties. This has propelled the state tourism department to raise similar green covers at various tourist spots across the state. The tourism department has started planting saplings in 22 tourist destinations identified in 12 districts, excluding Idukki and Wayanad.

The Miyawaki forest model is being implemented at an estimated cost of Rs 5.75 crore. The planting of saplings is expected to be completed in two months. "The project aims to provide an afforestation model that involves micro forests and helps turn tourist spots into eco-friendly spaces. The project also aims to create awareness about afforestation among the general public," said P Balakiran, director of Kerala Tourism.

The Miyawaki forest model was recently inaugurated by Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran by planting a sapling at Shankhumukham beach, one of the tourist spots identified for the model. Malamel Para and Muttara Maruthimala in Kollam, Munambam beach in Ernakulam, Thottappally park and finish-



The Miyawaki forest at Kanakakunnu Palace Grounds | B P DEEPU



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A R Santhosh Lal, deputy director, tourism planning

ing point near boat jetty in Alappuzha, Kappad beach and Sarovaram bio-park in Kozhikode and Kanjirapuzha dam garden in Palakkad are the other spots identified for the project.

A concept introduced in the 1970s by ecologist and botanist Akira Miyawaki of Japan's Yokohama National University, the Miyawaki forest model aims to increase the earth's green cover by nurturing and planting native plant species in small patches of land. "The Mi-

yawaki model is being implemented in about five to 10 cents of land at various tourism spots. The specialty of the model is that it can grow and transform into lush green mini forests in about five to 10 years," said Balakiran. He added that the micro forest also helps minimise the effects of climate change and global warming, preserving biodiversity.

The technical consultant for the project is Nature's Green Guardian Foundation. "The purpose is to bring a forest-like ambience in tourist spots and educate tourists about the benefits of afforestation. The foundation will be responsible for maintaining the green cover and providing trees with essential nutrients for the first three years," said A R Santhosh Lal, deputy director, tourism planning.