

# **World Biggest Plantation Drive Done in UP 493 Cr Saplings Planted in 1 Day**

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In a bid to secure a place in the Guinness Book of World Records, a four-lakh strong workforce across Uttar Pradesh launched an aggressive plantation drive, and by the end of the day planted nearly 4.93 crore saplings. The deadline was 10:00 am Tuesday morning. Of 17 circles, only two, Agra and Lucknow, could not achieve their target on Monday.

A majority of those involved in the drive were MNREGA workers, while government officials, politicians, schoolchildren and forest department officials comprised the rest. The drive began at 10:00 am on Monday and continued till late in the evening.

A centralised command centre, set up at the forest department headquarters in Lucknow, kept track of the plantation figures pouring in from across the state. On Monday morning, apart from Samajwadi Party Supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and Kannauj MP Dimple Yadav planted a sapling in their 5 Kalidas Marg home, followed by more trees in Kannauj, and later in Kanpur Dehat. The CM also paid a visit to the command centre to monitor the drive.

Mukesh Kumar, chief conservator of forest for Western Zone that comprises two circles - Meerut and Saharanpur – which include 10 districts of UP West, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Baghpat, Bulandshahr, Noida, Ghaziabad, Saharanpur, Shivalik and Hapur, said, "It is a massive exercise for which the preparations began six months ago. The government had at that time communicated to the Guinness Book of World Records about its initiative. The Guinness office acknowledged the effort in 'official attempt' category. The government had roped in TERI (The Energy and Resource Institute) for carrying out carbon sequestration connected with the exercise. The institute also played active role in selection of sites and digging up pits for plantation. By March-end 90 per cent of the pits had already been dug up."

The forest officials also informed that seven crore saplings were raised in 950 nurseries across the state for the D-Day. Heavy logistics were employed to transport these to 6,166 sites earmarked on google maps for easy identification. The average size of each site was 7.5 hectares and also included some treacherous territories in the Shivalik range in Saharanpur district.

KPMG was also roped in as official auditors for this initiative by the UP government. The firm's zonal coordinator for Saharanpur and Agra division, Deepak Garg, told *TOI*, "Our job in this initiative is primarily focused on doing reality check on the five crore claim. We have one district coordinator and 50 adjudicators for each of the 86 district centres where the activity is taking place. We have our men on the ground who are involved in the data collection from over 6,000 plantation sites. Once the compilation of the data is complete, KPMG will send the report to the UP government.