# Project For Improvement of Himachal Pradesh Forest Ecosystems Management and Livelihoods (JICA Funded)

# Newsletter

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## CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Applauds the Efforts of Self-Help Groups



# If there is forest, we are

Himachal Pradesh is renowned across the country for its natural beauty, snow-clad mountains, pristine rivers and dense forests. Forests cover nearly two-thirds of the state's geographical area and play a vital role in protecting its biodiversity, water sources and ecological balance. This is why we say, “Forests are our life.” Forests are not merely a collection of trees and plants; they are also a source of livelihood for millions of people, provide clean air and fresh water, and serve as a safe habitat for wildlife. Trees such as deodar, kail, chir pine, oak and toon not only enhance the natural beauty of Himachal Pradesh but also play a significant role in mitigating the effects of climate change.

Today, challenges such as population growth, forest fires, illegal felling and climate change have made forest conservation more important than ever. Afforestation, conservation of natural forests, public participation and environmental awareness are the keys to securing a greener future for Himachal Pradesh. For the financial year 2026–27, the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department has set a target of planting 50 lakh saplings over an area of 7,000 to 8,000 hectares. Of this, approximately 4,000 hectares will be brought under plantation activities through the Rajiv Gandhi Van Samvardhan Yojana. Chinar and other species are being planted in accordance with the geographical conditions and climatic suitability of different districts of the state.

The Forest Department and the JICA Forestry Project have resolved to achieve **Mission-32 by 2030**, which aims to increase the state's green cover to 32 per cent. Excellent work has been undertaken across the state's forest divisions under the state government's flagship initiatives, including the Rajiv Gandhi Van Samvardhan Yojana, Mukhyamantri Van Vistar Yojana and Rajiv Gandhi Green Adoption Scheme.

I am delighted to share that on the occasion of World Environment Day on 5 June this year, Hon'ble Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu launched the plantation campaign in Shimla by planting a Chinar sapling. Subsequently, on 25 June, Hon'ble Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia, inaugurated the plantation campaign at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.
From 2018 to 2025, the JICA Forestry Project played a significant role in bringing about a green transformation across 22 forest divisions of the state by planting saplings of various species over an area of 8,343 hectares. As in previous years, the project will continue its efforts this year, through public participation and departmental initiatives, to achieve the targets set under Mission-32. Under the Mukhyamantri Van Vistar Yojana, the project successfully planted saplings of various species over 124 hectares last year.

***“Let us all pledge to plant more saplings every year, protect our forests from fires and pollution, and preserve this invaluable natural heritage of Himachal Pradesh for future generations. After all, only when our forests remain protected can our lives, environment and the future of Himachal Pradesh remain secure”***

**Dr. Sanjay Sood, IFS**
**Head of Forest Force and**
**Chief Project Director**

## World Environment Day:

# Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Launches the First Phase of Chinar Plantation



**RP Negi**
Media Specialist





**O**n the occasion of World Environment Day 2026, Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu launched the first phase of the Chinar plantation drive at his official residence, Oak Over.

During the event organised by the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department, the Chief Minister planted Chinar saplings at Oak Over and conveyed the message of sustaining the state's green revolution. He also distributed Chinar saplings among schoolchildren, encouraging them to take a pledge to protect the environment.

Earlier, PCCF (HoFF) Dr. Sanjay Sood warmly welcomed the Chief Minister by presenting him with a bouquet.



## Four Books on the Forest Department and Its Projects Released







On the occasion, Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu released four books published by the Forest Department. These included Van Bodh, a field handbook for frontline forest staff; Environmental Management and Regulations, authored by PCCF Dr. Sanjay Sood; Forestry Projects: Forest Conservation, Livelihood Improvement and Integrated Development, highlighting the outstanding work undertaken under the JICA, KfW and IDP projects; and Coffee Table Book on 75 Eco-Tourism Sites of Himachal Pradesh. Chief Minister Sukhu congratulated the Forest Department officials and the JICA Forestry Project management team on the successful publication of all four books.

# Chief Project Director Reviews Progress and Seeks Feedback During Kinnaur Visit







**RP Negi**
Media Specialist

**D**uring his three day visit to Kinnaur from 26 to 28 June 2026, PCCF (HoFF) and Chief Project Director of the JICA Forestry Project, Dr. Sanjay Sood, directed officials to expedite pending works under the Kinnaur Forest Division and ensure their timely completion.

Dr. Sood arrived in Reckong Peo on 26 June, where officers and employees of the Kinnaur Forest Division accorded him a warm welcome. On 28 June, he chaired a review meeting of the Forest Department and the project at Kalpa.

During the meeting, he directed officials to ensure effective implementation of key state government initiatives, including the Rajiv Gandhi Van Samvardhan Yojana, Mukhyamantri Van Vistar Yojana and Rajiv Gandhi Green Adoption Scheme.

Dr. Sood emphasised the need to accelerate the pace of the state's green revolution by undertaking large-scale plantation activities in Kinnaur this year. He said the Forest Department was playing a significant role in achieving the target of increasing the state's green cover to 32 per cent by 2030. To achieve this objective, all officers and forest personnel in the Kinnaur Forest Division must remain alert and committed to their responsibilities.

During the visit, Dr. Sood also sought feedback on activities being implemented in Kinnaur under the JICA Forestry Project. He appreciated the project's contribution to forest conservation and livelihood improvement and instructed all project staff to work proactively and deliver their responsibilities efficiently.

Among those present were Kinnaur Divisional Forest Officer Arvind Kumar, ACF Kinnaur Karn Kapoor, retired HPFS officer C.M. Sharma, SMS Kinnaur Radhika Negi, FTU coordinators and other project officers and employees.

# Rajiv Gandhi Green Adoption Scheme: MoUs Signed with Private Organisations





**Arvind Kapoor**
SMS, Kullu

The Himachal Pradesh Government has launched the Rajiv Gandhi Green Adoption Scheme to promote ecosystem restoration, increase green cover and encourage public participation in environmental conservation across the state.

The scheme provides an innovative opportunity for corporate entities, educational institutions, organisations and individual citizens to collaborate with the Forest Department and contribute to afforestation and the restoration of degraded forest areas.

As part of this initiative, the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with two private organisations, Red Apple and Paradise Chateau, in Kullu on 22 June 2026. The agreements were signed in the presence of PCCF (HoFF) and Chief Project Director of the JICA Forestry Project, Dr. Sanjay Sood, and Conservator of Forests, Kullu, Sandeep Sharma.

Dr. Sanjay Sood said that eligible organisations under the scheme could adopt forest areas identified by the Forest Department and undertake plantation, ecological restoration and maintenance activities in accordance with the department's prescribed technical guidelines.

The initiative aims to conserve biodiversity, strengthen resilience to climate change, promote soil and water conservation, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for local communities.

He added that the scheme had been designed to encourage investment in environmental conservation under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), while ensuring scientific planning, regular monitoring and the long-term sustainability of plantation activities.

The ownership and management of adopted forest areas will remain with the state government, and all activities will be carried out under the supervision and monitoring of the Forest Department.

Dr. Sood reiterated the state government's commitment to building an environmentally rich and greener Himachal Pradesh. He expressed confidence that the scheme would prove to be a milestone in environmental conservation through public participation and collaboration with various organisations.

On the occasion, Dr. Sood also visited Nature Park, Babeli, and planted a Chinar sapling.

# CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu Applauds the Efforts of Self-Help Groups





**Ashutosh Pathak**
SMS, Wildlife Spiti

**O**n 15th October evening, during the Sarkar Gaon Ke Dwar programme organised at Ladaracha Ground, the Chief Minister visited a stall set up by the JICA Forestry Project. Women from six self-help groups associated with the project were delighted to interact with him.

The Chief Minister appreciated the natural and chemical-free products displayed for sale and exhibition. He particularly praised the efforts of women engaged in producing Chharma-based products, which are rich in Vitamin C, and handmade carpets.

He commended the women for their hard work and said that members of self-help groups were making significant contributions to livelihood improvement and economic self-reliance.

Lahaul-Spiti MLA Anuradha Rana, ACF Wildlife Spiti Chaman Lal Thakur, JICA Forestry Project Subject Matter Specialist for Wildlife, Spiti, Ashutosh Pathak, FTU Coordinator Kaza Meenakshi Bodh, and other Forest Department and project officials and employees were also present.






# Him Tradition Products Make a Mark at the International Kullu Dussehra Festival







**RP Negi**
Media Specialist

**T**he Him Tradition brand and organic products of the JICA Forestry Project attracted considerable attention during the International Kullu Dussehra Festival, held from 21 to 27 October 2026.

On 21st October, during the inauguration of the festival, Kullu Deputy Commissioner Dr. Amit Sharma inspected the exhibition and sales stall set up by the JICA Forestry Project. He appreciated the traditional and organic products displayed at the stall and emphasised the growing need to promote organic products in today's world. He also congratulated the JICA Forestry Project and the associated self-help groups for their efforts.

Products prepared by various self-help groups under the Parvati Forest Division were displayed for sale and exhibition during the week-long festival.

DCF Parvati Sarthak Parashar said that products made by self-help groups associated with the project were regularly displayed and sold at festivals organised across the state. Following the same approach, traditional and chemical-free products were made available to visitors at Kullu Dussehra.

The products included pahari rajma, maize flour, honey, ghee, pickles, Sea buckthorn, sepu badi, walnuts and kodo millet flour.

According to DCF Parvati, products from 30 self-help groups were displayed at the festival. On the opening day, a large number of visitors gathered to purchase products made by self-help groups associated with the Wildlife Kullu, Parvati and Lahaul forest divisions.

# Tourists Flock to Traditional Attire and Chemical-free products At Ridge











**T**raditional, natural and chemical free products prepared by self-help groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project emerged as a popular choice among local residents and tourists visiting the Ridge in Shimla, popularly known as the Queen of Hills.

On 8 October 2026, the concluding day of Wildlife Week, stalls were set up at the Ridge to display and sell products prepared by self-help groups from the Kinnaur, Banjar, Shimla, Rohru and Chopal forest divisions.

Principal Secretary (Forests) M. Sudha Devi inspected all the stalls and appreciated the efforts of the self-help groups associated with the JICA Forestry Project. She observed that these groups were producing high-quality goods and improving their livelihoods through their sale.

Appreciating women who had travelled from remote regions such as Lahaul and Kinnaur, she said they were making meaningful contributions to their household economies by marketing chemical-free products.

M. Sudha Devi noted the growing demand for a wide range of traditional and natural products, including Chharma from Lahaul; traditional Kinnauri garments; desi ghee; locally produced honey; pickles; Kinnauri rajma; red rice; kodra millet flour; warm socks; pine-needle products; and seera-badi.

Local residents and tourists turned out in large numbers to purchase these products, which were available at competitive prices and offered a chemical-free alternative to conventional market goods.

The two-day exhibition and sales event recorded an encouraging total sale of ₹1,35,160, reflecting the growing popularity of traditional, natural and chemical-free products prepared by the project's self-help groups.

# The Project in Media

Hindustan Times

## HP: Japan-backed forestry project aiding revival of endangered medicinal plants

Shailee Dogra
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**SHIMLA :** With a bid to revive endangered medicinal plants and promote their scientific cultivation, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) forestry project in Himachal Pradesh, said an official spokesperson.

Special focus has been given on "Picrorhiza kurroa", locally known as Kadu or Kutki, a medicinal plant on verge of extinction owing to unscientific extraction by local traders. The plant's roots are used for medicinal preparation.

Under the initiative, rural communities are being encouraged to take up medicinal plant farming with support from village forest development committees and self-help groups formed under the project. The spokesperson informed that up to the financial year 2025-26, around 1.62 million Kadu saplings have been planted across various forest divisions in the state, marking a significant conservation and livelihood milestone.

Owing to its limited distribution in the western Himalayas, small populations, and high



Up to financial year 2025-26, around 1.62 million Kadu saplings have been planted across various forest divisions in the state. HT

included among the 37 top-priority plant species identified for conservation and cultivation. Its farming can provide an alternative source of income as well as generate self-employment opportunities. At present, Kadu is fetching a price of ₹2,000 to ₹5,000 per kilogram in local markets.

Locals highly value Kadu as it is used for treating stomach ailments and high fever. It is also used in the treatment of scorpion stings, blood pressure, intestinal pain, eye disorders, bile-related diseases, and sore throat. It is reported that medical practitioners in Nepal and Tibetan medicine use its rhi-

fever.

An official associated with the project said that cultivation of this medicinal plant is completely chemical-free and does not harm water sources. Around 1,00,000 saplings in Taranda and Nigani areas of Kinnaur Forest Division, 2,20,000 in Baga Sarahan and Sarga, and 3,00,000 in Sharsha under Ani Forest Division have been planted along with 1,75,000 saplings in Mati Kochar of Kullu Forest Division; 4,00,000 in Dodra-Kwar; 3,00,000 in Khashdhar under Rohru forest division; 1,70,000 in Bamta; 3,60,000 in Sarahan under Chopal Forest Division and 90,000 saplings in Sainj area

Cultivation of Chirayata another medicinal plant rich i therapeutic properties, is also being promoted under th project. Currently, Chirayata i selling at ₹300 to ₹500 per kilo gram.

The JICA forestry project i carrying out work to promot medicinal plant cultivation i tribal district Kinnaur and fores divisions of Ani, Rohru, Chopa and Kullu. "The JICA forestry project is playing an importan role in promoting the cultivation of the endangered medicina plant Kadu in the state. From th financial year 2024 to 2026, 1.6 million Kadu saplings have bee planted across six forest divi sions. Positive results will b seen in the coming years," Dr Si Kapta, director, Jadi-Buti Cell JICA forestry project, said. "Th demand for natural products i increasing. This is a rare plan and it was earlier found at hig altitudes where the tree line use to end. So through JICA we hav been provided nurseries an now we have started plantatio This promises high return con sidering the demand which no just help in revival of the specie but also financial independenc of the cultivators," shared Aja Negi of village forest develop

## Himachal forest Dept partners with pvt firms to restore green cover

OUR CORRESPONDENT
Kullu, Updated At : 07:16 AM Jun 24, 2026 IST



Forest Department officials in Kullu.

## JICA Forestry Project empowering state's rural women, says MLA Kamlesh Thakur

OUR CORRESPONDENT

DHARAMSALA, MARCH 8

Today, women associated with the JICA Forestry Project are becoming an example of empowerment, said MLA Kamlesh Thakur during an event organised at Bachhat Bhawan in Dehra on the occasion of International Women's Day. Thakur patted the back of the hardworking women of JICA across the state. Addressing the gathering, she said that today the women of Himachal Pradesh had become empowered. They were competing well with men. She said the state government had launched several important schemes for women, which were now benefiting them.

Thakur interacted online with the women from remote areas associated with the project and directly with the women who were attending the event. Earlier, chief project director Dr Sanjay Sood welcomed the chief guest. He said that by joining the forestry project, the women of rural areas of the state were strengthening their economy by improving their livelihood. Dr Meenakshi Sood, Professor and Academic Expert Advisor



MLA Kamlesh Thakur along with state forest chief Dr Sanjay Sood at Dehra on Sunday.

of National Institute of Technical Teachers and Research, Chandigarh, also addressed the women present at the event.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, stalls were set up to exhibit and sell products made by self-help groups and MLA Kamlesh Thakur expressed appreciation. On this occasion, MLA Thakur honoured women from self-help groups doing excellent work under the Forest Divisions of Dehra, Dharamsala, Nurpur and Palampur. Self-help groups from 18 other forest divisions were honoured online.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the JICA Forestry Project also organised programmes at all forest division levels, which were chaired by the respective forest division officers.

On this occasion, CF Hamirpur Nishant Mandhotra, CF Dharamsala Basu Kaushal, Project Director Shrestha Nand Sharma, Forest Divisional Officer Dehra Sunny Verma and a large number of women were present.

## Himachal aiming for 32% forest cover by 2030: Sukhu

HT Correspondent
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**SHIMLA :** Himachal Pradesh government has set a target of increasing the state's forest cover to 32% by 2030, said chief minister (CM) Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday.

The CM was speaking to the media after planting a Chinar sapling at his official residence Oak Over on World Environment Day. At present Himachal's forest cover stands at 29.5%, as per data.

"Planting trees alone is not enough; protecting and ensuring their survival is equally important," Sukhu said while outlining the state's long-term afforestation strategy. The CM said nearly 68% of state's geographical area is classified as forest land, while around 28% is under dense forest cover. "State government has set a target to increase it to 32%."

**Governor for collective action for environment**

Governor Kavinder Gupta flagged off a Mini Marathon – on the theme "Clean Environment



Himachal Pradesh governor Kavinder Gupta flags off mini- marathon on World Environment Day on the Ridge, in Shimla on Friday. ANI

and Chitta-Free Life" from The Ridge Ground. The event was jointly organised by the Himachal Pradesh Police, department of environment, science, technology and climate change, and the census directorate, Himachal Pradesh.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor said, "Development cannot be accepted at the cost of the environment. While we often cut through mountains and rivers in pursuit of development, these actions can eventually become harmful to us. Therefore, it is essential that we protect and conserve our environment. Environmental protection and a drug-free society are the foundations of a better future."

# JICA Initiatives in Himachal Pradesh Applauded by Other States: Experiences Shared

**Experts from Five States Participate in a Two-Day Workshop Held in Dharamshala from 5th to 7th September 2026**













**FOR DETAILED INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT**


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