



Katra, Mata Vaishno Devi shrine township gets massive afforestation

Jammu, Nov 1 To sustain the ecology and the air quality in Katra township of Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district where nearly 100 million devotees come annually to pay obeisance at the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, a Mumbai-based social organisation has undertaken a massive afforestation campaign.

In a statement shared with IANS on Wednesday, the social organisation Grow-Trees.com said, "Katra, the sacred town in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district where the much-revered Vaishno Devi Temple is located, will now breathe easier with the plantation of 25,000 trees by social organisation Grow-Trees.com.

"These trees on maturity will combat air pollution and replenish the biodiversity in a town which attracted over 91.25 lakh devotees last year. This was noted to be the highest number since the launch of the Online Individual Yatri Registration in 2013.

“The increasing inflow of tourists has also triggered a demand for accommodation facilities around Vaishno Devi and has had an adverse impact on ecology. Since religious locations account for more than 60 per cent of India's tourism as per a study by Hotelier India, the big question is, can we not blend environmental concerns with the needs of the tourists.”

Pradip Shah, Co-Founder, Grow-Trees.com said, "Eco-friendly tourism is the need of the hour especially in holy places like Katra. We need to manage the tourist inflow in such a way that it does not impact the environment and we must actively reforest areas that have lost tree cover. Our project 'Trees for Shri Mata Vaishno Devi' aims to do just that by planting over 25,000 trees”.

Expanding on the project, Shah said, "We are focused on planting a diverse range of local tree species, from medicinal plants to ornamental ones to promote biodiversity. It will have a multipronged impact on the environment and also support local communities with long-term livelihood options by involving them in preparing saplings, plantation as well as maintenance activities”.

The Katra project also promises to improve air quality as trees act as natural carbon sinks.

"The project also aids in recharging groundwater, regulating the water cycle, and enhancing water quality, which will bring substantial benefits to the local communities”,