



massive tree plantation to protect Kashmir's rare hangul species

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HIGHLIGHTS

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Srinagar: In order to protect the fragile environment of Kashmir's rare stag species known as the 'Hangul' a social enterprise has decided to plant over 1, 25,000 plants in the habitat of this protected animal.

As the after-effects of climate change are adversely affecting not only the environment but, also the rare and distinct wildlife in the Valley of Kashmir, there is an urgent need for intervention.

A social enterprise, Grow-trees.com has come forward to plant over 1,25,000 trees of various species in the habitat of the Hangul.

Hangul is a subspecies of the Central Asian red deer found in the dense riverine forests of the



He said that in response to the situation and to raise awareness about the need for Hangul conservation, the social enterprise Grow-trees.com, actively involved in afforestation projects in the country, has initiated the 'Trees for Hanguls' project.

"This project aims to create a lasting and meaningful impact, focusing on the area around Pampore, in the periphery of the Dachigam National Park, and serves multiple purposes," he said.

Shah said that by planting trees, the programme works towards restoring the Hanguls' habitat, and as these trees mature, they offer vital ecological benefits such as carbon sequestration, a sustainable water supply, and a healthy source of nutrition for the Hanguls. Afforestation also helps to fight climate change.

"Studies indicate that human activities are among the major factors contributing to the decline in the Hangul population," Shah said.

He said that rising pollution, poaching, habitat fragmentation due to land use and climate change have had adverse effects on the ecosystem.

"Planting trees is an effective measure to counteract these threats," he said.

He said that through the 'Trees for Hanguls' project, we aim to enhance the Hangul habitat by restoring ecosystems, providing essential ecological services, and fostering community engagement in conservation efforts.

Following a landscape-level conservation planning model, the agency is implementing a strategic mix of coniferous and broadleaf species, such as Kail (*Pinus wallichiana*) and Apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*), to serve as a valuable food source for the Hanguls. Additionally, Cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*) and Deodar Cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) have been included to provide ample shade and shelter. The project also features the planting of Apples (*Malus pumila/domestica*), Pears (*Pyrus communis L.*), Quince (*Cydonia oblonga*), and Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), contributing to the social impact by offering various benefits to the villagers residing around the planting site.

The greatest advantage of the 'Trees for Hanguls' is that the public can become a part of this initiative by gifting or purchasing a tree for Rs 85 through www.grow-trees.com.

"Once the trees reach maturity, the project will play a pivotal role in enhancing the Hangul habitat and fostering biodiversity within the ecosystem," Shah added.

