

INTERNATIONAL THE NEWS

Extensive community support for tree plantation campaign

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By our correspondent

Karachi

Local communities in three districts of Sindh planted 120,000 trees during the National Plantation Campaign observed in the country on Tuesday. This community plantation initiative was supported by the Indus for All Programme of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Pakistan, in Thatta, Shaheed Benazirabad (formerly Nawabshah) and Sanghar districts of Sindh. More than 30 local NGOs, community-based organisations and 10 schools took part in the campaign, revealed a statement issued on Tuesday.

The Programme's priority sites were located in Keti Bunder and Keenjhar Lake in Thatta, Pai Forest in Shaheed Benazirabad and Chotiari Reservoir in Sanghar. These sites represent the significant ecosystem in the Indus eco region such as mangroves and riverine forests, freshwater and brackish lakes and rangelands.

The Programme involves local communities to safeguard and improve the dwindling conditions of natural resources like forests, fisheries and wildlife species. By building their capacities and enhancing their participation in decision-making, the Indus for All Programme intends to make communities the stewards of their resources. The Programme endeavours to inculcate a sense of ownership and self-reliance among local communities so that their dependence can be reduced and they could take action on a self-help basis.

An overwhelming response and participation by the local communities in the national plantation campaign was truly an example of self-help development initiatives. School children and youth groups also took part in the campaign in which three schools of The Citizens Foundation in Keti Bunder planted 2,000 Neem trees on their respective campuses and about 6,000 trees were planted by various private and government schools in Shaheed Benazirabad, Sanghar and Thatta. In Keti Bunder the communities planted 35,000 mangrove plants on about 32 acres of land in Hajamro Creek.

The initiative, on one hand, will be helpful in stabilising the coastline and, on the other, will be a source of livelihood. Similarly, in Thatta the communities of four villages planted 10,000 trees of *Cornynocarpus*, *Eucalyptus*, and *Neem* around Keenjhar Lake. This plantation was expected to be of great help to improve the environment around Keenjhar Lake.

In Sanghar 47,000 plants of *Acacia*, *Eucalyptus* and *Neem* trees were planted on 46 acres of land in 11 villages. In Shaheed Benazirabad 25,000 of *Acacia* and *Neem* were planted in Pai Forest with the help of local community-based organisations and school children.

Thousands of local people especially members of youth organisations enthusiastically participated in the event. Representatives of the respective district governments and other stakeholders witnessed the campaign and extended their support to the community organisations.