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on the occasion of last M

THIS ORGANISATION IS ON A MISSION TO RECHARGE GROUNDWATER

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@ Karwar

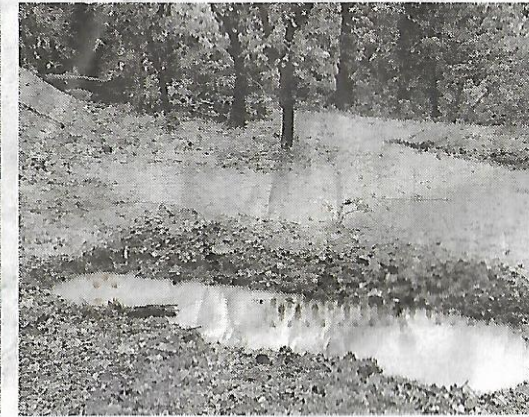
WITH an aim to increase groundwater table and enhance forest patches, a Sirsi-based organisation has dug up more than 10,000 rainwater harvesting pits in Sirsi, Siddapur and Yellapur taluks of Uttara Kannada district in the last one-and-a-half-years.

Like plains of Karnataka, Malnad taluks in the district are also facing severe water scarcity for the last two summers. The groundwater level has also depleted in heavy rainfall-receiving areas like Sirsi, Siddapur and Yellapur. Hence, the district administration had to supply water through tankers to people in these areas. Realising the seriousness of water scarcity, many organisations in Sirsi have started rainwater harvesting.

Manuvikasa, an organisation from Sirsi, has dug up over 10,000 rainwater harvest-



Rainwater harvesting pits dug up in leaf forests of Yellapur in Uttara Kannada district | EXPRESS



ing pits in leaf forests (Soppina Gudda) and 200 such big pits in social forests. Along with water conservation, the organisation is also promoting Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) among farmers, who are dependent on these leaf forest areas.

Planting of saplings of kokum, ashoka and others, which are income-oriented,

are being promoted in these leaf forests. The farmers are also showing interest to plant these saplings, which will give fruits and other products, which will ultimately help them generate income after a couple of years. The Forest Department and other organisations have been providing farmers with these saplings, which are being planted near

rainwater harvesting units.

Ganapati Bhat of Manuvikasa said the rainwater harvesting pits also benefit farmers, besides recharging the ground water table. "Rainwater harvesting will help increase the groundwater level. On the edges of these pits, saplings are being planted, which will increase green cover and bring income to farm-

ers," he noted.

"As of now, more than 10,000 pits have been dug up and we have covered green patches in 4,000 hectares area of leaf forests. The farmers in these areas are also showing interest to plant saplings and some of them are coming up with their own seedlings and planting them, which is a positive sign," he added.

Recharge pits

- Small pits measuring 8-ft-long and 3-ft-wide and 2.5 ft-deep are being dug up
- Even if people or animals fall in the pit, they can easily climb up
- Apart from these small pits, big pits of 70-ft-long, 60-ft-wide and 8-ft-deep are dug up on slopes

Unique leaf forests

- An unique concept of leaf forests exists only in the ghats of Uttara Kannada district. These patches are like social forests
- Farmers, who cultivate near forest areas, can collect green fodder from these forests for their cattle
- Farmers also collect forest by-products and mud for their agriculture needs