

CITY EXPRESS

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ARTY FACTS

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30,000 acres of tree cover being lost every day: Maneka

Union Minister decries indiscriminate tree felling carried out by government agencies

Express News Service

Chennai: "We lose about 30,000 acres of tree cover on a daily basis," said Maneka Gandhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development. She decried the indiscriminate amount of tree felling carried out by government agencies, and said that such activities remained unmonitored. "It is scary. Our children will soon be growing up in a world without trees," she said.

Maneka was in the city for the release of the book 'Sacred Plants of India' compiled by Nanditha Krishna, director, C P Ramaswamy Environmental Education Centre (CPR EEC), and M Amirthalingham, environmental education officer with the CPR EEC, on Saturday.

She elaborated on the importance of certain plant species, calling them sacred not just for their mythological significance, but also for medical purposes. "Keeping one tulsi leaf beneath your tongue when you sleep will make you not feel thirsty in the



Maneka Gandhi at the launch of the book 'Sacred Plants of India' | A RAJA CHIDAMBARAM

middle of the night," she said. She recounted her experience during the visit to the Federation of Damanhur, an eco-village in Northern Italy, and said that the community members there were working on two important scientific experiments that could benefit India as well. "They are trying to generate

meat by multiplying cells so that no animal is killed in the process. They have also developed a machine which when hooked onto plants, can transmit signals and tones that enable us to hear conversation between plants," she said.

Nanditha Krishna spoke about her experience of

writing the book. She said that she referred Hindu mythological texts that had accurate information about rare species of plants and trees. "If you look at the Ramayana, Valmiki describes ancient trees to perfection. This helped me compile the list for the book easily," she said. "I would

The current rate of deforestation is scary. Our children will soon be growing up in a world without trees — Maneka Gandhi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development

go so far as to say that Valmiki was the world's first true botanist in this regard," she added.

Maneka also said that the State governments should take the initiative to set up Nirbhaya Care Centres. The Centre is ready to begin the process provided the states respond positively, she said. "The aim is to set up Nirbhaya Care Centres in every district of every State. We are waiting for the respective state government's response so as to begin work," she added.