

Flora & Fauna

Every UG student has to plant sapling on campus, says UGC

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BENGALURU: Undergraduate students across 706 universities of India have a new assignment in hand - to plant a sapling each on their college campuses. Not just that, they'll have to compulsorily pursue a six-month course in environmental studies. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has directed vice-chancellors of all universities and higher educational institutions to implement this move with immediate effect. The UGC's March 30 circular follows a directive from the Supreme Court's National Green Tribunal (NGT). While many institutions have welcomed the initiative, the moot question is do campuses have that kind of space to accommodate so many saplings. Dr K S Ravindranath, vice-chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS), said that while it's good to encourage

students to be green conscious, RGUHS will need to consult its affiliated colleges to check if there is enough space. "We'll hold a meeting with the colleges to discuss how to frame the syllabus for environmental studies as RGUHS already offers different programmes in health sciences," he said. Stating that the Reva University campus is already green, vice-chancellor VG Talawar said, "Making every student plant a sapling on campus could be difficult due to space crunch. Also, ever since the inception of RU, we have been offering a course on environmental studies." But not all have welcomed the go-green drive. A vice-chancellor of a prominent university who preferred anonymity said if the UGC begins directing varsities to offer courses on different issues like this, it'll soon burden students. "Every year, we conduct various programmes on environment-

related issues. To have it as a course might become a burden," he added. Bangalore University has been offering environmental studies as a course since last year, and its students have been planting saplings at its Jnana Bharathi campus. Varsity registrar K K Seethamma said the problem is that many BU-affiliated colleges don't have the required space to allow its students to plant saplings. "The university has decided to allow students of such colleges to carry out the plantation drive on BU campus instead," he said.

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