

**Theme Talk**

**Reforestation through Private-Public Partnerships**

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Mangrove ecosystems are the focus of much observation and study, given their critical role as the foundation of land formation as well as a natural barrier against sea erosion. Marine life thrives in this unique habitat that is a nesting ground for invertebrates and birds, as well as home to various types of reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Coastal communities depend on mangrove environments for commercial activities including fisheries and tourism. However, they are also one of the most seriously endangered ecosystems due to coastal development activities. Sustainable management of this complex ecosystem is of paramount importance in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change on all living beings on Earth. Tokyo Cement Group has initiated the Mangrove Reforestation Project around bay of Trincomalee in collaboration with Sri Lanka Navy and the fishing communities. Tokyo Cement Mangrove conservation project targets planting 8,000 new saplings of native mangrove species every year. Since its inception in 2012, the project has so far planted over 40,000 saplings raised at the plant nursery within the Trincomalee factory premises. Marking an important milestone in this journey, Tokyo Cement partnered the Forest Department of Sri Lanka, to set up forest nurseries at Trincomalee and Mahiyangana. Under this project, each nursery will produce 10,000 native forest tree plants per year, to be planted island wide as part of the Forest Department's National Reforestation Programs. The project aims to conserve valuable indigenous tree species both as to replenish our natural forest cover while educating future generations of our rich biodiversity. The plants will also be used in Urban Forestry Programs carried out by local authorities to create healthy living environment in cities. In addition to reforestation efforts, the company also undertook an environmental awareness campaign targeting the general public with signs displaying slogans and messages about simple acts of conservation and everyday habits we should be mindful of in order to protect the environment.

**Keywords:** Mangrove Ecosystems, Reforestation, Indigenous tree species, Private-public partnerships