

'Nurture nature, not religion'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Sept 23: In an apparent reference to the ongoing controversy about the existence of Lord Ram and the consequent 'fatwa' issued against him, Chief Minister M Karunanidhi on Sunday urged the public to protect nature instead of propagating religion during the launch of an initiative by the Isha Foundation to plant 25 million saplings here.

"Spreading religion will only lead to exhortations to behead or cut a person's limbs and tongue, whereas planting trees will benefit the people and help future generations," he said.

Stating that he had love and respect for religious stalwarts like the late Kundrakudi Adigalar, his successor, the junior pontiff and Isha founder Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev, the rationalist Chief Minister pointed out that these leaders were concerned about the devel-

opment of the Tamil society. The government is observing a week for tree planting and in order to create an impact, all concerned should come together.

"Other cities like New Delhi and Bangalore have a good green cover, whereas in Chennai we have advertisement hoardings and banners that hamper the growth of trees. The administration is concerned about this. However, the situation will not change with efforts just by the Government. The officials, owners of hoardings, who obtained stay orders from the courts and the judiciary, which granted the requests, should be equally concerned about the protection of the environment," he added.

Speaking earlier, Rajya Sabha MP Kanimozhi, former CBI director D R Karthikeyan, artiste Sudha Ragunathan and State ministers participated in the function.



Chief Minister Karunanidhi launching Isha Foundation's 25 million tree planting initiative during the foundation's Gramostavam, held in the city on Sunday. Isha founder Jaggi Vasudev, Information Minister Parithi Ilamvazhuthi and MP Kanimozhi are also seen — Express