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Un-nailing of trees on Earth Day

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KOLKATA: Vision Prabaho, the eco-conservation-cum- awareness forum of Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, observed Earth Day on Monday with its program for “Un-nailing Trees”. Volunteers of the group went around the campus armed with pliers to pull out nails, brackets, iron rods, wires and screws from tree trunks. This was their attempt to prolong the life span of the trees. Each nail or protrusion hammered into trees interrupt the circulation of water, sugars and other valuable nutrients, thereby damaging them. Not surprisingly, the area surrounding the nails or bits of metals become dark and stops growing.

Within an hour, the foreign objects extricated from the barks of trees along the road facing the Tata Sports Complex had filled a whole bag.

Several students on their way back from class asked the volunteers what they were doing. “We use the nails to hang sponsorship ads. Do they need to be pulled out?” asked some of them. A volunteer of Vision Prabaho said, “We had to explain to them how the metals harm the plants. None of us is really conscious of the harm we are doing with our simple actions.”

The movement for ‘un-nailing trees’ has gathered storm in several cities in India since 2016. Citizens and civic activists in

Mumbai, Pune and Bengaluru have removed posters and nails from trees in concerted drives. Vision Prabaho hopes to raise awareness on this matter in the IIT Kharagpur campus.

The group has been quite active since it was formed under the aegis of the Technology Students' Gymkhana last year. Prof. William Kumar Mohanty, President, Technology Students' Gymkhana, said, "Vision Prabaho has taken up a big responsibility and within a year has been able to influence a lot of people with their zeal."

The group has also been imparting lessons in eco-conservatism to school children for the past few months. Formed mostly of research scholars, Vision Prabaho plans to teach children how to generate vermicompost from kitchen waste and use it for organic farming. Vision Prabaho has also been campaigning steadfastly against the use of plastic bags on campus. In the coming days, the group hopes to begin a movement against the use of thermocol.