



Yoor locals unite to save greenery

Sunday, 20 December 2015 - 08:05am IST | Agency: DNA | Padmaja Sinha

A local said, 'The developer has illegally put a concrete wall and enclosed a huge section of Yoor, violating several Acts. The forest is a protected area, but Gada wants to build a private resort there.'



Locals of Patonepad and Jambhulpada at Yoor have come together for a green cause and sought help of joint commissioner VV Lakshminarayana to help them in protecting the nature and register complaints against the developer, who allegedly encroached wide portion of the forest land.

They approached an NGO – Yoor Environmental Society (YES) – to help them in taking up the matter. Apporva Agwan, a member from YES, said, "For the the first time, tribals felt the threat and have come together for a cause. Not only protected trees from the area have been razed, but also tribals' access to the forest area, who have been using it for 50-60 years, has been blocked with recently done fencing."

Earlier, the NGO had requested forest officials to install CCTVs at selected locations, to keep a check on illegal activities inside the forest. Meanwhile, joint CP had instructed Vartak Nagar ACP to look into the matter, visit the site personally and look into details. A case has been filed against the developer Suresh Gada of Supreme Dream real estate.

A local said, 'The developer has illegally put a concrete wall and enclosed a huge section of Yoor, violating several Acts. The forest is a protected area, but Gada wants to build a private resort there.'

Aditya Salekar, a member of YES, said, "The concrete wall has blocked the path of schoolkids. They had earlier complained about it, but action was initiated only after the tehsildar intervened. Gada regularly threatens the localites and makes derogatory remarks."

It has been over a month, since Gada has been carrying out the work. This is not possible unless he gets support from forest officials. In fact, we had taken efforts in procuring the old map from the tehsildar office. As per the markings of the map, the entire area has been encroached by him. It is strange that forest officials have not bothered to check the map. Gada has been given plot No12/2, but he has encroached other areas," added the member from YES.

Agwan said, "For the past one month, the developer has been dumping concrete on the forest land, which is destroying the microbial flora structure of the soil. The forest area of Sanjay Gandhi National park has also been destroyed."

Renowned and Melghat fame tribal activist, Dr Smita Kolhe of Bairagad, is actively following up the issue and has offered her whole-hearted support, including democratic and non-violent protests. Rohit Joshi, another member from YES, said, "We will pursue the matter actively. They are plundering the protected areas and also felling the trees, hence, action must be taken. Now, cops too, are actively supporting the matter."

Sanjay Waghmode, range forest officer, though did not mention anything about procuring the old map and taking action, said, "We will pursue the matter and ensure proper action." The locals however, have hinted to agitation, if the stay is lifted and illegal activity continues.