

Tree park at Turahalli minor forest opposed by activists

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BENGALURU

THE State government's proposal to set up a tree park in Turahalli minor forest has snowballed into a huge protest with citizens protesting the move. In a letter to the Additional Chief Secretary (forest, ecology and environment) the president of Project Vruksha Foundation and Bengaluru Biodiversity Board member Vijay Nishanth stated that the project is in contravention of Forest Conservation Act. "It is disheartening to note that the State forest department itself has started the process to destroy the remaining last blocks of forests and convert it into a mega tree park at Turahalli Minor Forests. As everybody is aware, this is an abode to more than 120 species of birds, many species of small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies to bees and wasps. Also, the sightings of spotted deer and wild boar are frequent," the letter read. Nishanth apprised the additional chief secretary that heavy machinery is being used to destroy the secondary forests thereby, violating the condition in the approved Working Plan and also the Supreme Court directions. "The Constitution has neither provided the State the ownership of the resources of the environment or forests. Their position is that of a trustee who is required to protect and improve these resources for the public at large. Moreover, the Forest Conserva-



tion Act requires the state agencies to ensure forest diversion to non-forest activities is only an exception rather than the norm as before, and in any decision relating to diversion of forest to non-forest purpose," Nishanth said. In a list of guidelines, signed by H S Bhagyalakshmi, Deputy Secretary to Government, Forest, Ecology & Environment Department, for the setting up of tree park it is clarified that the Tree-Park scheme is apt to protect forest land. "Even though protection of Forest land is desirable, achieving the same through the Tree-Park Scheme, in general, is not ap-

propriate," the guideline quoted. The further quote taken from the guidelines with respect to the size of the land says, "Forest lands, when available, are in large parcels of land. This leads to the temptation for converting entire available land as Tree-Park. It should be understood that only 10-20 Ha of the area is utilized effectively in a TreePark. Thus Tree-Park should ideally be between 5 to 15 Ha. However, if land is available inside the city, Tree-Park can be on one Ha also." Nishanth in his letter has mentioned an excerpt of Lakshman Rao Committee report on Lakes and Tanks of Bengaluru wherein

he vouched for the creation of tree parks in disused and dried-up lakes. "There are a number of lakes which have dried and are on the verge of getting grabbed or have been turned into garbage dump yards. These spaces could be utilized for the setting up of tree parks. There are legal implications. It is highly objectionable to create these tree parks in the last remaining vestiges of degraded forests. And, that too, by pushing people into these forests to threaten the already endangered and remaining flora and fauna in the urban setup," Nishanth said.

Govt not raising fuel, LPG prices to fill its coffers: Suresh

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CHAMARAJANAGAR

MINISTER for primary and secondary education, Suresh Kumar said that the intention of the government is not to raise the fuel and LPG prices to fill its coffers. He said that nobody speaks when the prices of fuel and coming gas go down. "The Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has said that the price would come down," he said.

Reacting to Umesh Katti's statement on the cancellation of BPL cards for those possessing television, fridge and vehicles, Kumar said it was important to understand the basis of the statement.

"I will speak with him. Television is common even in the poor families. It's common to have television sets in one's home. Even the child from the poorest family watches DD Chandana channel to attend classes and learn," Kumar said. Katti said that there are parameters for possessing a BPL card which include that they should not have more than five acres of land, motorcycle, TV or fridge. He said that those Rs 1.20 lakh annually should not use BPL cards and has to return it before March 31.



52 WEEKS OF TRAINING FOR 18 PILOTS ENDS

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU

AIR Marshal RD Mathur, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Headquarters Training Command, IAF visited the Air Force Station Bidar and presided over the valedictory function of the 204 Pilots Course and 19 Weapon System Operators (WSO) course. The Air Marshal was briefed by Air Commodore Nikhilesh Gautam, Air Officer Command-

ing, AFS Bidar about the operational, administrative and maintenance preparedness of the base.

The visit marked the culmination of 52 weeks of training for 18 Pilots and 2 WSOs on fighter aircraft. The graduating pilots and WSOs were presented with certificates and trophies during the valedictory ceremony. Flying Officer Samarth Shukla was awarded the trophy for first in overall order of Merit in Pilots' Course.

TOOLKIT CASE

Activists demand release of Disha Ravi

NEW DELHI/ BENGALURU

SOCIAL activists and environmentalists called for immediate release of climate activist Disha Ravi who was arrested in the 'toolkit' document case, asking the government to stop targeting India's youth. Ravi (22) was arrested on Saturday from Bengaluru for allegedly sharing with Greta Thunberg the toolkit related to the farmer's protest against the Centre's three new agriculture laws, police said. The Delhi Police claimed that Ravi was an editor of the "toolkit Google doc" and "key conspirator" in the document's formulation and dissemination. Activists and environmentalists have condemned the arrest.

Kavita Krishnan, the secretary of All India Progressive Women's Association, said people like Ravi are India's best hope because they are concerned about not just themselves, but the future generations. "We are not behaving like a democracy right now. If we are going to equate protest with conspiracy and organising protests as conspiracy, then you are not a democracy anymore," she said. "They should immediately drop this case based upon absolutely flimsy, ridiculous and evil pretext. A toolkit is not sedition, it is not conspiracy, toolkit is for protest," she added.

Rights activist Shabnam Hashmi also questioned the basis of Ravi's arrest, saying anybody even doing a local campaign prepares a toolkit. "We should look at the prime minister's campaign toolkit. We are crossing the limits of absurdity. We will become a laughing stock internationally," she said. Sunita Narain, head of the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment, also extended her support to the arrested activist. "We know #climatechange is an existential threat. World desperately needs the passion and commitment of the youth and their loud and strong voice to shake it to more action #FreeDishaRavi," she tweeted.

Nine-year-old climate activist Licypriya Kangujam called it an attempt to silence the voices of young girls and women in the country. "This is an attempt to si-

BJP compares Disha Ravi with terrorists

HANS NEWS SERVICE



BENGALURU: BJP MP PC Mohan compared climate activist Disha Ravi with terrorists Burhan Wani and Ajmal Kasab. The 21-year-old activist is accused to be involved in the toolkit related to farmer's protest, shared by environmental activist Greta Thunberg. "Burhan Wani was a 21-year-old. Ajmal Kasab was a 21-year-old. Age is just a number! No one is above the law. Law will take its own course. A Crime is a crime is a crime," Mohan said.

Taking to Twitter, BJP National General Secretary, B L Santhosh said, "As the the great drama of #Toolkit unfolds many anarchists who are rallying behind #DishaRavi as 21 year old, sole bread winner, daughter of single mother, climate change activist will run for cover. WhatsApp groups, editing option, conversations will unravel many characters."

"21 year old...environment activist... student...Are these credentials for becoming a part of breaking India forces...? How does she get the access for editing tool kit...?Why she is part of anti national WhatsApp groups...?Many questions...But only one answer...21 year old...!" he tweeted

BJP National spokesperson Nupur Sharma said, "What do gender and age have to do with crime? Former PM Rajiv Gandhi's assassin was a woman and allegedly either 17 or just 24. Nirbhaya's rapist and murderer was all of 17." Meanwhile, the state Congress leaders have criticised Ravi's arrest and called it politically motivated. Former chief minister of Karnataka Siddaramaiah said, "The arrest of Disha Ravi, a climate activist, has exposed the cracks in the Indian democracy under Narendra Modi.

How can the act of supporting farmers be charged under sedition? I strongly condemn this politically motivated act by Delhi Police."

Byataranyapura MLA Krishna Byre Gowda called Ravi a patriot. "Disha Ravi is an Indian patriot. Supporting farmers or environmental activism are civic virtues. Purpose of her arrest is just to instil fear in people not to raise voice," he said.

lence the voices of young girls and women in this country. But this will not stop us from fighting for our planet and future," Kangujam tweeted. In a joint statement, more than 50 academics, artists and activists voiced support for Ravi and called her arrest "disturbing," "illegal in nature" and an "over-reaction of the State". The statement issued under the banner of 'Coalition for Environmental Justice in India' also called it an attempt to distract the public.

"It is also becoming increasingly clear that the current actions of the central government are diversionary tactics to distract people from real issues like the ever-rising cost of fuel and essential items, widespread unemployment and distress caused due to the lockdown without a plan, and the alarming state of the environment," it said.

An online petition has also

been started by the group demanding the immediate release of the climate activist. Environmentalist Vikrant Tongad said the incident will be demotivational for climate activists. "We cannot go on the merit of the case as the probe is ongoing, but the incident will be demotivational for climate activists..." he said.

Thunberg, a teen climate activist, had shared the "toolkit" to lend her support to the farmers agitation against the three farm reform laws. In the document, various urgent actions, including creating a Twitter storm and protesting outside Indian embassies, were listed which were needed to be taken to support the farmers protest. A graduate in Bachelor of Business Administration, Ravi is also one of the founding members of a group named 'Fridays For Future India', police added.

India under a state of undeclared Emergency: Kumaraswamy

BENGALURU

REACTING on the reports over stickers being pasted at the house of donors for Ram Temple, JD(S) supremo HD Kumaraswamy compared the scenario with Germany under Nazi. He said that seeing the developments anything can happen in the country.

"It appears that those collecting donations for the construction of Ram Mandir have been separately marking the houses of those who paid money and those who did not. This is similar to what Nazis did in Germany during the regime of Hitler when lakhs of people lost their lives

I don't know where these de-



velopments, which are being witnessed in India, take us finally," Kumaraswamy tweeted. Taking a jibe at the Sangh Parivar, the former chief minister said, "Historians say that RSS took birth at the same time when Nazi

Party was founded in Germany. There are concerns on what will happen if the RSS tries to implement similar policies adopted by Nazis. The fundamental rights of people are being snatched away in the country now."

Kumaraswamy felt that India is reeling under a state of undeclared emergency as one cannot express their views openly.

"A situation has been created where nobody can share their feelings. I do not know what will happen if media upholds the government's views in the coming days. In such a situation it is difficult to guess what would be the fate of the common man. This is nothing but an undeclared emergency," he stated.

GAGANYAAN IS JUST THE BEGINNING!

India plans to have sustained human presence in space

BENGALURU

INDIA plans to have a sustained human presence in space and is coming out with a policy framework and a long-term roadmap. The Department of Space (DoS) has envisaged a national effort to meet the goal of successful demonstration of human spaceflight capability and to achieve the vision of sustained human presence in space.

India's maiden human spaceflight module 'Gaganyaan' will be launched after the second unmanned mission planned in 2022-23, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said last week. In her Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said the first unmanned launch is slated for December this year.

The DoS has now put up for public consultation on the web-

site of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), which comes under the former, the draft "Humans in Space Policy for India -- 2021" and guidelines and procedures for its implementation.

DoS believes that given the collaborative nature of human spaceflight due to its multi-disciplinary nature, it is essential to have a policy-framework, which not only fosters partnerships but also addresses proliferation concerns and compliance to existing policies, laws and treaties.

"Human-spaceflight programme needs to be sustained over longer periods to deliver tangible benefits," according to the draft. Hence, it is essential that the policy enables sustained presence in low earth orbit and beyond through reliable, robust,

safe and affordable means by undertaking appropriate capacity building measures like collaborations, infrastructure development, facilities modernisation, technology development and human resource development.

This would also encourage new industries, create high technology jobs, enable socio-economic growth and further enhance India's stature and role in space, it was noted.

"The Humans in Space Policy aims for sustained human presence in space as an instrument for development, innovation and foster collaborations in alignment with national interests", the draft said. Technological elements such as development of human rated launch vehicle, environmental control and life support system, crew escape system, deceleration sys-

tem, crew selection and training and development of human centric products shall be undertaken by the DoS, utilising expertise of ISRO, national research institutions, academia, industry and others.

A long-term road map for sustained human presence in low earth orbit (LEO) and undertaking exploration missions beyond it would be defined. "DoS/ISRO shall encourage start-ups and industries through suitable mechanism.

Mechanism shall be established to explore spinoff opportunities and their development for societal benefits", according to the draft. DoS/ISRO shall establish a comprehensive criterion for screening and selection of crew members. For initial missions, pilots from Indian Armed forces will be inducted as crew members, it was stated.

