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Garden city Bangalore? 50,000 trees cut, more to go

Bangalore, Oct 30 (IANS):

Garden city could soon become concrete city. Bangalore has lost around 50,000 trees in recent years to infrastructure development and nearly 300 more will soon go for the Metro rail project.

Environmentalists and citizens fear that rampant felling could cost the city its 'green heritage' tag. Their fear is supported by heaps of logs of axed trees and tree stumps dotting roads across Bangalore.

"It's sad to see so many trees being axed down in the name of development. I fell in love with Bangalore because of its green cover, but in recent times, trees are fast vanishing from its landscape," septuagenarian Praveen Mehta, a native of Punjab who has been settled here for two decades, told IANS.

"Trees are Bangalore's famed heritage. Please don't let them vanish so fast," pleaded Mehta, a former government employee.

As many as 279 more trees will soon be axed down for 'Namma Metro' - the upcoming metro rail in central Bangalore, specially near the legislative assembly building Vidhana Soudha and Central College roads.

In the past two to three years alone, Bangalore has lost around 50,000 trees, felled for developmental activities, states a report of the Environment Support Group (ESG), a Bangalore-based NGO and part of Hasiru Usiru (Greenery is Life), a conglomeration of community organisations.

Hasiru Usiru has been at the forefront to protest the "illogical destruction" of Bangalore's greenery for developmental works.

"Most of the trees dotting the Vidhana Soudha and Central College areas are as old as 150 years. They are our heritage. It takes years for a tree to grow and cutting them in a few hours in the name of development is not logical," said Vinay Sreenivasa, coordinator of Hasiru Usiru.

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The group now plans to send a memorandum to Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) to shelve its project in areas where they have to cut down a large number of trees.

"If our memorandum is not honoured, then we will start our protest," said Sreenivasa.

"It is sad that in spite of so many protests staged by us in the last few months, the government is yet to do anything to save the city's trees. Bangalore was known for its vast tree cover. Most of the trees felled down in recent times have been part and parcel of Bangalore for over five decades," said Sreenivasa.

According to different environment groups, BMRCL has axed a large number of trees at several places, including the Lalbagh Botanical Garden, considered the city's green lung.

According to environmentalists, not only has the city's green beauty been destroyed due to developmental works, but the loss of green cover is also harming the Karnataka capital's climate.

"Bangalore's weather is changing fast. Bangalore is no more pleasant as it was earlier. If trees continue to be chopped off rapidly, the city's average temperature will rise by two-three degrees Celsius in the coming years," said environmentalist Yellappa Reddy.

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