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DECCAN Chronicle
THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
BENGALURU | FRIDAY 25 | NOVEMBER 2011

DUKE
For Trade Enq.: 093925-96803

Weather

Max: 28.5°C Min: 16.8°C RH: 79% Rainfall: Nil

Inside

CITY: Police raid 72 rowdies ■ P3
CITY: MCI to checkmate states in SC ■ P4

Windows

ASTROGUIDE:
Khara: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Kartika Krishna Amavasya till 11.40 am
Star: Anuradha till 24.44
Yoga: Atiganda till 3.56 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 pm

PRAYERS (JAMIA MASJID)
Fajar: 5.35 am Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.45 pm Maghrib: 6.00 pm
Isha: 8.00 pm

INTERNATIONAL 11
Jimi Hendrix greatest guitar player: poll

SPORT 15
Sachin needs 33 runs for 100th intl ton

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Jasmine country ravaged by power plant

AMIT S. UPADHYE | DC
YELLUR, UDUPI DISTRICT, NOV. 24

An expert committee appointed by the state government to study the environment and the impact of a power plant on the health of villages in Padubidri taluk has found a serious threat to the environment and people's health at Yellur village. Located some 25 kms from Udupi, it sits in the shadow of the Udupi Power Corporation Ltd.

The matter has been brought to the notice of Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda and other officials but villagers say they are running out of time and hope.

On Wednesday, the committee met in Yellur and to no-one's surprise the majority of the villagers complained about eye irritation and skin allergies. Some 300 villagers have signed a petition requesting the power plant to cut pollution levels, as salt levels in rain has gone up, affecting the villagers' main source of income — horticulture as well as their health and drinking water.

The committee has found serious lapses on the part of UPCL which is discharging contaminated water into the small streams, rivers and into the ground. To make matters worse several water wells in the region are now contaminated with ash and salt water. Villagers have no source for clean, drinking water.

One of the Committee members Y.B. Ramakrishna told *Deccan Chronicle* that there have been serious lapses from the UPCL's side and the government as well as the local administration has been made aware about the problems faced by the public but little has been done.

"You don't need an expert committee opinion to know that the water in the land that surrounds UPCL is now contaminated," Mr Ramakrishna said.

Last month the Gram Panchayat and the Karnataka Pollution Control Board conducted a survey in Yellur village which stated that nine out of 13 water wells in the village are not suitable for drinking water. "The restoration works taken up by the company are simply not good enough," said Vidhya Dinkar, an environmentalist from Mangalore.

DC INVESTIGATES

DECCAN Chronicle
BENGALURU
FRIDAY 25 | NOVEMBER 2011

Sample okroshka, ukha, shashlyk kebab, fish with lemon and saffron sauce and other dishes at Touche's European Food Festival

From the wonton noodle soup to the sea food cilantro broth and the curry laksa with chicken and prawn — all of this at The Tasty Tangles.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

He who waits for a chance may wait for a long time.
— Nigerian Proverb

CityScape

POWER OF THREE

The *Connecting 3 Worlds* concert will feature Fazal Qureshi (tabla), from India, son of the great, late Ustad Alla Rakha, Anders Hagberg from Sweden (saxophone, flute) and Ahmad Al-Khatib from Palestine (oud).
When: November 26, 6.30 pm
Where: BFlat, Indiranagar

OF GEMS AND STONES

Here is your chance to look at some fabulous emeralds set in gold, at this jewellery exhibition. Set in 22-carat gold, diamonds and furnished with pearls to finish off the classic look, this is a must-see collection.
When: November 25 to 26
Where: Amrapali, Mira Tower, Kasturba Road

ART ATTACK

In this latest exhibition of paintings and photos, latest works of artists are on display. Paintings by Naila Tambi from Bengaluru, Tilly Clifford from UK and collections by Somaansh will be exhibited.
When: Till November 30
Where: Renaissance Gallerie, Cunningham Road

A COMEDY PLAY

The Kannada play, *Ananamba Suthakava* is directed by MC Anand. The troupe is Sinchana from Bengaluru. This thought provoking hilarious play revolves around a middle class couple caught in the web of global recession.
When: November 25
Where: Ranga Shankara, 2nd Phase, JP Nagar

SOLO SHOW

Recollections, Reconnections, is an exhibition of copper reliefs by artist SG Vasudev.
When: Till December 5
Where: Kynkyny Art, 104 Embassy Square, 148 Infantry Road

A FILM SCREENING

If it wasn't for the towering Udupi Power Corporation that looms over it, few would be able to pick out Yellur village amidst the lush green forests and crop fields of Padubidri taluk. Except, the village, a byword for the fragrant jasmine 'attie' is now an arid wasteland, its residents at risk from a multitude of ailments, their livelihood all but destroyed. **Amit Upadhye** reports from Ground Zero.

Salt in the earth, and pouring rain

Life and means of livelihood changed drastically, as the hard-working residents of Yellur struggle to survive the after-effects. (Below) R. Madhu, a land-loser, shows rusting farm equipment and Mamata Poojari points to the damaged roof. -Satish B.

AMIT S. UPADHYE | DC
YELLUR, UDUPI DISTRICT

The hottest selling item in the village of Yellur isn't the jasmine attie that it was once known for. But helmets! Everyone, young and old, sports them. It's their only protection against the saline, toxic rain that corrodes everything in its path — man, animal, plant and mobile. The toxic rain, is reported to be behind the rise in the number of cases of irritation in the eyes, rashes on the limbs and respiratory problems. More than 4,000 people have complained of these problems since the Udupi Power Corporation Limited (UPCL) went on stream, triggered by the burning of large quantities of coal at the plant, and the subsequent pumping of salt water as a coolant.

Dr Ratnakar Shetty, a local physician, says he has attended on more patients complaining of eyes and skin problems "greater than in the past. I can't guarantee if one can attribute this sudden increase in patients to the thermal plant. But two days ago, a lady said rashes on her skin disappeared when the power plant suspended its operations for a month for maintenance," Dr Shetty added.

Jayanth Kumar, a member of Yellur gram panchayat said: "We are unable to cope. Ever since the power plant became operational, my son can't walk as he has allergic rashes on his feet due to salt in the rain and fly ash. No medicine works on him."

The salted rain has turned the land barren. Trees and flowering plants have withered and died. Structures made of iron have corroded — Pumpsets, roofs, tractors, automobiles. Villagers, moving out to get work are selling them off.

It will take at least a month for the committee to submit the final report. We shall submit separate recommendations to the state, central government and to UPCL. There are several lapses as far as environmental degradation is concerned.
— Y.B. Ramakrishna
Member of the expert committee

Coal-based power generation is the best way to provide power to commercial establishments. UPCL is taking all measures after environmentalists and residents complained about fly-ash and salt rain problems to the authorities. There are issues, but they are being addressed.
— Dr V.S. Acharya
Minister for Higher education

We have adopted a wait and watch policy until the expert committee report is out. The local people are unhappy with environmental degradation. My support to people living around UPCL will continue.
— Pejawar Seer

Fragrance of jasmine washed away in Yellur

Polluted water is the other problem

- The polluted waste water from the power plant is the other killer. Mamata Poojari, a housewife says her children complain about itching limbs, whenever they visit their farm.
- Even death ceremonies have to wait as clean water is now a two hour trek away.

Not long ago, these farmers were content with earnings from fragrant mamao flowers, which made its way to temples, markets in markets in Mangalore and Bengaluru and were much sought after during festivities, fetching up to Rs 1,000 a for a bunch of garlands! The 'atte' or special garland of jasmine from Padubidri often made it to markets in many cities in Karnataka during festivals. Today, the salinity in the soil and atmosphere has deprived farmers of their remuneration from the sweet-smelling jasmine. The upshot: the yield has dropped to such an extent that farmers cannot gather even a kilo of jasmine buds at the end of two seasons.

"The salt in the rain hampers growth. Be it areecnut or coconut, the yield has decreased from the time power plant became operational. We can't water the fields as most of the water in the wells in have high levels of salt," Manohar J, of Yellur village, told DC.