

Coimbatore district administration refuse permission to cut trees in Pollachi for a road project

April 21, 2024 07:56 pm | Updated 09:07 pm IST - COIMBATORE

M. SOUNDARIYA PREETHA, AVANTIKA KRISHNA



The tree-lined Ambarampalayam - Sethumadai road. | Photo Credit: file photo

Tamarind trees that are more than 50 years old form a green canopy along the 16-km stretch from Ambarampalayam to Sethumadai in Pollachi in Coimbatore district. The district administration on Sunday clarified that it has refused permission to cut 27 of these trees at Thathur junction for a road improvement project.

According to official sources, the Highways Department has taken up works to widen at ₹2.2 crore the two-lane road for 200 metres on either side of Thathur junction as it is identified as

an accident-prone zone. The works were scheduled for completion in June and 27 tamarind trees at the junction were identified for removal to enable widening and improvement of the junction.

However, a few days before the election dates were announced, District Collector Kranthi Kumar Pati had asked the department to look at alternative solutions and said that the trees cannot be cut.

Fearing removal of the trees, nearly 20 members of a local federation gathered at Mukkonam, Anaimalai, to stage a protest on April 20 against removal of the trees.

“These trees are crucial for the ecosystem, considering the nearby forests and wildlife. They also remain green throughout the year, offering relief during the scorching summer as they form a canopy of sorts on the stretch between Thathur and Sundarapuri,” said Paramasivam, a spokesperson for the group.

T.K. Dhanasekar, who is a native of Thathur, told *The Hindu* on Sunday that his uncle Thathur A. Chinnasamy Gounder who was chairman of Anaimalai panchayat union, planted the trees and also maintained them. “He arranged for people to water the saplings and on many days he used to water the saplings himself,” he said. “Further, five panchayats get revenue from the tamarind from these trees now. The trees were planted almost 10 feet away from the edge of the road,” he added.

Karthikeya Sivasenapathy, secretary of DMK’s environment wing, said in a press release on Sunday, “The trees adorning the Annamalai Top Slip Road will remain untouched. This historic roadway is not merely a thoroughfare; it is a living testament to Tamil Nadu’s environmental heritage... The Annamalai Top Slip Road stands as a symbol of our environmental legacy, and we are duty-bound to protect it.”

Pravin Shanmughanandam of the Pollachi Papyrus, in a petition to the Coimbatore district administration and the State government, said that to conserve the scenic and significant tree-lined roads in and around Pollachi and to safeguard the green ambience created as a result of more than 80 years of care, four roads (Pollachi - Aliyar Road, Ambarampalayam - Anaimalai Road, Vettaikaranpudur - Sethumadai Road, Anaimalai - Sungam Road) should be identified and marked as Heritage roads. A green buffer of 10 metres on both sides of the Heritage Road can be enforced to prohibit littering and removal of trees or plants for road expansion or other development works.

Pollachi Sub-Collector Catherine Saranya said in a press release on Sunday that if the trees are cut it will impact Nature and scenic environment of the area. Hence, the district administration has refused permission to cut the trees.

The Highways Department officials said they will look at an alternative plan within a week.