

# Greater Chennai Corporation destroys a portion of miyawaki forest

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CHENNAI: The Greater Chennai Corporation has destroyed the first miyawaki forest set up in Perungudi zone inside a corporation school on School Road to set up a building. Local residents who spotted the construction material and chopped trees filed a complaint with local officials.

"This was the first Miyawaki forest set up in 2,000 sq feet by the Rotary Club inside the Corporation Higher Secondary School in Perungudi. The GCC ward office is right opposite the school," said P Sajeevan, a resident activist, who added that there is a lake behind the miyawaki forest.

He further said, "We are not aware what construction is going on but there is a lot of space around this miyawaki forest. Why should they destroy the green space?"

GCC is undertaking beautification projects across the city under Singara Chennai 2.0, and spending public funds for it, he said. On the other hand, a protected space inside a school is being destroyed. "Just to make way for construction material and to create access for lorries, they have chopped down 30 trees. The civic body officials should ensure action against zonal officials and ensure this doesn't happen again anywhere else," he said.

School authorities, when contacted, said they were constructing a school building and that they didn't uproot any tree, but just chopped the branches off.

However, photographs available with TOI show that several trees were uprooted, and a portion of the entire green space has been destroyed. When the local engineer of GCC was contacted, he said the school had taken permissions from the education

department for construction, and that he was not aware of miyawaki trees being destroyed. "We will look into it," said the engineer.

The PLANET (Perungudi lake area neighbourhood environment transformation) association has been maintaining this forest for over three years. The school students would water the plants as well. There were about 500 saplings planted there, of which more than 70% had survived.