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Tribals invoke Lord Hanuman to stop felling of trees in Burhanpur forest

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Indore: Tribals have taken a unique step to protect forest land in Madhya Pradesh's Burhanpur, which has seen massive encroachments by illegal encroachers. A group went around

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“Lord Hanuman is worshiped in all the villages of Burhanpur and neighboring districts, even by those who have been involved in tree felling and encroachment of the jungle.”

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180km south of Indore.

“On Environment Day, around 25 people from Ghaghrala engraved / wrote ‘Jai Hanuman’ on more than 100 trees,” he said, adding that they will paint the words from here on and are buying fluorescent colours for this.

“We tried to follow the Chipko Andolan to save the jungle, but the encroachers, who don't hesitate to attack foresters and policemen, threatened villagers with dire consequences,” he said, adding that they hope that the encroachers’ respect for Lord Hanuman will prevent them from cutting the trees.

Last month, Burhanpur DFO [Vijay Singh](#), collector Bhavya Mittal and SP Rahul Kumar Lodha had approached residents of Bakdi village, which is said to be a ‘haven of encroachers’, and urged them not to cut trees or encroach the jungle. The locals gave them their word and took an oath before Lord Hanuman’s picture.

“The tribals have great faith in Lord Hanuman, and so do we” the DFO said, adding that the forest department is supporting the villagers’ ‘Jai Hanuman’ strategy. “As part of the afforestation drive, we have this year marked around 850 hectares of land to plant 4.5 lakh root-shoots from Chhattisgarh and around 30,000 seed-balls, costing around Rs 5 crore, before monsoon sets in,” he said.

Official records show illegal felling of trees in 60,000 hectares land in Burhanpur district in recent years. Ghaghrala, Pankheda, Saikheda, Bakdi, Sival and neighboring villages in Nepanagar tehsil are said to be the worst affected. There have been repeated incidents of forest staff and police being attacked by mobs of encroachers and timber mafia.

The encroachers even attacked a forest department depot and Nepanagar police station to free their accomplices, prompting a massive crackdown by the administration. More than 250 people, including some carrying bounties of Rs 95,000, were rounded up, and 50 houses and 1,000 demolished.

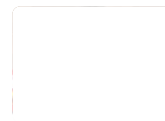
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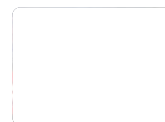
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