

Bengaluru: Biomedical waste dumped in Turahalli forest threat to wildlife

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BENGALURU: Turahalli forest, a sprawling jungle on Kanakapura Road in south Bengaluru, is now facing another threat: Reckless dumping of hazardous biomedical waste and construction debris.

This poses a risk to wildlife as well as the canine population in the vicinity. The forest, already under threat from encroachers, is a vital biodiversity spot.

According to locals, a heap of medical waste was spotted on Monday along Turahalli Tree Park, while passing from Bayyanapalya Double Road towards Kengeri. While the miscreants dumped some along the fence, bags containing it were also thrown inside the forest. Construction debris from demolished buildings and domestic waste from the neighbourhood is also strewn around the green space.

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Ravi M, a resident of RR Nagar that abuts the forest patch and morning walker, told TOI he was shocked to see the heap of biomedical waste. "From far it appeared like plastic waste. But it had everything, including disposed syringes, needles, blood-stained cotton, bandages and surgical gloves. If not prevented, this could lead to serious problems and may infect wild animals or the canine population that keeps passing through the stretch. Usually during the day, forest officials patrol the area and this

could have happened late at night,” he said.

‘Will investigate incident’

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SS Ravishankar, deputy conservator of forests, Bengaluru Urban, said, “The government has laid down a separate protocol to dispose of biomedical waste and only authorised agencies must handle it. It’s shocking to know that such waste is being dumped along the forest. This cannot be tolerated; we will investigate this further. Miscreants may have thrown it late at night. Nevertheless, we will crack down on them.”

Govindaraju, RFO, Kaggalipura, said, “There were no such incidents in the recent past as we had strengthened security and patrolling in the area. All of a sudden, this problem cropped up. Previously, we had caught many litterers red-handed while disposing of domestic waste and construction debris and penalised them. We will analyse CCTV footage to find out more about the incident and will accordingly take action.”

Turahalli Reserve Forest is spread across an area of 700 acres. In the past, several private players and government agencies, including Bangalore Development Authority (BDA), had encroached on the forest. However, the forest department successfully cleared the encroachments and fenced the area. Recently, the government under Mission Bengaluru 2022 wanted to develop another tree park. But drawing flak from citizen groups, it dropped the idea.