

Greens alarmed over food waste dumped near forests

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Mangaluru: Environmentalists are raising alarm about the improper disposal of catering waste near forest areas. The indiscriminate dumping of catering waste poses significant threats to the delicate ecosystems of nearby forests, leading to pollution, habitat degradation, and harm to wildlife.

The Vana Charitable Trust, led by environmentalist Jeeth Milan Roche, launched a unique forest conservation project in Kanthavara, recently.

Jeeth Milan Roche told TOI: "As part of the forest conservation project in Kanthavara, volunteers spend a lot of time engaging themselves in learning from experts, cleaning and tree plantation

activities. On Feb 25, a truckload of catering waste was cleared from Palladka panchayat limits with the help of volunteers from St Aloysius College, Mangaluru."

"Cleaning the area is a challenge due to the dumping of waste from elevated points into a narrow valley. Accessing the area to remove the waste is necessary. During our cleanup efforts, we encountered a significant quantity of water bottles and food waste. It is disheartening to observe the mixing of wet and dry waste. This marks the sixth site that we have cleared of dumped waste in recent days. While we were pleased to have cleared the area, our satisfaction quickly turned to shock upon discovering an equivalent amount of catering waste deposited in the same location on March 3," he said.

Further, Roche said, “Though we cleared the waste once again with volunteers of Shree Devi College, there must be an end to this cycle. We are concerned about the impact on wildlife, as this will only increase the human-animal conflict in the area,” Roche said and added that a memorandum regarding this issue will be submitted to the forest department, urging them to take strict action against the violators.

He said during every cleanup drive near the forest areas, they encounter a large number of plastic water bottles, liquor bottles (glass), plastic, and food waste.

He warned that if the waste had not been cleared, it would eventually make its way to the rivers.

A forest department official said that the panchayat must act against such activities and no dumping was found inside the forest areas.

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