

CHENNAI

Poromboke land converted into dense forest in Puzhal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI APRIL 09, 2022 20:27 IST

UPDATED: APRIL 09, 2022 20:27 IST

About 10 acres of land was recovered from an individual in a village near Puzhal

Ten acres of barren land at Vilangadupakkam village in Puzhal near here is set to become a dense forest, thanks to the efforts of the district administration. The work was done under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme by planting 5,600 saplings.

Villagers, who usually benefit from working under the job scheme, have put in back-breaking work for preparing the land that was full of thorny bushes and brambles.

"We levelled the land, created water sources, dug pits to plant the saplings and also dug percolation pits. If a few saplings dry up despite our watering them, we will replace them," said panchayat president Bharathi Saravanan, who has won the post three times in a row.

Saplings of trees that are sturdy such as gooseberry, neem, gulmohur, kadamba, punnai, magizham, malai vembu, mango, badal, jackfruit, guava, pomegranate and velaam have been planted. A fence of thorns with a gate has been formed and watchmen appointed to take care of the saplings. A walkers pathway too has been planned.

The land had been retrieved from an individual who had taken illegal possession of it. "He refused to let it go. But when we dug up revenue records, he admitted that he had encroached upon our meikaal poromboke land meant for grazing," she said.

District Collector Alby John Varghese said the saplings would be watered on a regular basis for at least one-and-a-half years. "When saplings are planted, land can be safeguarded. We are undertaking such efforts elsewhere too in the district. Officials of the District Rural Development Agency are following it up. They upload weekly updates with photographs," he said.

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