

“Minimise stay in forest to reduce pollution levels”



SPARE NATURE: Scientist of Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment R. Ganesan addressing the media in Tirunelveli on Tuesday.
— PHOTO: A. SHAIKMOHIDEEN

Staff Reporter

TIRUNELVELI: Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), a Bangalore-based research organisation conducting a range of researches within Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) for the past several years and scientifically monitoring the impact of visitors on the forest and the wildlife during the 'Aadi Amaavaasai' festival of Sorimuthu Ayyanar Temple at Karaiyar, has appealed to the devotees to minimize the stay within the jungles to a day or two instead of staying there for more than a week.

“Since the 'Aadi Amaavaasai' festival of the temple, situated within the KMTR, attracts 2 lakh to 5 lakh devotees every year, the Tamirabharani is polluted badly due to open defecation and also by the several tonnes of plastic waste dumped in the perennial river as well as in the forest. It irreparably damages the fauna and flora of this jungle. Hence, we, while

sincerely respecting their religious belief, appeal to the devotees to restrict their stay in the forest to a day or two. If the stay is between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on the auspicious day, it will certainly auger well for this sanctuary,” said scientists R. Ganesan and M Soubadra Devy of ATREE here on Tuesday.

As several lakhs of devotees camp around the temple during the festival for a period of more than a week, it causes serious impact on the Tamirabharani, where human waste and the garbage generated by them enter. ATREE has recorded high levels of 'coli' bacteria and the chloride in the water during and after the festival, which remains even after 3 months, causing concern to the people down stream up to Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai.

If this pollution continues at the same scale, there is every chance of an epidemic outbreak in Tirunelveli district. Apart from this, several rare reptiles, amphibians and other small animals get killed

on the roads due to the vehicular traffic allowed inside the forest even in the night.

As the devotees cut down the bushes including Euphorbia susan-holmi, a rare cactus variety, to establish their tents and also the small saplings under big trees, it completely destroys the germination of new plants as well as the existing rare varieties.

To minimise all these adverse impacts on the forest, the wildlife as well as on the Tamirabharani, the lifeline for Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Virudhunagar districts, ATREE has started an awareness campaign in the villages from which most of the devotees attend the festival.

“We've launched 'Be a Good Ancestor Campaign' asking the public to leave forests in good shape for their future generation by reducing the camping days in the forest, which will ultimately reduce the impact on our natural resources and the wildlife also,” said Dr. Ganesan and Dr. Soubadra Devy.

level inter-collegiate AIDS awareness sports meet, inaugural function, R. Avudaiyappan, Speaker, presides, T.P.M. Maideen Khan, Minister for Environment, Youth Welfare and Sports, Poongothai Aladi Aruna, Minister for Information Technology, MPs and MLAs participate, Anna Stadium, 9 a.m.

Alcoholics Anonymous: Regular meeting, Good Shepherd Matriculation School, 7th Street, Thiagaraja Nagar, 7 p.m.

• TENKASI

Rotary Club of Dindigul and Rotary Club of Kutralam Central: Inter-district fraternity meet, B. Arumugapandian, chief guest, T.D. Arunachalam Hall, 6.45 p.m.

• PULIYANGUDI

Sri BalaSubramaniya Swamy Aadi Karthigai Festival Committee: Aadi Karthigai festival celebrations, milk pot procession, 10 a.m., milk abhishekam, 11

a.m., deepaaraadhanai, 11.30 a.m., homam, 2.30 p.m., abhishekam, 4.15 p.m., deepaaraadhanai, 7 p.m.

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