

# Prolonged stay in forest affects ecosystem: Scientist

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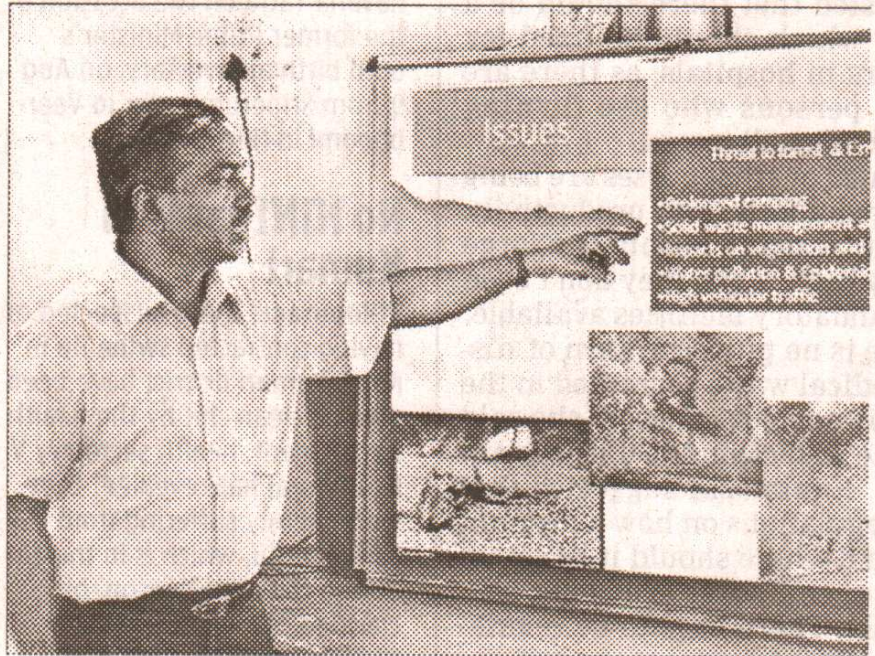
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'Be a good ancestor campaign' by Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) has appealed to people to avoid prolonged camping in order to conserve forests for the future generation.

The Sorimuthaiyanar temple located inside Kalakkad Mundanthurai tiger reserve attracts over 2 lakh people during 'Aadiamavasai' festival falling in July-August where Raja of Singampatti graces the festival from his customary durbar.

R Ganesan, Scientist with ATREE, a Bangalore-based research organization, after continuously monitoring the post festival impacts on environment, said that the outcome of the research revealed the serious impact on human health caused by prolonged camping of people. It has also affected the ecosystem of Thamirabarani river, where most of human excreta and garbage finally reach.

It has been recorded that high presence of coliform bacteria and chlorine in the water, which persisted for a long period even three months after the festival, posed a health hazard to the



R Ganesan, Scientist, ATREE briefing the environmental issues arising due to prolonged stay in forests at Tirunelveli on Tuesday

people living downstream up to Tirunelveli.

If this persisted at the same scale, there was a chance of an epidemic outbreak in Tirunelveli district, said Ganesan adding that many rare small animals such as Green Lizard (*Calotes aurantiolabium*), which is seen nowhere else but in the entire Western Ghats, got killed due to high vehicular traffic in the roads during the festival time.

The lengthy stays had greater impact on fauna and flora in the forest. People, during their stay, end up fell-

ing rare plants such as 'Vendellia' and 'Euphorbia susanholmii' a cacti variety for setting up tents.

'Be a Good Ancestor Campaign' along with the forest department and Swasam, a local NGO, aim to create awareness among people on conserving forests through street plays and other possible mediums. He appealed to the people to save the forests for the future generation by reducing the camping days in the forest.

Mathivannan and Subatra Devi, Scientists ATREE were present on the occasion.