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‘Pitch’ed battle in Nagarahole: Advivasis flay activists for misleading Karnataka govt

Based on complaints, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre had directed officials to inquire and submit a report in 7 days on the alleged clearing of several trees to play a cricket match at Nanachi gate, in the core area of the tiger reserve.



Chiranjeevi Kulkarni | DHNS

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A view of Nagarahole Credit: DH Photo

Bengaluru: Adivasi communities from Nagarahole Tiger Reserve slammed the environment activists for misleading the state government by portraying a tribal rights event organised at Nanachi gate as a cricket match and falsely accusing them of cutting trees.

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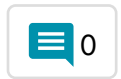


Based on complaints, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre had directed officials to inquire and submit a report in 7 days on the alleged clearing of several trees to play a cricket match at Nanachi gate, in the core area of the tiger reserve.

The minister's letter did not name the source but cited current satellite photos compared with those dating to 2011 as a reason for the inquiry.

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generations. Nobody has consulted us while declaring our habitat as a tiger reserve, its core and buffer areas. Despite the notification of the Forest Rights Act, our individual and community rights have been violated," the letter said.

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The letter stated that on November 19, adivasis celebrated the Birsa Munda day to spread awareness on the struggle for tribal identity and rights.

“As part of the event, we had also organised a cricket tournament for adivasi youths at Belekovu near Nanachi gate. This is the area where we have held events for years. Except for clearing lantana as per the forest department’s programmes,” the letter said.

JA Shivu, president of the Karadikallu Forest Rights Committee said not a single tree has been harmed in the area. “Forest staffers and their children have observed and participated in some of these events over the years. Everyone knows that except for removal of lantana, trees have not been cut. Still, there is a deliberate attempt to portray us as violators,” Shivu told DH.

Activist Joseph Hoover said that adivasis have been playing cricket in the patch for over a decade now. “They are angry that the government has stopped their annual tournament but did not object when Bandipur Tiger Reserve (then) field director S Prabhakaran prepared a concrete (pitch) with nets inside the core

area of Bandipur," he said.

Speaking to DH, Shivu said he was shocked after seeing the images of the cricket pitch. "How can they deny the same rights to us even though they know that we have not damaged the environment in any way," he asked.

ADDITIONAL INFO

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Nagarahole Tiger Reserve

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