

Forest department to translocate 52 trees marked for axing in Gadag

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GADAG: Scores of trees become casualty to road-widening projects. However, the forest department, keen on mitigating the damage to the environment that such projects cause, has decided to translocate 52 of the 334 trees being axed for the widening of National Highway-367 at Gajendragad. The 52 trees along the side of the road will be shifted to a new home, near a lake, where a tree park has been proposed.

Deputy conservator of forests for Gadag division AV Surya Sen told TOI that the department was translocating 'ficus' trees, primarily because they could survive the process. "The survival rate of trees that were translocated along the stretch of the national highway between Hubballi

and Hosapete is 90%, and we have enjoyed similar success when we translocated trees when the Gadag-Honnalli Road was widened – we shifted coconut and other trees. We wanted to save as many trees as possible in Gajendragad. When we mooted the idea, Ron MLA Kalakappa Bandi backed us, and convinced the contractors involved in execution of the project," Sen said.

Gadag range forest officer (RFO) Raju Gondkar said that, trees, if translocated carefully by employing a scientific method, and nurtured after they are shifted, their chances of survival rose markedly. "Our department gave the nod to axe 334 trees between Rampur and Katral. We subsequently intimated both the National Highways Authority of India, the MLA and the state

government departments concerned, that we could save 52 trees. We started working on translocation July 12, and we will complete the process in the next 10 days,” he said.

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The RFO said that they were using chemicals to ensure the roots of the trees marked for translocation survived the process. “We are shifting them near Unachageri Lake, to a spot that falls under the purview of the minor irrigation department, where a tree park has been proposed. The new park will have 52 big trees, which would otherwise take decades to grow as big,” said Gondkar.