

# **TN environmentalists petition Forest Dept for removal of invasive species**

- 📅 Thu, May 09 2024 12:41:42 PM

**Chennai, May 9 (IANS):** Tamil Nadu environmental groups have petitioned the state Forest Department against the unchecked growth of invasive species that was leading to the sustenance of thousands of saplings planted in the forest land of the state.

The invasive species Seemai Karuvelam (*Prosopis juliflora*) and unni Chedi (*Lantana camara*) are the main invasive species threatening the survival of the saplings planted in forest lands.

Environmentalists complained that the unchecked growth of invasive species like *Prosopis juliflora* (Seemai Karuvelam) and *Lantana camara* (Unni Chedi or Nandana Chedi) are threatening the sustenance of hundreds of saplings planted in the forest areas over the past few months.

Environmentalist and social activist Karupanan Natarajan while talking to IANS said they have petitioned the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to clear the weeds and improve green cover with native varieties.

The state Forest Department as part of efforts to improve the green cover in the forest areas, spread over around 26342 square kilometres hectares, planted thousands of saplings of native tree varieties like neem, Indian beech (pungam) and Arjun.

Many of the saplings, however, withered due to climatic conditions. Environmental activists said that saplings should be planted during the rainy season so as to limit such damage.

“Invasive species are spreading more in the forests. This leads to stunted growth of other native plant saplings and these invasive species to absorb moisture. There should hence be clear plans made for developing forests,” Karupannan said.

He also proposed building check dams over the streams in forest areas to store excess water. The environmentalist said that this will help wildlife quench their thirst as well as maintain flora.

Narayanan Vaidyanathan, Director, Centre for Policy and Environmental Studies told IANS that more native varieties help in regulating the temperature levels.

“Land parcels are already dry due to insufficient rainfall in the state this year and the heatwave is making the situation worse. Proper maintenance of the tree cover in forests and planting native saplings will green up the state,” the Director said.

A Tamil Nadu Forest Department official told IANS that the department is putting in all efforts to plant the native species and are curbing the invasive species.

“In certain forest areas, invasive species like Seemai Karuvelam are present in large tranches of forest land at the expense of native species. The Forest Department is looking into this and has alerted all district-level forest officials,” the official said.