

Bangaloreans protest to access green spaces

With placards in hands and shouting slogans, around 250 people protested against the Karnataka government's proposed plan to make ID cards mandatory to enter Cubbon and Lalbagh parks, two of city's sprawling green spaces.

The protestors, mostly children from poor families, gathered near Bangalore's historical landmark Queens Statue at Cubbon Park on M.G. Road in the heart of the city to demand free access to 'green' spaces.

The citizens also said 'no' to government's plans to charge Rs.200 a person every month to enter parks.

'Cubbon and Lalbagh parks have been the city's most popular grounds for people. Young and old love these parks. If children from poor families play in the parks, then the elderly come to relax. Introduction of ID cards and fees to enter parks will deter poor people from having access to green spaces,' Bhargavi S. Rao, coordinator of Environment Support Group in Bangalore, told IANS.

The protestors were led by various citizen groups including Environment Support Group, Slum Jagatthu, Vimochana, Dalit Sangharsh Samiti Samyojaka, Sanmathi, Alternative Law Forum, Sangama, Stree Jagruthi Samithi, CIVIC Bangalore, Hasiru Usiru and Open Space.

The protestors submitted a petition to Karnataka Horticulture Minister Umesh Katti, the brainchild behind the proposed idea of having ID cards to enter parks.

'My parents cannot afford to pay Rs.200 a month nor will they spend money to give me an ID card. We are poor children and the government cannot stop us from accessing parks and other public spaces,' said Prabhat (11), holding a placard saying 'Evenings are fun, but not when I need an ID card to run!'

Some protestors said the move meant to pamper the rich and the elite.

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