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# Let us breathe: 5,000 kids protest road through Biodiversity Park

Write to PM, CM And NHAI, Want The Park To Be Declared A 'Sacred Forest'



A road through the park will destroy greenery, force animals and birds to flee the urban forest and increase pollution levels in the city, said students who gathered to protest

Rohit.David@timesgroup.com

**Gurgaon:** On Children's Day, around 5,000 school students from 31 schools in the city came together to protest against the government's plan to build a road through the Aravali Biodiversity Park.

Many of them also wrote letters to the highways authority, the Prime Minister and the chief minister, requesting them to not go ahead with the project. Tejaswai, who is in Class 3 of Made Easy School, wrote to the CM, "Please don't cut the trees. If you cut them, we cannot breathe and birds will die." Adil Hussain, Class 4, The Happy School, wrote in his letter, "I live in Sikanderpur. Please don't destroy the biodiversity park because trees give us oxygen."

As many as 31 schools have come forward to support the 'Save The Aravali Biodiversity Park' campaign of 'I Am Gurgaon', a citizens' body. As part of this campaign, students gathered at the park on Wednesday and formed a human chain, demanding that the park be declared as a "sacred forest".

The protesters, including volunteers and teachers, carried posters, reading "Don't be mean, go green", "Be part of solution and not pollution", "There is always enough pollution, why increase it" etc. Vijay Dhasmana, an ecologist said, "We were expecting 13 schools to participate but 31 turned up. By forming a human chain, the students have sent out a clear message that saving this forest is a necessity."

Latika Thukral, the founder of 'I Am Gurgaon' said, "We can only try to make the authorities understand that a

“If a road is built through the biodiversity park, it will negatively affect everything here from water to animals. Even the clean air we are breathing now will turn hazardous

— ROHAN SACHDEV,  
CL VI, HERITAGE  
XPRIENTIAL  
LEARNING SCHOOL



“This is an important natural reserve in Delhi-NCR. If we destroy this, we will lose this forever. We don't need another flyover or road in this city, which will cut into the forest

— VEDANSH  
SONEJA, CL VII, SHIV  
NADAR SCHOOL



“There are so many animals here and if vehicles are moving through the park, they will run away

— MISHY KAUSHIK,  
CL VIII, BLUE BELLS  
MODEL SCHOOL



road through the park is going to hurt everyone. The children are disturbed with this development. The authorities need to decide what is more important—making roads or saving green spaces for our future generation?" Thukral rubbished the NHAI claim that the plan was to use only a portion of the park. "The park lies on uneven terrain. NHAI will have to fill up potholes and take out rocks with machinery that will destroy greenery and force birds to fly away. After that

kind of work, 50% of the park will be gone," she said.

On Wednesday, the assembled students pointed out that the park belonged to everyone and no road should go through it. Divya Sharma, a Class 7 student of Shiv Nadar School said, "My purpose here is to support the movement to save the biodiversity park. Migratory birds visit the park and if I don't raise my voice today, I won't have this place tomorrow." Ira Mishra, a Class 7 student from Shikshantar School said, "In Gurgaon, this park gives us hope that people will breathe fresh air. Does a road have more importance than our health?"

School principals urged the government to protect the biodiversity park. Deepa Kumar, principal, Heritage Xperiential Learning School said, "At a time when Gurgaon features among the most polluted cities in the world, it is imperative that our green areas remain protected and steps are taken to combat pollution so that our children can inherit a cleaner, greener future." Kumar added that the road would nullify the efforts by citizens who spend lakhs of money on reforestation work in the area.

"We urge the authorities to declare Aravali Biodiversity Park as the city's 'sacred forest' that would remain untouched and protected," she said.

Many students were visiting the park for the first time on Wednesday. Raina Giri, a Class 9 student of Ajanta Public School said, "I stay in Gurgaon but this is the first time that I have come to this park and it's magnificent. There is so much greenery here. I can't imagine how NHAI planned a road through this park."

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# hindustantimes



On the morning of Children's Day, 5,000 students, teachers, and volunteers from 31 city schools gathered at the Aravalli Biodiversity Park in Gurugram. YOJENDRA KUMAR/HIT PHOTO

## Kids march against way through Aravalli bio park



Sadia Akhtar  
sadia.ah@hindustan.com

**GURUGRAM:** Around 5,000 students, teachers, and volunteers gathered at the Aravalli Biodiversity Park on Children's Day morning and "adopted" the forest as a sacred grove. Together, they voiced concerns against the National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) proposed six-lane expressway — part of the Gurugram-Manesar Connectivity Project — which, many claim, threatens the park.

Between 10.30am and 12.30pm, students formed a human chain in the park, holding placards that read "green trees look better than grey highways", "Aravalli bachao, government ko padhao" and "Highway? ByeWay".

"We will tell the government that it should not go ahead with the construction of the road. If the road comes up, we will lose trees. Trees are important since they give us so much. How will we breathe without them?" said Sarita Sahu, a class 5 student from The Happy School.

Jahnvi Manglik, a class 8 student of Shikshantar School, chanted "ped hamari saans hai, hamari aankhri aans hai (Trees help us breathe, they are our last

"Aravalli is public property and a six-lane highway doesn't make sense. The air quality index will shoot up if the park is destroyed. People will not be in a position to step out if that happens," said Manglik.

Earlier this month, The Shri Ram School had sent out circular to parents, urging them to join the campaign of saving the park. Shikshantar and Heritage school had followed suit with similar circulars.

Jhumar Anand, a teacher at Ajanta Public School, who accompanied 27 students, said, "The students were motivated

and happy since they got a chance to do their bit in creating awareness about the park's protection," said Anand. She added that saving the Aravalli was important at a time when the city and its residents were facing the challenge of pollution.

Latika Thukral, founder of iamgurugaoon, an NGO, said, "The children have also written around 4,000 letters to the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister. We have collected 50,000 signatures and will be reaching out to the deputy commissioner and the chief minister to share the children's concerns."

### they say



I am here to tell the government that if the park is threatened, the animals here will die. The park should be preserved.

KAVYA MODI  
Class 5, The Shri Ram School Aravalli



I am here to protest against the proposed expressway. The park is a peaceful place, a much needed green space.

VIKRAMADITYA SAWHNEY,  
Class 7, Shikshantar School