



Date: 13.07.2016

To,
Mr. E. Rajendran
District Forest Officer – Hosur Forest Division
Mathigiri Cattle Farm
Hosur

Dear Sir,

Sub: Dabaguli annual festival 2016

The annual festival at Dabaguli, in Bilikal RF, Urigam Range was conducted on Feb 27 & 28th Feb 2016. Hosur Forest Division (HFD) and KANS worked together on mitigating the environmental impact of the festival.



Below is statistics collected during the activity. An estimated **4500 people** visited Dabaguli

No. of vehicles entering at Kestur Checkpost & at Dabaguli:

2 Wheelers	4 Wheelers	LCV / HTV / etc.	Coracle
482	84	111	284 people

No. of vehicles entering at Balagadapallam Checkpost:

2 Wheelers	4 Wheelers	LCV / HTV / etc.
56	3	8

State-wise (based on vehicle registration number):

Karnataka	TamilNadu
494	242

This activity was conducted by a team of people comprising of FD Staff from Urigam and Anchetty Ranges and KANS volunteers. Over 25 staff from FD and 15 volunteers from KANS participated in this activity. It involved the following:

- Checking for plastic and liquor items at the checkpoints and at the Coracle jetty
- Demarcating no-entry zones to prevent people from venturing deep into the forest
- Patrolling around the event venue and warning people from selling tobacco products and to ensure that there was no litter
- Repeated announcements over mike to instruct people to not to litter

These were done on 27th Feb, 2016 from 1:00PM till midnight.





KANS review:

KANS has been working with HFD at Dabaguli since 2010 with the intention to regulate the crowd and to prevent ecological damage to this region of the Melagiris. Due to continuous engagement with the people who conduct the festival, they were convinced to use eco-friendly areca-nut leaf plates instead of the non-biodegradable plates and this year, they reduced the number of disposable plates and used steel plates that could be washed and reused, thus reducing wastage.

KANS, in collaboration with TNFD, has put up boards at the check-posts and APC to educate and create awareness among the visitors.



However, a lot still needs to be done. The region has seen a steady increase in the number of people visiting the temple, not just during the annual festival but throughout the year. This has resulted in a lot of picnicking and litter and disturbance to the ecology.

Problem areas:

Uncontrolled movement of people and vehicles:

There are 2 roads that lead to Dabaguli, one from Manjukondapalli-Kestur and the other from Urigan-Kotiyur.

- Balagadapallam checkpost does not allow right of way. Despite this, vehicles are allowed to pass through at all times of day and night
- Kestur checkpost sees 95% of the traffic volume. People and vehicles travel through this check-post late in the night also and picnic along the river bank.

The ban on people in Mutatti in Cauvery WLS (Karnataka) has resulted in more people visiting Dabaguli for picnicking, fishing, swimming etc. Last week (9th and 10th July), 100s of people had gathered to celebrate the festival of Ramzan. A similar congregation apparently happens downstream every year for the festival of Aadi.

Encroachments:



People who have been given licenses to ferry have set up their houses along the river bank, next to the APC, and carry out fishing and other commercial activities



Shops have been setup along the river bank in Dabaguli



Several temple structures have been constructed along the river bank, whereas the only temple mentioned in the RF notification is the Basaveshwara temple.

Some of the steps that we request the FD to take up at the earliest are:

- Ban thoroughfare through the Balagadapallam checkpost
- Restrict timings at Kestur checkpost from 6 AM to 6 PM, like in other places in CNWLS
- Temple rituals and functions at Dabaguli should close by 6 PM and no one should be allowed to stay back in the forest
- Remove all encroachments mentioned above
- Appoint additional staff so that visitors are allowed only to visit the temple and no other part of the Reserve Forest.

As always, KANS is willing to help the HFD in any possible way to implement the above and any other steps that can be taken to mitigate the situation.

For,
Kenneth Anderson Nature Society

(Laxmeesha Acharya)

Copy to:

1. Conservator of Forests, Dharmapuri Circle
2. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife)