Kovai blooms in green shade

■ Halfway into tree census, assessment team finds green canopy in city to be satisfactory

A view of the green cover in Ram Nagar neighbourhood. —DC

V. ASHOK KUMAR | DC
COIMBATORE, AUG 1

Despite large scale felling of trees for infrastructure development and expansion activities, the ongoing tree census has revealed that the canopy is satisfactory in areas in urban Coimbatore.

"Tree counting, which is halfway through in the central zone, has so far been satisfactory. It is complete in Ram Nagar and partially over in the race course area, while counting is yet to begin in places like Avinashi Road, Dr Balasundaram Road and Nanjappa Road in this zone," said R Karpagam of the Oli Awareness Movement.
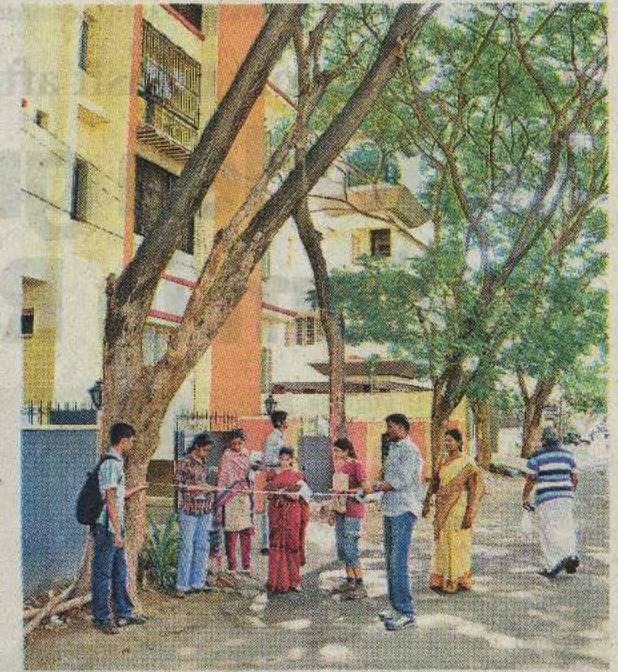
More than 2000 trees have been enumerated so far in the last one month, when Green NGOs kicked off the ambitious Coimbatore Green Cover Assessment. Volunteers are enumerating every species of trees by their age, size, location and health condition in Coimbatore. "There is a good population of native trees among those counted, which is a positive indicator. The rain tree (thoongu vagai) is found in abundance followed by neem and tamarind trees. All trees were found to be in good health and there is no need for concern," Karpagam said.

However the claim of the 'good' tree population in the central zone cannot be taken as an indicator for other zones. The tree census is likely to be completed in the central zone by December, but could not be taken up in all other zones at the same time due to limitations in resource availability. "There are only 25 sets of instruments available to measure trees and mobilising volunteers for continuous work also remains a challenging job," said A. Balasubramanian, Professor (Forestry), Dept. of Forest Ecology and Environment

The Greens, however lamented that the counting process inside compound premises suffers due to non-cooperation from residents, mainly due to fear and suspicion. "However, we have taken note of such houses, and we will approach them again for permission to conduct the study," Karpagam added.

Tree census to help improve biodiversity

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG 1

The ambitious tree census taken up by Greens in Coimbatore is aimed to help government characterize the city's tree population in terms of structure, function, and value.

"This information will go a long way in improving our biodiversity, underground water table, air and sound pollution control. Based on the outcome of the study, tree planting could be taken up in urban residential areas that lack sufficient canopy," said A. Balasubramanian, Professor (Forestry), Dept. of Forest Ecology and Environment. Urban tree canopy coverage is an important measure of the quality of life. "This study will also bring to light the disappearance of our native species of trees," he added.

Manned by volunteers from all sections of society, the effort will be the largest participatory urban project undertaken for the first time in Coimbatore city, and is led by the staff and students of Forest College and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Mettupalayam along with other students and general public coordinated by Green NGOs. It also gains significance because of the current concept of urban forestry.

Volunteers examining a tree during the ongoing tree census in the city. —DC

"It is necessary for every city and township to have a clear plan and policy to promote urban forestry to counter the drastic effects of pollution. In fact, urban forests, if promoted, could be the lung space for the city's growing population. Even small clusters of trees can be planted in available places to form urban islands," said N Krishna Kumar, director of the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB). He also suggested that a registry of urban trees be maintained as in Delhi.

"There should also be regular surveillance and monitoring by mobile teams to prevent felling of trees and also keep a tab on their health status to provide required care," said Mr Krishna Kumar.