

Conductor honoured for planting 50,000 saplings

COIMBATORE

another ed-hero"

"Real hero" ee President Ansari he was contribu- ent the Day at

Delhi. Though he shared the dais with several film stars and prominent celebrities to bag the award, he drew the maximum attention for his simplicity and responsibility towards Mother Nature.

The TNSTC bus conductor who hails from Mayiladudurai, Thanjavur district, has planted over 50,000 saplings over 25 years across the country

and at least 35,000 are fully grown trees now. The conductor of bus route no 92 at Koval, for whom writing poems has been a passion since early childhood, recalls those days when he wandered inside the forests for inspiration. "It was during that time, in a thicket at Kothagiri, that my heart first beat watching a group of tall trees."

The thoughts— What hap-



KUDOS: Bus conductor Yoganathan gets an award from Vice President Hamid Ansari for planting 50,000 saplings

PHOTO: DC

pens to the greenery? How can any poet derive inspiration without the lively trees?—disturbed him and he decided to contribute his share to nature by planting saplings. With the support of Mr Jayachandran of the Tamil Nadu Green Movement at Ooty and other environmentalists and experts including wildlife photographers like Dr Rajapalayan

Ramachandran, Dr Mayilvahanan and Dr Tolstoy and Mr Ravi, he became an active contributor. "There have been several instances when I've tried to stop wood laden lorries by prostrating on the road. And have also been threatened to be beaten up by several mafias. But these shallow threats did not deter me," he said.

The 40-year-old conduc-

tor's aim is to rear youngsters and in- need to conserve. With the money a provident fund, he chased a project paper clippings and photographs at school leges. "I purchase newspapers, but c read. I cut out the issues related to e ment and project the students," he

FROM NOYAL banks, poisoned birds find way to Tirupur bars



Poisoned fish (left) which were used as a bait and (right) dead birds strewn on the banks of Noyal

M Rafi Ahmed | ENS Coimbatore, August 30

ENVIRONMENTALISTS are up in arms against killing of birds for its meat by poachers on the banks of river Noyal at Somapur near here which they said is going unchecked.

Yoganathan, an environmental activist told Express that he along with his friends were shocked to find a group of persons peeling and dressing the birds.

On seeing them, they took to hiding leaving the dead birds.

"This isn't an isolated incident since it's a continuous affair on the banks of Noyal River. And the modus operandi



poisonous leaves along with limestone into the river to kill the fish. After the dead fish floats on the river, the poachers fish it out to put them on the plains," he said, adding that the birds are attracted to the dead fish which swims to the ground after consuming it.

Noyal Green Foundation president R Palanisamy said the dead birds, after dressing, are taken to nearby Tirupur and sold to hawkers and some roadside eateries. Yoganathan said and added this has been going on for a long

time and nipped in the bud. However, the environmental activists informed the veterinary doctors, who rushed to the spot and took samples of water and dead fish for analysis. Even the birds' flesh were sent for laboratory test, he informed.

Listing out some bird species that are killed for meat, he said the birds that are spotted here are Night Heron, Small Egret, Pond Heron and Ringed Plover, which usually fall prey to the poaching gang.

Though they took up the issue with the forest department last month, forest watchers were posted on this stretch for a few days. And it's business as usual with poachers having a field day. If this isn't checked, some rare bird species would vanish soon, he said.

Meanwhile, Express spoke to District Forest Officer Rajkumar in Tirupur whom he suspected to be a handover of a gang operating in Rajapalayan and Thiruvallur areas, who are reportedly still killing birds for its meat.

He said they have engaged informers in the area to inform them about incidences of

Modus operandi

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- The birds are attracted to the dead fish which swims to the ground after consuming it.
- The birds are then peeled and dressed to nearby Tirupur and sold to hawkers and some roadside eateries.
- The birds that are spotted here are Night Heron, Small Egret, Pond Heron and Ringed Plover.