

TIMES OF INDIA, May 15 '99

# Army denies construction activity on the Ridge

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: A group of "green activists" have accused the Army of carrying out "illegal" constructions on the Capital's south-central Ridge.

But the Army denied this, saying no new construction has been carried out in the area.

"It was a barren area. We have in fact planted more than 10,000 saplings there," Army assistant public relations officer V K Joshi told *The Times of India* on Saturday.

In a report, the Citizens for the Preservation of the Quarries and Lakes Wilderness alleged the Army was carrying out a "relentless construction programme on the Vasant Vihar, Vasant Kunj, Mahipalpur Forest Ridge."

The report said the area has been designated as part of the South Central Ridge in the map of the Geological Survey of India.

Rajya Sabha member Kuldip Nayar, a member of CPQLW, told reporters defence minister George Fernandes had said in a reply to a

question in Parliament that no building activity was going on in the Southern Ridge area.

But, he added, he had in a letter to him acknowledged that residential quarters for married officers were being built there. "I may bring the matter before the Parliament's Privilege Committee," he added.

CPLQW member Vikram Soni urged the Centre and the Delhi government to notify this entire area as a reserved forest under the Environment Protection Act as it fell within the boundaries of the Aravalli Ridge as per the GSI maps.

He demanded action against the officials who had allegedly felled a large number of trees without seeking permission from the Delhi Tree Officer.

City environment minister A K Walia said he had not received any such report. "I will tell my officers to look into the matter. If any violation has been done, we will definitely take action against all those who are found guilty."