

GUEST COLUMN:



# Ridge On The Edge

A rocky outcrop of the Aravallis, the Ridge is Delhi's defining feature. It recharges 3 billion litres of unpolluted water a year. Can we afford to lose it?

Some 70 million years ago, a piece of Antarctica drifted across the Southern Hemisphere with the Indian plate and merged into the Asian plate to make India and the Ganges. The city of Delhi is a little younger, perhaps a shade over 2,000 years old. And till as recently as 30 years ago, Delhi was in its pristine natural state until block after block came under human aggression.



The area is part of the Aravalli ridge forest and, geologically, it was formed by ancient quartzite, which shows countless fractures of time and natural history. This endows the area with the amazing ability to recharge 80 per cent of the rain that it gets, making it a remarkable sanctuary of pure water. As you head home out of

Then, clockwise, it runs along the Nelson Mandela Marg - opposite JNU - passing along the northern boundary of Vasant Kunj to the old town of Mahipalpur, back on the national highway. The area is about 7 sq km of forest, ridge and migratory bird water bodies.

Residential property prices around the Ridge have touched Rs 3 lakh per square yard and if allowed to turn commercial, the land could multiply its money value by three times. The value of the entire area could then be pegged at \$50-150 billion.

The Ridge is the defining feature of Delhi. Its natural value has been recognised in the Master Plans, where it is defined as the rocky outcrop of the Aravallis that needs to be completely protected. It is

Activism to save the sprawling Ridge has started relatively late.

recharge area and has been declared 'notified' by the Central Ground Water Board in 1997 and 2004. The Environment Act protects it on all three counts.

The SC ordered a stop to the International Hotels Complex in 1996-8 after finding it to be an ecologically protected area.

More recently, the court, not being an expert body on forests and environment, created the CEC, as its very own expert committee, to deal with such matters. The CEC directed the Centre in March 2004 to



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