

Small acts Can Transform The World.



PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MONTH



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How do you feel about our work for nature conservation?

SEND FEEDBACK

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Memes Of The Month

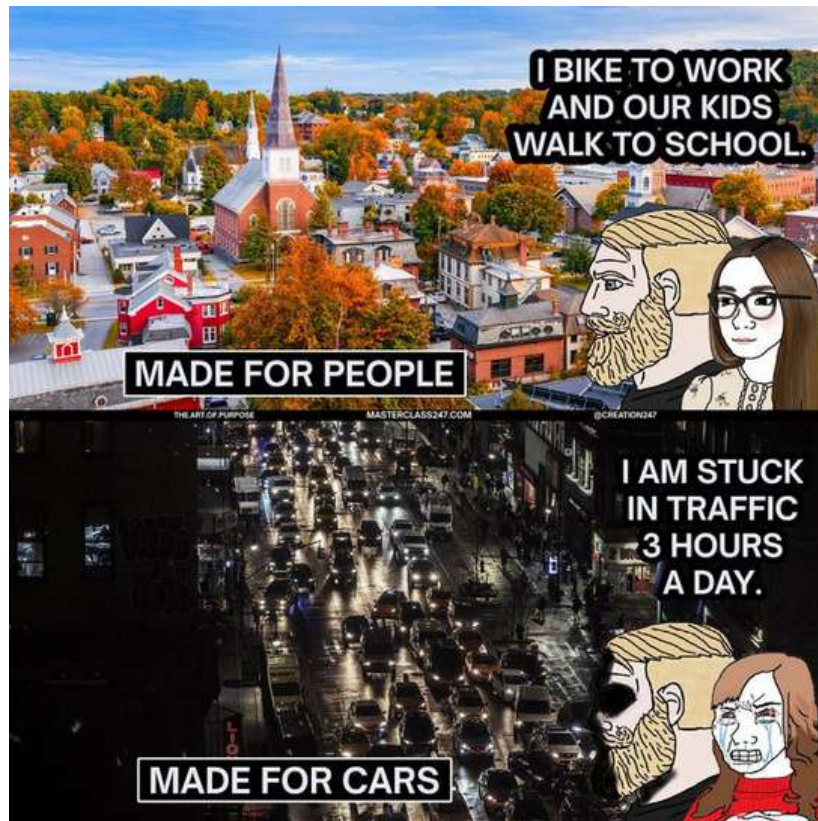


जब हमने नदियों की जगह ली,
तो हमने उसे विकास कहा।



जब नदियों ने अपनी जगह वापस
ली, तो हमने उसे विनाश कहा।

Mememes Of The Month



*All we ask: Stop scarring our Himalayas
in the name of 'development'*



We don't want 4-lane highways.
We don't want tunnels tearing our
hills apart. We don't want trains,
ropeways, or projects that cut down
our forests. We are content with our
narrow roads, our RTC buses, and
our longer routes. We don't need
Chandigarh in 3 hours we cherish the
6-hour journey

Waste Management Workshop at Soami Nagar Model School



NDNS successfully organized a Waste Management Workshop at Soami Nagar Model School, focusing on environmental awareness among students.

The session included interactive discussions, activities, and demonstrations to highlight the importance of waste segregation, recycling, and reducing single-use plastic.

Students enthusiastically participated and pledged to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives.

The workshop aimed to nurture young environmental leaders and strengthen community responsibility.

Together, we took a meaningful step towards building a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future.

Plantation Drive with IIAD



NDNS organized a tree plantation drive at Tughlakabad Biodiversity Park, bringing together enthusiastic students from IIAD to take meaningful climate action.

With shovels in hand and smiles on their faces, the students planted native saplings, contributing to restoring Delhi's green cover.

The initiative not only strengthened the bond between youth and nature but also instilled responsibility for safeguarding our environment.

By nurturing these trees, the participants pledged to protect biodiversity and ensure a healthier, greener future for generations.

[Watch Video](#)

Fireflies Workshop



This month wraps up our fireflies walks for the year, where countless visitors experienced the magical glow of nature's lanterns.

We also hosted a special private event with 12 children and their parents, who enjoyed the rare sight of fireflies while learning about their importance in healthy ecosystems.

The twinkling lights created cherished memories, showcasing the magic of nature.

A Magical Night In Delhi With Fireflies

“I was inside a noisy park within my never asleep metropolitan city!
I did not believe my eyes, truly!
‘Cause ten million fireflies did light up my environs...”

Mudita Agarwal, moved by the fireflies workshop, penned down her thoughts.



Click the link below to read the entire blog

[Open Blog](#)

Nature Talks Podh-cast Ep. 77



Delhi Trees vs Human Menace

Join us on Nature Talks Podh-Cast as host Verhaen Khanna from the New Delhi Nature Society sits down with Bollywood star Arjun Dutt, famous for his role as the Genie in Aladin!

In this lively episode, we dive into the critical condition of Delhi's trees, the reasons behind tree-cutting, and the vital importance of preserving green spaces.

Arjun shares insights from his acting journey, while Verhaen discusses NDNS's efforts to save trees and wildlife in India's capital.

Plus, get the scoop on the Delhi Birds and Delhi Trees card games, available at the NDNS website!

Don't miss Arjun's playful nod to Verhaen as "The Undertaker" and his call for a choke slam!

Buy the card games: www.ndns.in

[Listen on Spotify](#)

[Watch on Youtube](#)

[Watch Reel](#)

Tree Care

HOW TO SAVE FALLEN TREES

When a tree falls down for any reason like storm, pruning, construction, etc. instead of removing them, efforts should be made to restore the tree back to its original location.

HOW TO SAVE A FALLEN TREE

Standard Operating Procedures



Scan this QR code for more details

OR

Click the link below

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yN5wKNEFmzmtCSIRZzO1shu1PAMDD/view?usp=drivefsk>

Tree Care in the Colony

Do you have trees in your society?

No
Plant Trees

Yes
Are the trees cemented?

Yes
Remove the cement around the trees

No
Are there any wires/nails/boards on the tree

Yes
Remove them

No
Pour Water around the trees and spread leaf compost around the trees

Tree Line- The tree line is the row of trees planted along roads, and boundary walls. It helps keep the colony green, cool, and full of life.

What is a gap in the tree line? A gap means a tree has fallen, dried, or been illegally removed and hasn't been replaced.

What Can You Do? Residents can plant a native tree in the empty spot, especially during monsoon. With basic care like watering and composting, the tree line can be restored and kept healthy.

Illegal Activities and Penalties

 Driving nails into trees causes internal wounds, making them vulnerable to disease, decay, and even death.
Penalty is Rs 10,000/-

 Wrapping or hanging wires around trees constricts growth, damages the bark, and can lead to electric hazards or slow tree death.
Penalty is Rs 10,000/-

 Fixing boards onto trees is illegal. Trees are not advertising spaces. Defacing public property is a crime.
Penalty is Rs 10,000/-

 Digging Within 1 Metre of Trees damages roots, causes stress, and can destabilize the tree. It's illegal and harmful.
FIR will be filed against the person/department involved.

 Cementing Around Tree Base (Within 1 Metre) blocks water and air from reaching roots. It suffocates trees, prevents them from growing wider and weakens them structurally. Forest department will charge the penalty based on the damage caused.

[Open Pdf](#)

Raising Awareness

Vulture Awareness Day



International Vulture Awareness Day is celebrated to protect one of nature's most efficient cleaners.

The day highlights a vital truth — vultures, with their unmatched ability to prevent the spread of disease by consuming carcasses, face shrinking populations and rising threats from poisoning, habitat loss, and food scarcity. It calls for global awareness and urgent conservation efforts to ensure these remarkable birds continue to soar in our skies and keep ecosystems healthy.

World Dolphin Day



World Dolphin Day is celebrated to protect one of the ocean's most intelligent and playful beings.

The day highlights a vital truth — dolphins, with their extraordinary communication skills and social bonds, face shrinking habitats and growing threats from pollution, fishing nets, and climate change. It calls for global awareness and urgent conservation efforts to ensure these gentle guardians of the sea continue to thrive in our waters.

O3 Protection Day

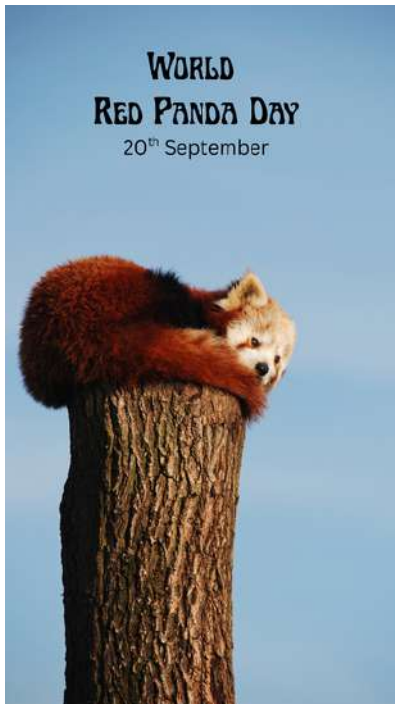


Ozone Protection Day is celebrated to safeguard the shield that protects all life on Earth.

The day highlights a vital truth — the ozone layer, which guards us from harmful ultraviolet rays, faces constant threats from human-made chemicals and climate change. It calls for global awareness and urgent action to reduce emissions and protect this fragile shield, ensuring a healthier planet for generations to come.

Raising Awareness

Int. Red Panda Day



International Red Panda Day is celebrated to protect one of the most charming and endangered forest animals. The day highlights a vital truth — red pandas, with their playful nature and striking beauty, face shrinking habitats, deforestation, and the dangers of poaching. It calls for global awareness and urgent conservation efforts to ensure these gentle guardians of the Himalayan forests continue to thrive in the wild.

World Rhino Day



World Rhino Day is celebrated to protect one of Earth's most powerful yet vulnerable animals. The day highlights a vital truth — rhinos, symbols of strength and resilience, face shrinking habitats and grave threats from poaching and illegal trade. It calls for global awareness and urgent conservation efforts to ensure these ancient giants continue to roam freely in our grasslands and forests.

World Gorilla Day



World Gorilla Day is celebrated to protect one of our closest relatives in the animal kingdom. The day highlights a vital truth — gorillas, with their strength, intelligence, and gentle family bonds, face shrinking habitats, poaching, and disease. It calls for global awareness and urgent conservation efforts to ensure these great apes continue to thrive in their forest homes.

Raising Awareness

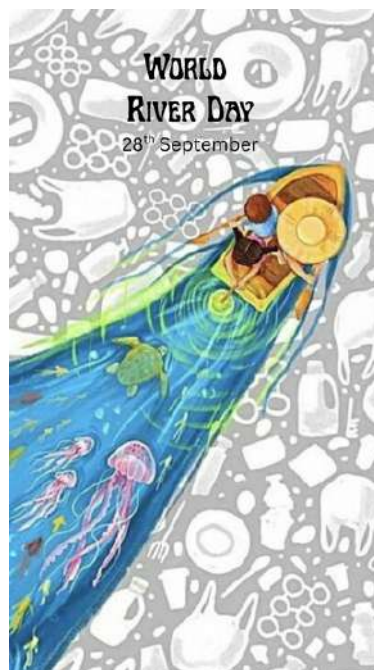
World Env. Health Day



World Environmental Health Day is celebrated to protect the link between a healthy planet and healthy people.

The day highlights a vital truth — clean air, safe water, healthy soil, and balanced ecosystems are essential for human well-being. Yet, pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss threaten this delicate balance. It calls for global awareness and urgent action to safeguard environmental health for present and future generations.

World River Day



World Rivers Day is celebrated to protect the lifelines of our planet.

The day highlights a vital truth — rivers, which provide water, food, and energy while sustaining countless species, face growing threats from pollution, dams, and climate change. It calls for global awareness and urgent conservation efforts to ensure these flowing ecosystems continue to nourish people and nature alike.

BLOOD MOON



The recent blood moon lunar eclipse captivated skywatchers across the world with its rare beauty.

As the Earth aligned perfectly between the Sun and the Moon, the lunar surface took on a deep red glow, often called the “blood moon.”

This striking celestial event reminded us of nature’s wonders beyond our planet and the importance of protecting our skies from pollution.

Many gathered outdoors to witness the phenomenon, sharing a collective moment of awe under the night sky.

Help Trees & Animals



The Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (NGT), Principal Bench, New Delhi in O.A. No. 62 of 2013 Aditya, N. Prasad & Ors. v Union of India & Ors. vide its Order dated 23.04.2013 directed.

"In the meanwhile, we direct all the public authorities, more particularly Municipal Corporation of Delhi, DDAs, DTC, DMRC, NHAI and all Government respondents in this petition including the Director General of CPWD, the Chief Engineer, FWD, to ensure that:

1. All the sign boards, names, advertisements, any kind of boards or signages, electric wires and high tension cables or otherwise are removed from the trees forthwith.
2. They shall also ensure that the concrete surrounding the trees within one metre of the trees are removed forthwith and all the trees are looked after well and due precaution is taken in future so that no concrete or construction or repaving work is done at least within one metre radius of the trunk of trees. The Vice-Chairperson, the Commissioner, the Chief Engineer, the Director General and all other senior most officers of the Departments/authorities concerned shall be personally responsible for carrying out this order.
3. The Departments/authorities concerned shall take all and every prohibitive measures to prevent the defacing of the trees in any manner whatsoever, save only its trimming in accordance with law.
4. All the respondents whose boards are fixed on the trees shall be prosecuted by the respective authorities under in accordance with the relevant law."



Nails on trees



Wires on trees



Signboards on trees



Cementing within 1 meter of trees



Digging within 1 meter of trees

Green Helpline : 011-23378513

TREE CARE

1. Remove cement around the tree, soil space around the tree should not be less than 1 meter on all sides.
2. Remove nails, wires and signboards from trees.
3. In case of holes in the tree caused by nails, you can put wet soil in the injured parts of the tree.
4. Ensure no digging or construction is done within 1 meter of trees.
5. Give water to trees daily.
6. In the forest, trees shed their leaves on the soil floor, those leaves mix with the soil and turn into nutrition for the tree roots to absorb. But around the city streets, all the fallen leaves are swept away, so the trees are not receiving that important nutrition from the fallen leaves. This is why it is extremely important to put leaf compost around trees, to make the trees strong and healthy.
7. If you see a tree cut, or with nails, wires, signboards on it or if the tree is cemented within 1 meter, then please call the Green Helpline and report the issue with the exact location, then they will send you the complaint number by SMS for you to follow up.

HOW TO SAVE FALLEN TREES



HOW TO CONDUCT A TREE CENSUS :

1. Number on the Tree :
2. Common name of the tree :
3. Location of the tree :
4. Girth (in cms) :
5. Approximate height (in ft) :
6. Health of the tree :
(D-Dry, H-Healthy, I-Infected, L-Lopped, N-No Nails, Ch-Tree guard chocking)
7. Width of open soil around the tree :
(A- Up to 1 ft, B- 1 to 2 ft, C- 2 to 4 ft, D- 4 to 6 ft, E- Over 6 ft)
8. Ground condition, outside the open soil :
(S- loose soil, C- cemented, M-metalized, T-tiled)
9. Remarks :

Download the form :



We're offering free reflective collars for street animals and tree care brochures to spread awareness and safety.

You can collect them from the NDNS headquarters, so simply contact us at newdelhinaturesociety@gmail.com

Let's work together to protect our animals and nurture our trees.

[Email us](#)

Important Articles

SC takes note of timber logs in floodwaters

Utkarsh Anand

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday expressed alarm that rampant illegal tree felling appeared to be taking place across the fragile Himalayan belt, as it referred to videos of timber logs floating in the floodwaters of Himachal Pradesh.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Bhushan R Gavai and justice K Vinod Chandran, underscored the gravity of the issue against the backdrop of widespread devastation in northern states caused by incessant rains, flash floods and cloudbursts.

"We have seen unprecedented landslides and floods in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir. From the media reports, it is also noticed that in the flood, a huge number of wooden logs were floating around.

Prima facie, it appears that there has been illegal felling of trees which has been going on uphill," the bench noted in its order, while hearing a public interest litigation on environmental degradation in the Himalayan region.

The court issued notice to the Union of India (through the ministries of environment and jal shakti), the National Disaster Management Authority, the National Highways Authority of India, and the governments of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir.

Orally addressing Solicitor General Tushar Mehta after the order, CJI Gavai stressed: "It is a serious issue. In the media we have seen that a large number of wooden logs are flowing around in Himachal and Uttarakhand. Illegal tree felling is going on...Villages after villages in Punjab are inundated."

Mehta assured the bench that

he would immediately speak to the environment ministry secretary to coordinate with the state governments. "We have tinkered with nature so much that nature is responding with its fury now," the SG said. Responding, the bench said: "Development has to be there but it has to be sustainable development...there have to be adequate mitigating measures."

The counsel for the petitioner, Anamika Rana, pointed to another dimension of the crisis, noting that there are 14 tunnels between Chandigarh and Manali, which become "death traps" during landslides in heavy rain. She referred to reports of nearly 300 people being stranded inside one such tunnel.

"We have noticed the seriousness of the matter," the bench replied.

The petition, filed through advocate Shubham Upadhyay, has sought protection for pristine ecol-

ogy of Himalayan states, while further demanding formation of judicial guidelines and an inquiry by a special investigation team to ward off future disasters.

The court's concern comes at a time when large parts of northern India are reeling under the onslaught of extreme monsoon. In Himachal Pradesh, natural disasters triggered by incessant rainfall such as flash floods and landslides have claimed more than 300 lives this season.

Punjab too has been battered, with at least 30 deaths and more than 354,000 people affected by floods. Authorities have declared all 23 districts of the state flood-hit as rivers and reservoirs breached danger levels. Uttarakhand has suffered a series of cloudbursts and flash floods across Chamoli, Rudrapur, Tehri Garhwal, and Bageshwar districts, leaving several dead and dozens missing.

SC flags illegal tree felling in hill states

Utkarsh Anand

letters@hindustantimes.com

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A bench led by Chief Justice of India BR Gavai underscored the gravity of the issue against the backdrop of widespread devastation in northern states caused by incessant rains, flash floods and cloudbursts.

THE APEX COURT UNDERScored THE GRAVITY OF THE ISSUE AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF WIDESPREAD DEVASTATION IN NORTHERN STATES

"From the media reports, it is also noticed that in the flood, a huge number of wooden logs were floating around...it appears that there has been illegal felling of trees..." the bench noted. →P10

Important Articles

{ FARIDABAD } COMPLAINT FILED WITH FOREST DEPT

Trees 'felled' in Aravalli tract

Jayashree Nandi

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FARIDABAD: Environmental activists have flagged large-scale felling of trees and clearing of vegetation in Sarai Khwaja village in Faridabad's Aravallis, an area declared a "deemed forest" by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in March 2019.

In a complaint to the divisional forest officer (DFO), Faridabad Forest Division, on Saturday, Lt Col Sarvadaman Singh Oberoi (retd), the original petitioner before the NGT, alleged that "a concerted effort is underway to clear the area of all trees and regeneration in an apparent effort to frustrate the NGT's orders and violate the status quo situation." He added, "This cutting of trees of all sizes is amply visible in the attached photos with the time, date and GPS location (Lat. Long.) stamp of today, Saturday, 30.08.2025."

Oberoi has submitted photos and videos of the felling to the forest department. He pointed to the timing of the activity, saying, "The timing of this activity is particularly suspect, as it comes



A photo shared by an environmentalist on alleged damage. HT

just after a week or two of the notification of the definition of forest as per the dictionary meaning by the Govt of Haryana, which has fixed a minimum threshold of forest cover for the same. It is submitted that this clearing is an attempt to create new facts on the ground and subvert the orders of the hon'ble NGT and the hon'ble SC regarding deemed forests."

According to the DFO, nearly an acre of shrubs had been cleared. On August 18, Haryana issued a notification defining

"forest as per dictionary meaning" with restrictive technical criteria, a move environmental activists have warned could strip most of the state's remaining Aravalli tracts of legal protection. The definition requires a minimum canopy density of 40% and coverage of at least five hectares if isolated, or two hectares if contiguous with government-notified forests. It excludes all linear, compact agroforestry plantations and orchards outside notified forests.

Surender Dhangi, DFO Faridabad, said the department had acted on the complaint. "We got the complaint and immediately rushed a team to the spot. The clearing of vegetation has been stopped," he said. It was not immediately clear on whose behest the clearing was done.

HT had reported on March 9, 2019, that the NGT held a 52-acre plot in Sarai Khwaja village to be a "deemed forest", a ruling with potential implications for real estate projects across the Aravallis. The case arose after Haryana permitted the felling of over 7,000 trees in 2017, including mesquite and axle wood (dhau), for a group housing project by Bharti Land Limited. The tribunal rejected the state's contention that the land was not a forest because it was not recorded as such in revenue records, calling the interpretation "an erroneous understanding of law."

Three months later, Haryana government moved the Supreme Court, calling NGT's order "erroneous in law" and seeking to quash it. According to Oberoi and other activists defending the NGT order, the case has had only one hearing so far.

the Hindustan Times

SC overturns order on Hry community land

Utkarsh Anand

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NEW DELHI: In a judgment with major implications for land ownership in Haryana as well as for the sensitive Aravalli ranges, the Supreme Court on Tuesday set aside its April 2022 ruling that had directed the return of village commons to gram panchayats, dealing a blow to the state government's efforts to reclaim thousands of acres of land.

The court upheld the correctness of a 2005 full bench decision of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which had held that unutilised land, not specifically earmarked for common purposes during consolidation, would continue to vest with proprietors rather than the panchayat or the state. A three-judge bench of Chief Justice of India Bhushan R Gauri and Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and KV Viswanathan concluded that the 2022 ruling erred in ignoring binding precedent and constitutional principles.

"We have therefore no hesitation in holding that no error could be noticed in the impugned judgment and final order of the full bench of the high court... lands which have not been earmarked for any specific purpose do not vest in the Gram Panchayat or the State," the court held while dismissing Haryana's appeal.

The bench traced the roots of the dispute to the landmark Bhagat Ram Vs State of Punjab (1967) decision, where a five-judge consti-



The verdict has tremendous implications for Aravallis.

tution bench had drawn a crucial distinction between acquisition of land by the State and modification or extinguishment of private rights. It held that unless possession of land changed hands under Section 24 of the Consolidation Act, management and control would not vest in the panchayat. In other words, land contributed by proprietors during consolidation but not earmarked for common use continued to belong to the contributors.

The court noted that the 2022 ruling, which ordered reclamation of lands sold by proprietors or gram panchayats for monetary gain, did not take into account the constitution bench judgment in Bhagat Ram and thus reached a conclusion contrary to settled law.

The court further underlined the importance of stare decisis—the doctrine that consistent judicial views must be respected to ensure stability in the law. It pointed out that the Punjab and Haryana High Court had, in more than 100 judgments, consistently

applied Bhagat Ram to hold that so-called bachat land (unutilised portions left after land earmarked for common purposes was carved out) reverted to proprietors. The state itself had earlier accepted this position, challenging only time-bound directions for redistribution of such land.

Tuesday's verdict follows the court's May 2024 order, when a two-judge bench led by Justice Gauri recalled the April 2022 decision on grounds that it had undermined the Bhagat Ram precedent. The recall order had fixed the matter for re-hearing, while cautioning against ignoring constitutional bench rulings.

The now-overturned 2022 judgment had been welcomed by environmental activists, who saw in it a tool to protect the ecologically sensitive Aravalli hills from illegal construction and mining. Lands categorised as gar munsin pajar (uncultivable mountain land) and those notified under the Punjab Land Preservation Act were meant to be shielded from exploitation. But consolidation processes and pro-rata land pooling had often enabled their sale to outsiders and developers. How land is classified has had tremendous implication for the Aravalli ranges in Haryana, where unauthorised mining and construction has eaten away at a hill range that served as a significant green belt in northwest India and, apart from bringing biodiversity, shielded the national capital from the desert sands and dust from more arid regions to its west.

Important Articles



Like a midsummer night's dream

A city landmark under moonlight

{ PUBLIC INTEREST }

Let's start with the setting. This is the night following the night of Monday's lunar eclipse. A white moon is peering out from the starless sky, shining upon a pond. The water in the pond though is absorbing nothing of the moonshine, looking, in fact, much darker than the sky.

This is a place dreamy enough to stage Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It lies in Delhi's heart.

The place also has a more tangible identity, not dependent on the presence of our inconstant moon. In this city of tombs, samadhis, and memorials, the site memorialises two icons, and is called Gandhi-King Plaza.

The American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. was an ardent devotee of Mahatma Gandhi. Once, in the mid-1950s, he described Gandhi as "the guiding light of our technique of non-violent social change." In 1958, King visited India for the first and only time. On arriving in Delhi, he said: "To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim."

The aforementioned site stands as a souvenir of King's pilgrimage to Gandhi's homeland. The Gandhi-King Plaza lies within the India International Center (IIC), close to the entry gate. To be sure, King never visited this spot. IIC didn't then exist; it came

up four years after his visit. Neither did King ever personally meet Gandhi. (As for Gandhi, he never visited the US.) Anyhow, this secretive space was created to commemorate the spiritual union of these two giants of the 20th century.

This moment, the plaza is steeped in 10pm darkness. A granite plinth, which is responsible behind the plaza's unique name, is partially visible under the moonlight. The inscriptions on the plinth display the sayings of these two historic figures.

"For us today there can be no sacrifice higher than to forget distinctions of high and low and to realise the equality of all men"—Gandhi

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension but it is the presence of justice and brotherhood"—King

(Curiously, while the all-knowing Google confirms the quote attributed to King, it shows no credible search result for the quote attributed to Gandhi).

An even more majestic sight is of the two massive pilkhan trees whose combined foliage has colonised the entire plaza. In the daylight, the same leafy pair also colonises the pond, their reflection falling on the pond's stagnant water. Also during the day, the roar of the traffic outside on Max Mueller Marg does intrude into Gandhi-King's profound silence, but the plaza's steely solitude remains impenetrable. Tonight is a rare exception. The plaza's solitariness has been somewhat compromised—by the intrusion of the brilliantly white moon. See photo.



READ: For more stories by Mayank Austen Soofi, scan the QR code

Six projects get Ridge board nod; cafe at Sanjay Van, hosp expansion among them

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New Delhi: The Ridge Management Board (RMB), which met in July after a year, has approved six projects – construction of a café at Sanjay Van; conservation work on historical monuments in Sanjay Van; laying of sewer lines at Smriti Van; construction of Madhya Pradesh's state guest house in Vasant Kunj; infrastructure development on defence land in Delhi Cantonment; and expansion of Balak Ram Hospital in Timarpur.

The projects will now need the approval of the Central Empowered Committee and the Supreme Court.

RMB permitted the construction of MP's state guest house on a plot allotted by DDA adjacent to the existing state guest house in Vasant Kunj. The project is in the morphological ridge and seeks felling or transplantation of 215 trees.

"Necessary approvals under Trees Act (DPTA), 1994 shall be obtained by the user agency for felling or transplantation of trees," stated the minutes of the meeting. While the RMB was held on July 18, the minutes of the meeting were prepared on Aug 21.

Two of the projects involve Sanjay Van, which is part of the south-central ridge

and notified as a reserved forest. The first project involves the construction of a water trough and tank, as well as a café made of bamboo for public use. The total area proposed is 60 sqm, and the proposal does not involve felling or transplantation of trees. For the second project, RMB has granted permission to

DDA to take up conservation works of existing monument structures at Sanjay Van. The work requires the removal or translocation of 16 trees.

The board has also given the nod to the defence ministry for the construction of infrastructure on defence land at Nausena Bhawan in Delhi Cantt. The proposed

area is over 8 hectares, falling in the morphological ridge, and no tree felling is involved. The estimated cost of the project is about Rs 450 crore.

The fifth project – expansion of Balak Ram Hospital in Timarpur – was proposed by MCD to ensure the smooth passage of emergency vehicles inside the facility. "The proposed project area is 960 sqm. The hospital is already functioning, and nine trees are standing in the passage that runs around the building. These trees are a hindrance in the smooth passage of emergency vehicles," stated the proposal. The project area falls within the boundary of the geo-morphological ridge.

"Necessary approvals under DPTA shall be obtained by the user agency for felling/transplantation of trees," said RMB as per the minutes of the meeting.

It also permitted DDA to lay a sewer line for diverting surplus sewage coming directly into the waterbody at Smriti Van. "This shall help in its ecological restoration and restoration of aquatic biodiversity. The area is part of the south central ridge and reserve forest, and the existing structure includes store rooms, a decentralised sewage treatment plant, and a small toilet block along with the boundary wall," said the proposal.

NOD TO FELL, TRANSPLANT 240 TREES



Nature of work	Number of trees to be felled or transplanted
Construction of a state guest house in Vasant Kunj	215
Construction of water trough, tank and cafe in Sanjay Van	0
Conservation works of existing three monument structures at Sanjay Van	16
Sewer line at Smriti Van, Vasant Kunj	0
Constructions at Nausena Bhawan, Delhi Cantt	0
Expansion of Balak Ram Hospital, Timarpur	9

► Now, permission from Central Empowered Committee and Supreme Court is required

► For tree felling and transplantation, user agency will have to take approval under Delhi Preservation of Trees Act

Important Articles

DDA plans greenscapes near Yamuna to avoid damage during floods

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New Delhi: Delhi Development Authority (DDA), which started cleaning up the silt deposits at project sites on the Yamuna floodplain to restore public infrastructure after the flooding on Tuesday, has decided to shift its focus from building concrete structures to green landscapes along the banks.

The reason for the shift is the time-tested resilience of certain indigenous species of plants, which are part of a multi-tier riverine plantation project. "The plantation system was adapted according to the ecological needs of the floodplain, and it survived the water level rise in 2023. This year, too, it is anticipated that the plants have not suffered major damage," an official said.

"Instead of traditional concrete structures, the project sites will be developed as green landscapes, with indigenous species of plants dotting the riverbank and wetlands," the official said. If this is done, the damage from flooding will be minimal in the future, officials said.

"In place of tiled walkways, there will be unpaved paths. Seating will be in a simple, nature-friendly manner. There will be spaces for community activities such as yoga, as well as decks for river viewing. The banks will have environmental information boards, organic toilets and solar-powered nighttime lighting," the official said. A budget of Rs 82 crore has been allocated



Staffers are cleaning the surface-level silt, removing unwanted plants and repairing infrastructure

in the current financial year for the floodplain rejuvenation.

The development of the Yamuna riverfront is being done in phases.

Out of the 1,700 hectares of land spread over a 22-kilometre urban stretch, approximately 780 hectares have been developed. The Asita park, Vasudev Ghat, Amrit Biodiversity Park, and Bansera are part of this rejuvenation plan. On the remaining 920 hectares, the Yamuna Vatika, Mayur Nature Park, Kalindi Aviral and Hindon Lake are about to come up. Work is in progress at the Millennium depot near Sarai Kale Khan, where a market will be created using tents. There will be parking area too.

ADDA official said that lieutenant governor VK Saxena was overseeing the floodplain clean-up. Officials added that the staff waited for the water to recede before starting the cleaning. The staff is cleaning the silt, removing plants and repairing infrastructure, such as seating areas and lights. Restoring water bodies comes next.

SC orders status quo in Mhadei-Kotigaon area, seeks experts' report

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday called for a report from the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) - expert body assisting court on environment issues - on notifying the Mhadei wildlife sanctuary and adjoining areas in Goa as a tiger reserve and directed the state government to maintain status quo over the land in question.

The order was passed by a bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Bhushan R Gavai on an urgent application moved by non-profit organisation Goa Foundation objecting to certain clearances by the state for commercial projects in the land for tiger reserve, which the state delayed to notify despite a July 2023 direction by the Goa bench of the Bombay high court.

The application was filed in the Goa government's appeal of 2023 challenging the HC judgment on the ground that the area to be notified as tiger reserve — measuring up to 745.18 square kilometres, will take away significant stretch of land that will impact forest dwellers and related activities in the buffer zone of the reserve. The HC order required the state to notify the reserve within three months, a decision that has not been stayed till date by the top court.

Faced with opposing stands by the state and the Goa Foundation, the bench, also comprising justices K Vinod Chandran and AS Chandurkar said, "We find it will be appropriate for CEC to examine this issue and submit a report to this court."

In the meantime, the court held, "The petitioner state is



The notification of the tiger reserve will take up 20% of land in Goa, the state argued. HT PHOTO

directed to maintain status quo so far as the area directed to be notified as tiger reserve by the high court is concerned."

The court requested the CEC to submit its report in six weeks after hearing all concerned parties, including the state government. The matter has been posted after eight weeks to enable the state and Goa Foundation to respond to the CEC report.

Advocate Norma Alvares who appeared for Goa Foundation pointed out that in the garb of the appeal pending in the top court, the state was handing out permissions for eco tourism projects in the land which falls within the area to be notified as tiger reserve.

The state represented by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi said that the high court order directing notification of the tiger reserve will take away 20% of the land in Goa. He said, "People staying along this place will fall in the buffer zone and will have to be moved out. It will swallow 20% of the state. Can you have 20% of the state being declared as tiger reserve. Goa has a unique problem being a small state. If this is implemented, tigers will be roaming everywhere in Goa."

Important Articles

Tree offence portal to digitise records of violations

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New Delhi: The Delhi forest and wildlife department has made a tree offence portal to digitise records of violations under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act (DPTA), 1994.

The portal will log cases of illegal pruning, felling and concretising and help in identifying repeat offenders.

In Delhi, hundreds of trees are illegally felled, violating the

DPTA and NGT's guidelines.

The portal has been developed following the orders of National Green Tribunal (NGT) which, in a case, observed that a resident was repeatedly found to be cutting and pruning trees.

The case of the repeat offender came before NGT in a plea filed by the Naharpur RWA in July 2021.

After inspections, the forest department told the tribunal that it had fined the offender Rs 20,000 for illegal pruning. The

The portal has been developed following the orders of NGT which, in a recent case, observed that a resident was repeatedly found to be cutting and pruning trees

resident was later charged a compounding fee of Rs 3.5 lakh for felling trees several times between 2023 and 2024.

The forest department had also told NGT that it lacked a system of tracking such cases.

In May this year, NGT told the department to establish the mechanism for digitised record-keeping in three months.

In the hearing held on May 15, Delhi govt assured the tribunal that it would take stricter action against the repeat offenders by digitising records.

In its report dated Sept 19, the forest department said that the portal "has been created" to

track such "offenders booked under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994".

The tribunal also noted in May that the Supreme Court had called for a tree census in Delhi and asked agencies to explore the feasibility of geotagging trees during the exercise.

The forest department has brought in the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun, to carry out the census. The Supreme Court has been told that it will take four years to complete it.

 Hindustan Times

'Web portal made to log tree offences'

NEW DELHI: The state forest and wildlife department has created a tree offence portal online where all tree-related offences and offenders in Delhi will be recorded, the department told National Green Tribunal (NGT). The submission came in a hearing of a case from north Delhi's

Naharpur, where an offender had felled and pruned trees in the area on multiple occasions.

The NGT has been hearing a plea by the Naharpur residents' welfare association (RWA) since July 2021, alleging illegal felling of trees in the area. The forest department, following ground

inspections, had informed the tribunal that a repeat offender was levied a compounding fine of ₹3.5 lakh for the offence between 2023 and 2024.

In the submission dated September 19, the department said the portal for all tree-related offences was now complete. **HTC**

'2k trees may be impacted for Dwarka sports campus'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The construction of an integrated multi-sport arena, including a cricket stadium, in Dwarka's Sector 19B is likely to impact 2,035 trees, the forest and wildlife department has informed National Green Tribunal. The department claimed that no tree had been felled illegally or damaged at the site so far.

The submission was made following an inspection of the 20.3-hectare project site. The inspection was ordered after the tribunal received a plea alleging that trees were felled without permission.

Officials handling the matter told NGT that most of the trees being impacted "are vilayati kikar (*Prosopis juliflora*) while around 20,000 native trees had already been planted as compensatory afforestation".

The project is being executed by Delhi Development Authority through a private builder via a public-private partnership model. The submission, dated Sept 16, says the department carried out the detailed field inspection on Sept 1, finding all trees to be numbered correctly, with none damaged or felled. The project has now been sent to the Supreme Court-appointed central empowered committee for further approvals.

In its report, the department said the site had 2,266 trees, out of which 2,035 would be removed. This includes 266, which have been recommended for transplantation, while 1,769 trees will be felled.

All trees at the site are found to be in order as per the tree list and are marked with

Officials handling the matter told NGT that most of the trees being impacted 'are vilayati kikar (*Prosopis juliflora*) while around 20,000 native trees had already been planted as compensatory afforestation'

a unique number and colour coding, the report stated. "No offence like tree cutting, felling, pruning or root damage has been noticed within the project premises," it emphasised.

The report also added that the private construction company had earlier, between May and Aug, informed the department about 173 trees in the area that fell due to heavy rain and strong winds. The department said its inspection revealed these 173 trees were not part of the project site, but the contractor would be asked to undertake compensatory plantation for these trees as per the standard operating procedure.

The project will see a premium commercial sports complex being developed, along with a club and a five-star hotel with ample parking space.

Any project in the city requiring more than 50 trees to be felled requires approval by the SC-appointed committee under Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994. The department said the committee would carry out another inspection soon, which would take the final decision on the trees to be felled or transplanted.

Important Articles

Centre forms environment auditing framework

Jayashree Nandi

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NEW DELHI: The Union environment ministry has put in place an environment monitoring framework comprising environment auditing through registered environment auditors (EAs) in a move aimed at enhancing the capacity of pollution control boards.

Union environment minister Bhupender Yadav announced on Tuesday that, on August 29, the Government of India notified the Environment Audit Rules, 2025, creating a formal framework for environmental auditing across the country. "These rules establish a two-tiered system of auditors and set up a dedicated agency to transparently oversee the process. These rules are designed to supplement the existing monitoring and inspection framework of the government, not to replace it,"

he added.

Tier-1 comprises existing government regulator-based review of compliance, including by government agencies like Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs) and regional offices of the ministry; and tier-2 comprises environment auditor-based mechanism.

The auditors will be brought on board through a certification and registration mechanism, to be implemented by the Environment Audit Designate Agency (EADA). The agency will be responsible for certification and registration of EAs, monitoring their performance, take disciplinary action, facilitating capacity building, and maintaining an online register, according to officials.

The certification of EAs will be based on either scrutiny of their qualification and experience or by conducting an exam. The



The EADA will be responsible for certification and registration of environment auditors (EAs). HT PHOTO

assignment of registered EAs to specific project entities shall be done by a random assignment method, they said.

Experts have flagged the capacity crunch in pollution control boards and the lack of adequate monitoring of various infrastructure and industry projects to assess whether they comply with environmental and forest laws.

Now, the Union government can employ registered environment auditors for undertaking environment audits of projects, activities, or processes governed by applicable environmental laws and regulations; conducting sampling and analysis of emissions, effluents, wastes, and evaluating the effectiveness of pollution control and waste management systems installed; reporting any violations or non-compliance of applicable environmental regulations related to the project.

The Centre and state governments will assign projects to these registered environment auditors who will have the authority to enter the premises, collect samples, obtain audit evidence, and access such other information or documents necessary for the purpose of proper discharge of their assigned responsibilities, according to the notification.

There is no specific provision for filing of annual reports by the auditors. The annual report will be filed by EADA, according to officials. "To address the existing gaps in environmental compliance monitoring, and drawing upon international best practices, the Environment Audit Rules has been conceptualised" an official said in response to HT's queries.

Debadityo Sinha, lead — climate and ecosystems at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, said the "entire framework risks becoming a facade because its credibility rests wholly on whether the EADA can function with genuine independence and rigor". "Unless this body proves it can hold auditors accountable without bending to political or industry pressure, the system will only weaken public regulators further while giving the appearance of compliance," he said.

Govt notifies forest conservation rules amendment

Jayashree Nandi

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NEW DELHI: The Union environment ministry has notified the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules, 2025, which make significant amendments to the forest conservation rules, 2023.

Among several key amendments, the new rules, notified on August 31, said the Centre can decide what works can be taken up on various linear infrastructure projects before final forest clearance is granted.

The new rules define "working permission" as permission granted to linear projects after in-principle, or Stage-I, approval to mobilise resources or to commence the preliminary project works other than black topping and concretisation of roads, laying

of railway tracks, charging of transmission lines, etc. or as specified by the Central Government."

Whereas the 2023 rules specified that "working permission" means permission granted to linear projects before final approval to mobilise the resources to commence the preliminary project work other than black topping, concretisation, laying of railway tracks, charging of transmission lines, etc. or as specified in the in-principle approval.

Further, the new rules have defined what is final or Stage-II approval. It means the prior approval of the Central government granted under sub-section (1) of section 2 of the Adhiniyam after receipt of satisfactory compliance report of the conditions stipulated in the in-principle or Stage-I approval from the State Govern-

THE NOTIFICATION GIVES STRATEGIC, DEFENCE SECTORS EXEMPTIONS TO SUBMIT OFFLINE APPLICATIONS

ment; while "in-principle or Stage-I approval" means the preliminary approval of the Central government to allow the use of forest land for a given purpose specified under sub-section (1) of section 2 of the Adhiniyam subject to the compliance of conditions stipulated therein.

The notification also provides exemptions to certain sectors especially "defence", "strategic" and "national importance", "public interest", etc to submit their

applications offline.

"Provided that for projects related to defence, strategic and national importance, exceptional cases related to public interest or emergent nature, the user agency may be permitted to submit an application for prior approval through offline mode," it states.

Further special dispensation has been provided to critical minerals sector for compensatory afforestation. Mining of critical and strategic minerals, as specified in Part-D of the First Schedule of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, and minerals specified by the ministry of mines out of the list of minerals included in the Seventh Schedule of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, will get special dispensation for raising compensatory

afforestation over degraded forest land, minimum double in extent.

The notification also makes declaring compensatory afforestation lands as "protected forests" optional, which earlier was a must. It states the words, figures and brackets "same shall be notified as protected forest under section 29 of Indian Forest Act, 1927 or under any other law for the time being in force" to be substituted with the words: "same shall be transferred and mutated as forest land in favour of the Forest Department or notified as protected forest under section 29 of Indian Forest Act, 1927 or under any other law for the time being in force..." "It is important to see if these rules exempt forest departments from notifying compensatory afforestation as protected forest or not," an expert said.

Important Articles

Ridge Takes On 'Foreign' Invasion

Pruning Of Kikar Branches To Allow Growth Of Native Species; Experts Question Long-Term Viability

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New Delhi: For nearly a century, the Central Ridge has stood under a thick canopy of vilayati kikar (*Prosopis juliflora*), an invasive species from south and central America. This fast-growing tree, whose leaves and branches block sunlight, spreads so widely that it leaves little room for other species, thus degrading forest diversity. Now, a pilot project attempts to push back the kikar to ecologically restore the Central Ridge by giving native trees a second chance.

Of the 864 hectares of the Central Ridge, the forest department has been carrying out ecological restoration in three patches totalling 70 hectares. Using the method of canopy lifting, the branches of vilayati kikar are pruned to allow sunlight to penetrate, facilitating the growth of native species planted around the kikar.

The project started on a small patch in 2022 and has now been expanded. "The branches of vilayati kikar are pruned every six months so that other native species can get enough sunlight to grow," explained an official. When TOI visited the Central Ridge on Thursday, it found the vilayati kikar in the select patches trimmed and saplings planted around them. The pruned branches were dumped nearby.

The removal of vilayati kikar is necessary for restoring the Ridge to its pristine glory. Since the tree has both wide-spreading shallow roots and very deep taproot, it takes up rainwater quickly and also pulls large amounts of groundwater during dry spells, often leaving less water for native species and lowering the local water table. It also displays allelopathic traits, releasing chemicals that suppress the growth of surrounding vegetation. Due to its rapid invasion, it replaces native species, disturbs biodiversity, and cau-

RESTORING GREEN LUNGS

Central Ridge

Total area
864 hectares

Land-owning agencies
Forest department,
Army (Signal Regiment),
DDA, CPWD, NDMC,
MHA, MCD, Northern
Railway and LADO

■ Delhi also has
Northern, South Central,
Southern, Nanakpura
and Morphological
ridges



How Vilayati Kikar Is Being Removed From Central Ridge

Canopy zones created, Kikar branches pruned to allow sunlight to penetrate the ground

About Vilayati Kikar (*Prosopis juliflora*)

- It's an invasive species from South and Central America
- The British introduced Vilayati Kikar in Central Ridge around 1920
- According to India State of Forest Report, it is the most dominant species in Delhi's forests and rural areas

Impact Of Vilayati Kikar

- Due to its rapid invasion, it replaces native species and disturbs the ecology
- Pulls large amounts of groundwater and disturbs the biodiversity
- Displays allelopathic traits, suppressing the growth of other vegetation around them

History Of Ridge

Delhi Ridge is the tail end of the ancient Aravalli Hills, which are around 1,500 million years old

ses habitat loss.

According to the forest department's project proposal on 'ecological restoration of Central Ridge through biodiversity enrichment', city's green lung has lost its ecological services because of degradation due to urbanisation, other human induced factors, and biological invasion by alien species, including *Prosopis juliflora*. "The Ridge ecosystems have been rendering ecological services such as combating desertification (keeping air moist), buffering local weather, serving as a

catchment area and recharging the groundwater, and providing recreation to the citizens. All these ecological services have been substantially reduced over time," stated the proposal.

Vilayati kikar is the most dominant species not only in the Central Ridge, but in most of Delhi's forests and rural areas, according to India State of Forest Report, released in Dec 2024.

However, experts aren't sure of the project's long-term viability because of the doubt whether the kikar will be pruned regularly as required.

Pradip Krishnan, environmentalist and author of *Trees of Delhi*, said, "The overweening presence of vilayati kikar, whose planting began in 1919-20, now makes up over 90% of all the trees on the Ridge. No restoration

plan can succeed without getting rid of this tree. Lopping off the big branches and then planting other species underneath is not a feasible plan. But then Delhi's Trees Act gets in the way. It is important to allow not just anyone, but only the forest department to selectively start removing vilayati kikar to enable natural vegetation to flourish."

Krishnan said another big impediment was the system of engaging contractors to undertake the restoration work. "In a recent survey, I counted only fo-

ur species of native tree species being planted by a contractor. The rest were all exotics. Contractors need to be closely supervised and held accountable," he said. He added that there was a need to find ways of the forest department understanding and working planners, botanists, restoration experts and ecologists for better results.

Proposing Mangar Bani, a sacred grove in Haryana, as a model for restoring the Delhi Ridge, Krishnan said, "Mangar Bani is a ready-made model of what a natural forest in the northern Aravalli looks like. It shows you what species thrive here, in what kind of density and which ones can form communities. We call such forests a 'reference site', a place that teaches you everything you need to know about what to plant and how Mangar Bani is dominated by a wonderful tree called dhau (*Terminalia tomentosa*) that is brilliantly adapted to the rocks and minerals of this tract." He added that it was astonishing that in the past 120 years, no one had thought to plant even a single dhau when greening the Ridge.

Paizay Khudsar, scientist-in-charge at DDAs biodiversity parks programme, said that for the removal of vilayati kikar, just canopy lifting is not enough. "The pods and seedlings of the tree have to be regularly eliminated, followed by the opening of the canopies. If the saplings planted around a kikar do not get proper sunlight, the shade will kill them. Initiating the ecological restoration process is important for establishing a functional ecosystem," said Khudsar. He noted that some successful experiments of removal of vilayati kikar have been done in the country.

A forest official said, "A working plan for Delhi's forest for the next decade is being prepared in association with the Forest Research Institute. Ecological restoration of the Central and other Ridges will be systematically done as per such a plan."

Ridge zone works now get digital scrutiny in new SOP

Jasjeet Gandhok

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NEW DELHI: The Delhi forest and wildlife department on Wednesday called on all landowning agencies in Delhi to utilise its e-Van Lekh portal to check whether a project they were planning or executing forms a part of the "morphological ridge", according to a standard operating procedure (SOP) issued on Wednesday.

Environment minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said the SOP simplifies the process for getting clearance, allowing agencies to gauge and take additional permissions if the land parcel forms a part of morphological ridge.

The morphological ridge is defined as an area that shows ridge-like features (such as rocky terrain and hills), but is not actually a notified or protected forest. However, it enjoys the same protection as Delhi's Ridge, with no commercial activity or construction allowed there.

For clearance to execute projects on such land, the Ridge Management Board (RMB) and the Supreme Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) need to first give permission, before the Supreme Court gives the final permission.

What is a Morphological ridge?

Rocky, ridge-like terrain—not a notified forest but protected like Delhi's Ridge—no construction or commercial activity allowed

NEW SOP

Delhi forest & wildlife dept. directs land-owning agencies to use e-Van Lekh portal to check if projects fall within the morphological ridge.

MINISTER SAYS

Manjinder Singh Sirsa says the portal will simplify and speed up the clearance process.

CLEARANCE

Projects need approvals from the Ridge Management Board (RMB) and Supreme Court-appointed CEC before final SC clearance.

DIGITAL MAP

Ridge digitised using Geological Survey of India and GeoSpatial Delhi Limited data. Agencies can upload kmz files to verify locations.

DELHI'S NOTIFIED RIDGES	Southern Ridge	Central Ridge	South-Central Ridge (Mehrauli)	Northern Ridge	Nanakpura South-Central Ridge
	6,200ha	864ha	626ha	87ha	7ha

The SOP, dated September 24, said the department digitised Delhi's morphological ridge as per the map provided by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) and the GeoSpatial Delhi Limited (GSDL).

"Any area or location within the NCT of Delhi may be checked on the E-Van Lekh website to ascertain whether it falls under the category of Morphological Ridge as per the existing GSI map. The SOP can also be accessed on the e-vanlekh portal

at <https://evanlekh.e-forest.delhi.gov.in>," the SOP read, adding that one could simply upload "kml" files on the website, which will then automatically show whether a project is within the morphological ridge.

Sirsa said the process was fairly simple and will save time for all agencies concerned. "The CEC is also using the same process and portal for analysing the projects submitted before it," minister Sirsa said.

Delhi has four prominent

notified ridge areas, with an area of around 7,784 hectares considered as reserved forests.

The largest ridge is the Southern Ridge, which is spread over an area of 6,200 hectares, followed by the Central Ridge, spread over 864 hectares.

The south-central Ridge in Mehrauli is spread over 626 hectares and the Northern Ridge is spread over 87 hectares. Additionally, the Nanakpura south-central ridge is spread over seven hectares.

Important Articles

Hindustan Times

CM Gupta lays foundation for FOB near Rajputana Rifles HQ

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NEW DELHI: Chief minister Rekha Gupta and Public Works Department (PWD) minister Parvesh Verma on Saturday laid the foundation stone for a foot overbridge near the Rajputana Rifles headquarters in Delhi Cantonment area along the Ring Road. Officials said that tenders have been floated for the work and the overbridge is expected to be ready by March next year.

"This is a Diwali gift for our brave soldiers who were earlier forced to cross a tunnel which was at a very low height and dirty. As soon as the Rajputana Rifles team informed us about this problem, our government got into action and approved the construction of FOB. The previous governments never appreciated the importance of our brave soldiers," CM Gupta said at the foundation laying ceremony.

The CM along with other ministers also visited the culvert that has been used by the soldiers for years to reach the other side. She said that they will not have to use it next monsoon.

PWD minister Verma said it was shameful that the previous government did not pay attention to this basic need of soldiers. "They spent ₹80 crore on their Sheesh Mahal, but could not spare ₹1.5 crore for an FOB for our soldiers. Of all the projects that we are dedicating to the people during the sewa pakh-wada, this is the one we are most



CM Gupta at the headquarters of Rajputana Rifles.

VIPIN KUMAR/HT

"This is a Diwali gift for our brave soldiers who were earlier forced to cross a tunnel which was at a very low height and dirty... previous governments never appreciated the importance of our brave soldiers."

— Rekha Gupta, chief minister



May 25: HT reported soldiers at Rajputana Rifles HQ cross a filthy drain daily, seeking FOB.

proud of," he said.

On May 26 this year, an HT report highlighted how thousands of soldiers of Rajputana Rifles, the oldest rifle regiment of the Indian Army, negotiate a smelly culvert that overflows during rains on their way to the parade ground due to the absence of a safe crossing. They do this four times a day – twice before breakfast and twice after dusk as the Delhi government has failed to build a foot overbridge despite multiple requests in the last decade.

The problem aggravates during monsoon as the culvert fills up with rainwater runoff and the

trainees of the Rajputana Rifles regiment have to either wade through waist deep drain water or walk along the road for over 2.5 kilometres.

"It was a long struggle and we approached several government officials with the request before reaching out to the CM. One of the officials even joked that the Army should be able to manage through such difficulties, but we kept at it and I am glad the government and the CM have finally taken swift action and started work," said brigadier (retired) Abhijit Chandra, who was the commandant of the regiment when they approached the cur-

rent government with a fresh request for the FOB.

HT had found that the FOB was also approved in 2010. The project was eventually scrapped until the demand was raised again recently. Following the HT report, the Delhi High Court took suo motu cognisance and asked agencies to ensure its construction.

After PWD informed the court that the FOB construction will take at least a year, the court suggested that a Bailey bridge be made for temporary relief. Work on building the Bailey bridge has started and is likely to be completed within a month.

LG empowers tree officer to decide on 174 trees for Army's cancer centre

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New Delhi: Lieutenant governor VK Saxena granted a special exemption under Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, allowing a tree officer to decide on felling or transplanting 174 trees over 5.50 hectares meant for the construction of a 200-bed oncology centre building at Army Hospital (R&R) Delhi Cantonment.

A tree officer can usually take a decision on an area covering just one hectare and the exemption has been granted in public interest under Section 29 of the Act, stated the gazette notification dated Aug 29.

However, the exemption does not grant permission for automatically felling or transplanting the trees. "The application for transplantation or felling of trees shall be considered and scrutinised independently and separately

by the tree officer (west forest division) under the provisions of DPTA 1994, Delhi Preservation of Trees Rules 1996, relevant guidelines, directions issued in this regard and all relevant court orders with due application of mind, minimising the number of affected trees to be transplanted or felled from within the exempted area," the notification pointed out.

Since the project will impact 174 trees, the permission of the Supreme Court-appointed central empowered committee is required for felling or transplantation. According to the revised standard operating procedure, it is mandatory for the committee to review all requests for felling 50 or more trees.

"The application seeking tree felling or transplantation request for the project has been forwarded to the committee to take a final decision," said an official.

Important Articles

Oak Culture And Humans

What the life of tree teaches us on survival strategies

Humans can brag about their ability to control nature, but the reality is we're powerless in the face of heatwaves, floods, wildfires and natural phenomena. Survival needs collective strategies against threats – and mutual aid goes beyond the species barrier.

That's what forests show us. Collaborate amid competition. Collaborate across species. But humankind, writes **Laurent Tillon** in *Being An Oak: Life as a Tree*, "resists co-evolution with the microbes that have shaped us into our species, consciously risking gradual decline in collective immunity through isolation and excessive sterilisation."

But we get ahead of the story – the story of Tillon's oak, his friend and confidant. Of discovering *who* the tree – at least 240 years old – is, in forest Silva, near Paris. The tree that showed Tillon the nature of nature – challenges in sourcing nutrients, the fight to grow tall, keeping the canopy safe, and competing and coexisting with a million creatures – plant, animal and microbe. It's never easy. It's never hopeless either.

An intricate lattice of stories with incredible detail shows the oak's relationships with other trees, beetles, woodpeckers, salamanders, foragers, lizards, wolves, and humans. "Trees that live in a community make up a super organism whose powers are immeasurable," Tillon writes.

By the 17th century, oaks provided wood for building boats, to meet maritime ambitions of King Louis XVI, also the first to engage in 'forest management'. Over centuries, railways, cities, industry – all needed wood from the forest. This oak's life was at risk from the minute it was born,

around 1780, an acorn, with a plantlet and a radicle inside, organs provided by the parent oak.

A fieldmouse grabs and runs with the acorn as it falls to the ground as winter looms – only to forget about it. A good crop of acorns means fieldmice eat up all the acorns, damaging them, the abundance driving them nuts. So the oaks pull back on producing acorns the next season. Rodents' population plunges – the plant world, says the book, outwits/fools the animal – a phenomenon called 'masting'. That's just one strategy.

Once the acorn strikes root, it is rooted for the rest of its life. Tillon's oak can't move at all. "This will be his calling for the rest of his life." Roots

mindfield
SHORT TAKES ON BIG IDEAS



don't grow randomly – "the tip of each is a veritable homing device. Nothing happens by chance." It's not that the oak gives an order, but in chemical and electrical messages still a secret to scientists, stimuli are received for roots to head downwards and a plantlet to vie towards light. Caterpillars time their emergence from eggs when the oak is about to bud. Yet the oak's branches too appear to hold off on budding – to make it harder for caterpillars to attack.

The young oak knows the approach of fungi is an act of aggression, but local "bacterial diplomacy" ensures all three strike up a relationship of nutrient and information exchange, to signal deficiency and danger, for all time to come. These early "breach in defences" only help the oak mount an efficient immune response against attacks through its life. Collaboration and a perpetual learning of strategies – relationships within competition.

That's the lesson for humans.

Themed gardens, welcome centre: SC panel nod to Buddha Jayanti Park upgrade

SOPHIYA MATHEW
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 27

A SUPREME Court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has recommended that the court permit the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) to use 4.1647 hectares of the Central Ridge's reserved forest for a two-phase upgrade of the Buddha Jayanti Park. The panel, however, has set certain conditions for the upgrade and said that the CPWD should seek the Union government's nod under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

The committee's report, filed on Friday, comes after the CPWD presented a proposal for the upgrade on September 23. The report highlighted that the plan would formalise visitor movement through durable paths, reduce reliance on borewells by creating a dedicated irrigation system, and improve safety, amenities and eco-education without disturbing the Ridge's natural character. According to the CPWD's proposal, Phase I of the project involves the addition of two underground water-storage tanks, totalling 20 lakh litres, and laying of pipelines that collectively divert 6,489 sq m of forest land.

On the other hand, Phase II covers 35,159 sq m of "development and renovation" works: repairing and widening worn and slippery walking tracks; upgrading the park restaurant and toilets;



At Buddha Jayanti Park. File

adding five wooden gazebos and a welcome centre; introducing solar-panelled parking, leaf-shredders, sculptures, benches, dustbins and fencing; revamping the nursery and creating water pits for birds; and laying out a series of themed gardens. These include a mandala garden cut to the shape of a lotus pond with an island and clusters to protect existing trees, a nine-hued Navras garden, and Italian, French, Japanese and Kashmir-style terraced plots.

Among the conditions laid down by the CEC is that the department must deposit 5% of the project cost with the Ridge Management Board.

The work on pipelines will be tightly controlled – no major equipment is to move inside the Ridge, and alignments must be planned to avoid injury to standing trees. Any damage will attract a penalty of Rs 1,00,000 per tree in addition to action under the Indian Forest Act, 1927.

The Indian EXPRESS

Sun, 28 Sept
<https://epape>



Important Articles

ही। सोपीसोबी क्षेत्रीय निदेशालय में विक्रम यादव मौजूद रहे। लाइफ की स्थिति में पहुंच जाएंगे। प्रधान ने कहा कि दिल्ली में उच्च सुविधाएं इस बात का प्रमाण हैं पहुंचाया जा सकता है।

पेड़ों पर दोहरा रवैया, तीन काटे बाकी छोड़े

कलौट छात्र • जलवायु

बाहरी दिल्ली: शालीमार बाग विधानसभा क्षेत्र के पीतमपुरा इलाके में स्थित होटल सिटी पार्क के सामने करीब 30 वर्ष पुराने तीन छायादार पेड़ काटने पर स्थानीय लोगों में रोष बना हुआ है। 'सुचारु यातायात के लिए खतरनाक होने' का तर्क देकर तीनों पेड़ों को रात में काटा गया। पीडब्ल्यूडी के इस तर्क पर अब लोग यह कहते हुए सवाल उठा रहे हैं कि जहां पेड़ काटे गए, वहां से महज 10 कदम दूर सड़क के बिल्कुल बीच में स्थित चौथे पेड़ को क्यों छोड़ दिया गया। यहां से करीब डेढ़ किलोमीटर दूर इसी तरह सड़क के बीच में खड़े पेड़ों पर पीडब्ल्यूडी की 'नजर' क्यों नहीं पड़ी। एनडी-ब्लॉक में डीएवी स्कूल के गेट के पास सड़क के बीच में खड़े पेड़ से क्या यातायात पर कोई असर नहीं पड़ता। लोगों का कहना है कि जहां तीन पेड़ काटे गए वहां हादसे की आशंका न्यूनतम है, जबकि दूसरी जगहों पर कई हादसे हो चुके हैं।

यहाँ, पीडब्ल्यूडी का कहना है कि दिल्ली सरकार की नई एसओपी के तहत नियमानुसार पेड़ काटे गए हैं। पेड़ काटने के बाद वन विभाग को भी सूचित कर दिया गया है। नई एसओपी के मुताबिक, विशेष परिस्थिति में पेड़ काटने के लिए वन विभाग की पूर्वानुमति की आवश्यकता नहीं है। शालीमार बाग से विधायक रहे तत्कालीन मुख्यमंत्री साहिब सिंह वर्मा ने लगभग 30 वर्ष पहले पीतमपुरा में बड़ी संख्या में पेड़ लगवाए थे, जो अब विशाल पेड़ बन चुके हैं। गोपाल मंदिर रोड पर होटल सिटी पार्क के सामने ऐसे ही छायादार पेड़ों में से तीन को रातों-रात काट दिया गया। इनमें से एक पेड़ शीशम का था। सुबह जब लोग घूमने लिए निकले तो उनको पेड़ों के तने ही देखने को मिले। इसके बाद लोगों ने वन विभाग व अन्य संबंधित विभागों से संपर्क किया, लेकिन कहीं संतोषजनक जवाब नहीं मिला। 15 सितंबर को वन विभाग को ई-मेल भेजकर शिकायत भी की गई थी। वन विभाग उत्तरी क्षेत्र से संबद्ध वरिष्ठ अधिकारी का कहना है कि आपात स्थिति को छोड़कर पेड़ काटने व छंटवाई करने के लिए वन विभाग की अनुमति आवश्यक है, लेकिन नई एसओपी में आपात स्थिति में पेड़ काटने के लिए वन विभाग से पूर्वानुमति की आवश्यकता नहीं है। पेड़ काटने के बाद सूचना देनी जरूरी है। पीतमपुरा में तीन पेड़ काटने के मामले में वन विभाग को सूचना मिल गई थी। वहीं, स्थानीय पार्षद डा. अमित नागपाल का कहना है कि जब साहिब सिंह वर्मा ने पीधरोपण अभियान शुरू करवाया था, तो वे भी इसमें हिस्सा लेते थे। अब इन पेड़ों को काटा जा रहा है। अगर यातायात में व्यवधान के कारण पेड़ काटे गए हैं तो सड़क के बीच में कई जगहों पर पेड़ हैं, जिन्हें हटाया जाना चाहिए।



पीतमपुरा के एनडी-ब्लॉक में डीएवी स्कूल गेट के सामने रोड के बीच पेड़ • टीएन

Floods rip into Punjab's dwindling green cover, 5 lakh trees uprooted

Vinod Kumar3
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Chandigarh: Devastating floods in Punjab have severely hampered the state's desperate efforts to expand its diminishing green cover. The forest and wildlife preservation department has reported the loss of 4,94,956 trees over nearly 776 hectares in the current floods — the worst in 37 years.

The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023 estimates the state's forest cover at 1,846 sq km, just 3.7% of its geographical area of about 50.3 lakh hectares. With nearly 83% of the land under cultivation, there is little scope for expanding forest cover.

The forest department



An Army doctor checks a person at a flood relief camp in Fazilka

has pegged the damage at about Rs 341.3 lakh. However, officials cautioned that these are only preliminary estimates, and the figure may rise once the floodwaters recede and the full extent of destruction is assessed.

A memorandum pre-

pared by principal chief conservator of forests Dharminder Sharma for submission to the inter-ministerial central team also noted damage to 10 departmental buildings, adding another Rs 19.2 lakh in losses. The total damage has been assessed at over Rs 360.5 lakh. "Once the situation improves, a detailed plan will be drawn up to overcome the damage caused to the green cover by the floods," Sharma said.

Experts caution the floods have deepened Punjab's ecological stress. With forest cover already among the lowest in the country, the loss of plantations under state-run afforestation schemes is expected to further slow efforts to restore ecological balance.

3 more deaths take Punjab toll to 46

Three more people died in Punjab between Friday and Saturday, taking the flood toll to 46. Another 48 new villages were threatened with floods. Among the dead was a 13-year-old boy who drowned in the Tangri river in Ambala district. TNN

Toll in HP floods at 366, 41 others missing

Search for two persons missing in a landslide in Kullu entered the third day on Saturday even as the weather eased up a bit, allowing for rescue and restoration efforts to speed up across the state. The toll stands at 366 and 41 others are listed as missing in the hill state. TNN

Important Articles

The making of an ecological disaster in the Nicobar

There has been no shortage of half-baked and ill-conceived policymaking in the last 11 years. The latest in this series of planned misadventures is the Great Nicobar mega-infrastructure project. The totally misplaced ₹72,000 crore expenditure poses an existential danger to the island's indigenous tribal communities, threatens one of the world's most unique flora and fauna ecosystems, and is highly susceptible to natural disasters. Nevertheless, it is being insensitively pushed through, making a mockery of all legal and deliberative processes.



Sonia Gandhi
is the Chairperson,
Congress
Parliamentary Party

Uprooting tribals

The Great Nicobar Island is home to two indigenous communities, the Nicobarese tribe and the Shompen tribe (a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group). The ancestral villages of the Nicobarese tribals fall in the project's proposed land area. The Nicobarese were forced to evacuate their villages during the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. This project will now permanently displace this community, ending its dream of returning to its ancestral villages.

The Shompen face an even greater threat. The island's Shompen Policy, notified by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs, specifically requires the authorities to prioritise the tribe's welfare and "integrity", when considering "large scale development proposals." Instead, the project devotes a significant part of the Shompen tribal reserve, destroys the forest ecosystems where the Shompen live, and will cause a large-scale influx of people and tourists on the island. Ultimately, the Shompen will find themselves cut off from their ancestral lands and unable to sustain their social and economic existence. Yet, the Government is stubbornly adamant and shockingly insistent.

The Constitutional and statutory bodies set up to preserve tribal rights have been sidestepped throughout this process. As in Article 238A of the Constitution, the Government should have consulted the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. It has failed to do so. The Government should have consulted the Tribal Council of Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar Island. Instead, the Council Chairman's plea that the Nicobarese tribals be allowed to return to their ancestral villages has been neglected. A

Letter of No Objection was secured from the Council, but it has since been revoked, with the Council noting that the authorities had "rushed them" into signing the letter.

Due process and regulatory safeguards set up to protect local communities have been evaded. The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) conducted as per the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 should have considered the Nicobarese and Shompen as stakeholders of the process and evaluated the project's impact on them. Instead, it omits any reference to them altogether. The Forest Rights Act (2006), which empowers the Shompen as the authority to protect, preserve, regulate and manage the forests, should have underpinned any policy action. Instead, the Shompen have not been consulted on this issue – a fact which the Tribal Council has now confirmed. The country's laws are being mocked wholesale. Unconsciously, one of the country's most vulnerable groups may have to pay the ultimate price for it.

The farce of compensatory afforestation

Ecologically, this project is nothing short of an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. The project will require the cutting down of trees on an estimated 15% of the island's land, decimating a nationally and globally unique rainforest ecosystem. The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change estimates that 8.5 lakh trees may be cut. This is a depressing figure, but it may also be a gross underestimate – independent estimates have suggested that 32 lakh trees to 58 lakh trees may eventually be cut.

The Government's solution to this indiscriminate tree felling is that of 'compensatory afforestation', a rather poor substitute for the loss of natural, old-growth forests. Inexplicably, the planned afforestation is in Haryana, a State that is thousands of kilometres away, and in a decidedly different ecology. In a tragedy bordering on farce, a quarter of this land planned for afforestation has now been auctioned off by the Haryana Government for mining. In any case, compensatory afforestation may help assuage a guilty conscience but is simply no substitute for

the destruction of multi-species, biodiversity-rich natural forests. The planned port site is also controversial with some of it falling under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) IA. Port construction is prohibited in CRZ IA areas due to the presence of turtle nesting sites and coral reefs.

Despite abundant evidence confirming the same, which includes a National Green Tribunal order, the Government has contrived ways to manipulate this truth through a high-powered committee (HPC). The report of this HPC and the ground-truthing exercise it conducted to reclassify the port site out of CRZ IA has not been made public.

Flaws in methodology

From a wildlife standpoint too, the project raises serious concerns. Primatologists have written to the Government expressing grave concerns about the project's impact on the Nicobar long-tailed macaque. These concerns have been ignored. The biodiversity assessments for the projects have come under questioning for critical methodological flaws. The assessment of sea turtle nesting sites was conducted in the off-season for nesting. Drones were employed to gauge the project's impact on dugongs, but these drones have limited capacity and can only assess shallow areas. Evidence has emerged that the institutes were made to conduct these assessments under highly unusual conditions, bordering on duress.

Finally, the project – including the port – is coming up in a seismically sensitive earthquake prone zone. The tsunami of December 2004 saw a permanent land subsidence of about 15 feet. The 6.2 magnitude earthquake in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in July 2025 only reminds us of this ever-present threat. Locating such a massive project here deliberately jeopardises investment, infrastructure, people, and the ecology.

Our collective conscience cannot, and must not, stay silent when the very survival of the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes is at stake. Our commitment to future generations cannot permit this large-scale destruction of a most unique ecosystem. We must raise our voice against this travesty of justice and this betrayal of our national values.

The Great Nicobar Island Project is a grave misadventure, trampling on tribal rights and making a mockery of legal and deliberative processes

A project of strategic and national importance

The Great Nicobar Island Project, envisaged by the Narendra Modi government, is an ambitious project with an integrated development plan that comprises an international container transhipment terminal (ICTT) with a capacity of 14.2 million TEU (Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit), a greenfield international airport, a 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plant, and township of an area of 16,610 hectares.

The project, of strategic, defence and national importance, is designed to transform Great Nicobar into a major hub of maritime and air connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region. The project poses no threat to the island's tribal groups, does not come in the way of any species, and does not jeopardise the eco-sensitivity of the region.

Scrutiny at many levels

Before the project was given the green signal, detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies were carried out and an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) was prepared which, inter alia, include mitigation measures to minimise the impact during the project's construction and operation phases. The commitment to environment and wildlife conservation can be seen in the fact that while no construction has started, an amount of ₹81.55 crore has already been released to various research institutes and departments for initiating wildlife conservation plans.

The risk assessment study has been carried out based on the two sources – anthropogenic and natural disasters and a vulnerability and disaster management plan have been prepared accordingly.

The measuring 166.80 square kilometres (65.35 sq. km revenue land and 101.75 sq. km forest land) has been conceived in three distinct phases, phase I (2025-35) 72.42 sq. km, phase II (2036-40) 45.27 sq. km and phase III (2042-47) 48.71 sq. km.

The project has undergone an appraisal at multiple levels, including statutory scrutiny under the EIA Notification, 2006 (as amended), and clearance has been granted only after compliance with prescribed procedures.

The project will not displace the Nicobarese and the Shompen tribes. The only habitation of the Shompens or the Nicobarese in the project area is at New Chingren, Rajiv Nagar and the administration is not proposing the displacement of any tribal habitation. A committee to oversee welfare and issues related to the Shompen and the Nicobarese has also been mandated in the EC's condition to address the issues of these tribes during the construction and the operation of the project.

Due consultation with tribal experts which includes the Anthropological Survey of India has been done in order to ensure the safety, protection, welfare and well-being of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the wake of Holistic Development of the Great Nicobar Island Project. The Andaman and Nicobar administration has also made adequate budgetary provision for tribal welfare plans throughout the project period and beyond in compliance of EC and Coastal Regulation Zone



Bhupender Yadav
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Minister for
Environment, Forest
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Government of India

clearances. At present, the Great Nicobar Island has a Tribal Reserve area measuring 751,070 sq. km. Out of the total area proposed for development, measuring 166.80 sq. km, only 84.10 sq. km falls within the Tribal Reserve. Out of the 84.10 sq. km, an area of 11.032 sq. km is already under habitation since 1972 as it is part of revenue area. Thus, the effectively remaining area that measures 740.038 sq. km is being de-notified for the purpose of this project. To compensate the same, an area measuring 76.98 sq. km is being re-notified as tribal reserve. Effectively, there will be a net addition of an area of 3.982 sq. km in the tribal reserve area of the Great Nicobar Island in Phase I, only 40.01 sq. km of the Tribal Area falls in the Great Nicobar Island project, out of which 11.032 sq. km is already under revenue since 1972. The provision in respect of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes is provided for under Article 238AD(9), which states: "The Union and every State Government shall consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting Scheduled Tribes." It would be relevant to mention here that the Union Territory of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands has not undertaken any new policy affecting the Scheduled Tribes – except that a development project is being implemented in Great Nicobar.

The relevant issues

The development plan is in sync with the Shompen Policy. The policy allows large-scale development proposals in Great Nicobar Island subject to consultation with the Ministry, Directorate of Tribal Welfare and the Andaman Adm Janjati VikasSamiti. Necessary consultation with the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs was also carried out and it is based on the recommendation of the Empowered Committee.

Two important policy documents – the Jarna Policy of 2004 and Shompen Policy of 2015 – clearly specify the process of consultation. The Jarna Policy of 2004 declares the AJPVS as the trustee of the PVTGs. The Shompen Policy of 2015 specifies, vide paragraph 6.3, that "With regard to large-scale development proposals in the future for Great Nicobar Island (such as trans-shipment/cont terminal, etc), the welfare and integrity of the Shompen community should be given priority and be reviewed in consultation with the Department of Tribal Welfare and Andaman Adm Janjati VikasSamiti (AJPVS) and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs". This is being followed in letter and spirit.

In its observations, the Empowered Committee has clearly stated that the interests of tribal population will not be affected adversely and that the displacement of tribals would not be allowed.

The decision to develop Great Nicobar Island has been taken after a comprehensive consideration of its ecological, social, and strategic aspects. The project is of national and strategic importance, is expected to accelerate holistic development, will generate employment, and will position the islands not only from strategic and defence point of view but also from economic point of view.

This is about only 2% of the total area of the Andaman and Nicobar islands. Further, 130.75 sq. km of forest area is proposed to be diverted for

the project which is only approximately 1.82% of the total forest area of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. As in the guidelines of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, the States/Union Territories with forest land of more than 75% of their respective total geographical area, shall not be insisted upon for providing non-forest land for raising compensatory afforestation and the same may be taken up in any other State/Union Territory having deficient forest land/cover and having land bank for compensatory afforestation.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands have a recorded forest cover of more than 75% of their geographical area, and the compensatory afforestation is proposed to be raised in other States in conformity with the aforesaid guideline formulated by the Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and in view of the fact that sufficient non-forest land for the purpose is not available in this Union Territory. Land measuring 17.10 sq. km has been identified in Haryana for diversion of phase I of forest land measuring 48.65 sq. km.

The total estimated number of trees in 130.75 sq. km of forest land to be diverted is 18.65 lakh. However, the maximum estimated number of trees to be felled in forest area measuring 49.86 sq. km is 7.11 lakh. As per the Environmental and Forest Clearance condition, an area measuring 65.99 sq. km shall be retained as green area wherein no tree felling is envisaged.

Studies by institutions of standing

All the institutions engaged in conducting various environmental studies for the project – including the Zoological Survey of India, the Botanical Survey of India, the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), and the Wildlife Institute of India – are reputed government organisations with a long standing presence and institutional capacity in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. These institutes possess extensive historical datasets and a deep understanding of the local ecological context, having conducted research and data collection in the region over several decades.

For facilitating movement of wildlife between forest and the sea shore and for the crossing of arboreal animals as well as for passage of snakes, crabs and crocodiles, safe wildlife corridors at eight locations along the eastern side of the island (connecting forest and seashore through viaducts in the north south arterial road) have been proposed and incorporated in the master plan.

The Narendra Modi government remains committed to the welfare of tribal groups, environmental safeguards, and sustainable development. Comprehensive safeguards have been prescribed to ensure the long-term protection of the Shompen and the Nicobarese communities.

The Great Nicobar Project is a significant example of economy and ecology complementing each other. It combines the objectives of economic growth, infrastructure development and employment generation with critical national security imperatives, thereby contributing to India's long-term strategic and developmental interests in the Indian Ocean Region while also protecting the environment.

The decision to develop Great Nicobar Island has been taken after due consideration of its ecological, social and strategic aspects

Important Articles

Project a structural and ecological gamble: Geologist

► Continued from P 1

Architect Bharti Jain, one of the protesters, captured the tension: “We don’t need another access route to Mussoorie. We need a Doon where streams flow freely, and forests stand where they always did.”

Plans show the elevated road will be built on massive concrete pillars driven into the Rispana and Bindal beds. Geologists say these riverbeds are unstable, layered with silt and gravel that cannot support such construction without major excavation — work that would generate lakhs of cubic metres of debris, with no clear plan for disposal. The altered river hydraulics could speed up floodwaters, destabilise the piers, and threaten both the corridor and nearby settlements during the monsoon.

Officers in the state public works department told TOI that feasibility and hydrological studies for both the Rispana (11km) and Bindal (15km) sections have been completed and land acquisition is underway. However, residents allege the

A protester said they need a Doon where streams flow freely, and forests stand where they always did

public hearings were rushed and unresponsive. At a recent session, several participants claimed they were given no chance to ask questions and were hurried through the agenda.

Rakesh Kapoor, a senior geologist and former special secretary to the Himachal Pradesh govt, called the project “a structural and ecological gamble”. He warned that canalising the rivers would sever their connection to floodplains and aquifers, while proximity to the Main Boundary Fault — one of the Himalayan region’s most active seismic zones — only deepened the risk. Kapoor also criticised what he called “a flawed environmental and social review process”, saying that both the social impact assessment and public hearings failed to fully account for long-term ecological and community impacts.

26km road project over two Doon rivers sparks protests

Gaurav Talwar & Shivani Azad

Dehradun: Uttarakhand govt’s plan to build a 26km elevated road corridor over two of Dehradun’s primary rivers — Rispana and Bindal — has triggered public protests, with citizens, environmentalists and geologists warning that the Rs 6,200-crore project could bring irreversible

► **765 extreme rain events in hill states, OTHER BK, P 8**

harm to the valley’s ecology, displace over 2,600 families and compromise flood safety and groundwater reserves.

Hundreds of residents marched through the city Sunday demanding a rollback of the project, which proposes building a four-lane highway on piers embedded directly into riverbeds.

The protest didn’t appear overnight. It had been building slowly, online and across dinner tables and neighbour-

CORRIDOR OF DANGER: EXPERTS

► PWD officials say feasibility & hydrological studies for both Rispana (11km) & Bindal (15km) river sections of the elevated road project have been done. Land acquisition underway

► Several geologists say the altered river hydraulics due to the construction project could speed up floodwaters, destabilise piers and threaten both the corridor and nearby settlements during monsoons

► Proximity to Main Boundary Fault — one of Himalayan region’s most active seismic zones — deepens the risk

► Many residents allege public hearings on the project were rushed and they were given no chance to ask questions



Doon eway pillars being reinforced

In the aftermath of massive flood destruction in Dehradun, NHAI has begun reinforcing 24 pillars on the elevated stretch of the upcoming Delhi-Dehradun expressway. The pillars, on the Mohand Rao riverbed or close to it, are being buttressed through jacketing — a process to strengthen structural bases. P 10

hood meetings. The project, billed as a traffic decongestion measure and an alternate access to Mussoorie, was not only seen as unnecessary by critics, but as misaligned with the needs and character of the Doon valley.

One protester held up a jar of foul-smelling river water, placing it beside a banner: “This is not progress. This is forgetting who we are.”

► **‘Ecological gamble’, P 10**

The Char-Dham Development A Boon or A Bane

The road widening project at the Chardham is a big question mark on the mindsets of the development authorities.

The area designed for the mountains and river by the Lord is challenged by the authorities to visit the same Lord, which seems absurd.

The recent landslides are a clear example of what all can go wrong in the mountains if their nature is disturbed.

The environmentalists from all around India have come together to file a letter against this project in the Supreme Court.

Here are some links highlighting the information about the same.

[Murli Manohar Joshi Karan Singh appeal to CJI Review and recall judgement on Char Dham project | Jansatta](#)

['Review and recall' judgment on Char Dham project, BJP veteran M M Joshi, Karan Singh appeal to CJI | India News - The Indian Express](#)

[Recall Char Dham project judgment: Murli Manohar Joshi, environmentalists to Supreme Court - The Hindu](#)

[Urgent Appeal to Supreme Court: Activists and Experts Demand Review of Char Dham Highway Project Amid Rising Himalayan Disasters - <https://indianmasterminds.com>](#)

[Sr BJP leaders MM Joshi, Karan Singh, 50 others write to SC for review of Char Dham road project order | Dehradun News - The Times of India](#)

Media Coverage



The intensity and frequency of monsoon rainfall have marginally increased (Photo: Sarika Singh/Twitter)

Ecologists blame faulty infrastructure projects for Himalayan landslides

SC panel okays use of forest land at Ridge park for benefit of public

Priyangi Agarwal
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Nearly a month after recommending action against CPWD officials for installing underground water tanks and associated pipelines in Buddha Jayanti Park without permission, the Supreme Court-appointed central empowered committee has approved the use of 4.2 hectares of the forest land to construct two storage tanks and conduct renovation work.

The committee said if any tree was damaged during the work, a penalty of Rs 1 lakh per tree and other penalties would be imposed. The work can start only after Supreme Court approves it. Buddha Jayanti Park is part of the ecologically sensitive Central Ridge reserved forest.

New Delhi Nature Society had filed a contempt petition in the court alleging that during a visit in April 2024, large-scale unlawful excavation was witnessed at the park. The petitioner claimed that the activity involved the felling or uprooting

While recommending the use of 4.2 hectares, the committee in its latest report said that the ecological character of the area must be restored. CPWD shall plant and maintain three concentric rows, each consisting of at least 1,000 indigenous fruit-bearing trees and shrubs

of several trees and was undertaken without obtaining any statutory clearance under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Following this, Supreme Court asked the committee to submit a report.

In a report dated Aug 20, which was submitted before the apex court, the committee estimated that nine trees were pruned in violation of Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994.

In another report dated Sept 26, the committee said "the CPWD officers may have commenced the work without

the approval of this apex court and also without prior approval of central govt under the provisions of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 either due to ignorance of the rules or under some other compulsion... However, this should not deprive the public of the benefits of the project". The matter is pending before the court.

Central Public Works Department earlier said it had proposed the construction of two underground tanks for the storage of unfiltered irrigation water and that "work began in April 2024 with site clearance of dead vegetation and barricading of the barren area".

While recommending the use of 4.2 hectares now, the committee said in its latest report that to restore the ecological character of the area, CPWD shall plant and maintain three concentric rows, each consisting of not less than 1,000 indigenous fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, along the periphery of the park during the next rainy season.



Here are some hot nature gossip tweets from our @NDN_HQ page in August.

Dive into these juicy stories by clicking the links and get ready to be wowed!

Follow our Twitter page for your daily dose of nature and conservation buzz!

Assam's PM2.5 breaches safety standards.

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The Gurugram landfills trigger environmental hazards.

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Meteor shower over Delhi NCR.

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Harassment of dog feeders to invite legal actions.

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Red Fort walls are coated with toxins, eating away their vibrant color.

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First cut trees, then plant shrubs and bamboo to deal with pollution.

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Ridge gives nod to six non-forest activity projects, more trees to be cut.

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Deragaon Police rescued 23 dogs from suspected meat trade trafficking.

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Mercury level in Delhi's air highest.

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Flood rip into Punjab's dwindling green cover.

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Drone shot of Delhi floods.

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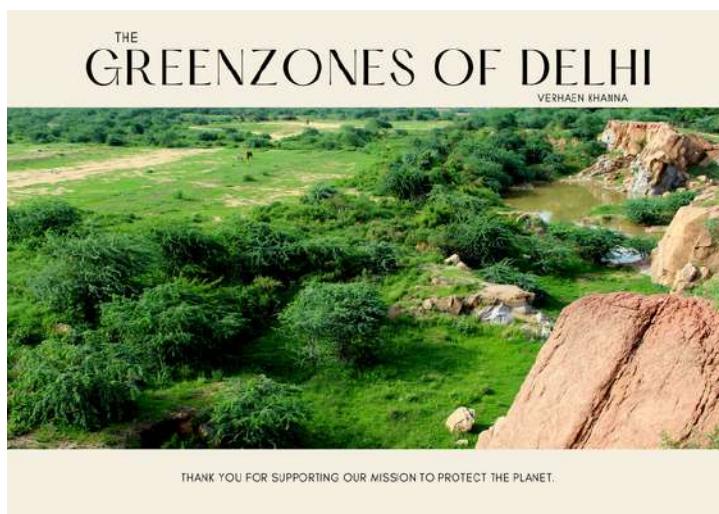
Yamuna River at Hathnikund Barrage is discharging massive 3,11,000 Cusces.

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This beautifully illustrated book showcases the lush greenery and vibrant ecosystems found in the heart of India's capital. Each page offers a glimpse into the diverse flora and fauna that thrive in Delhi's green zones, from bustling parks to serene gardens. By purchasing this coffee table book, you not only bring a piece of nature's beauty into your home but also support the efforts of NDNS (New Delhi Nature Society) in their mission to protect and conserve these precious natural habitats. Your contribution helps promote environmental awareness and ensures that future generations can enjoy the city's green treasures.

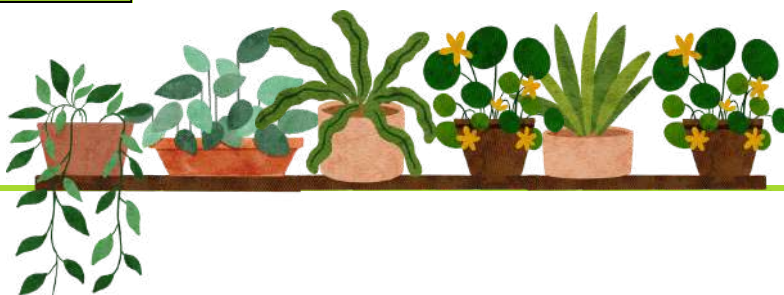
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These Cuties have been rescued and are now looking for a happy home. If you can provide them a home please fill up the form.



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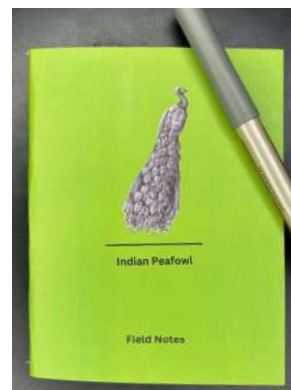
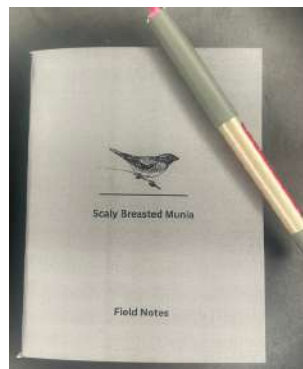
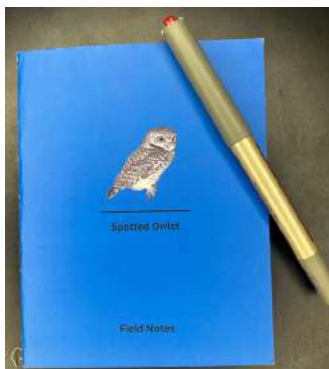
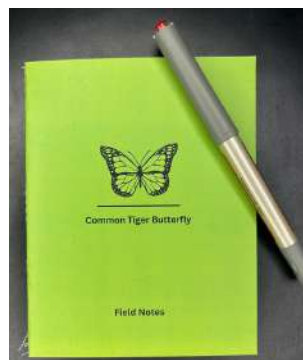
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NDNS Diary



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Volunteer, Intern Or Membership At NDNS

Join NDNS in our mission to conserve nature and make a positive impact on our planet! We are looking for dedicated individuals to volunteer or intern with us. Whether you're passionate about saving trees, spreading awareness through social media, editing impactful videos, organizing workshops, contribute your skills in your free time as a volunteer or commit to a two-month internship, there are many ways to get involved. Click the button if you're interested in joining us. Together, we can make a difference!



Membership Benefits:

- 1.Exclusive Invites to Members-Only events.
- 2.For every other event, members get a 15% discount (nature walk, workshops, etc.)
- 3.Members can avail of a 15% discount on NDNS merch.
- 4.Members are granted access to the NDNS library.

Internship Form

Membership Form

Volunteer Form

Cost for a 1-year membership is Rs 5000/- After submitting the form, we will verify your details and then send you a link for the online payment.

Donate a book to the NDNS library



We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the amazing individuals who have donated nature-related books towards the #newdelhinaturesociety library. Your generosity will help us in building a comprehensive library that will be a valuable resource for nature enthusiasts and students alike. If you too would like to contribute to our library, we welcome book donations and encourage you to get in touch with us for more information. You can visit our website at www.ndns.in to learn more about our organization and our various initiatives.

De-Choke Trees

The Hon'ble National Green Tribunal in its order dated 23rd April 2013 has directed all Public Authorities to ensure that all the sign boards, names, advertisements, any kind of boards or signage's, electric wires and high tension cables or otherwise are removed from the trees.

They shall also ensure that the concrete surrounding the trees within one meter of the trees are removed and all the trees are looked after well and due precaution is taken in future so that no concrete or construction or repairing work is done at least within one meter radius of the trunk of trees.

NAILS, WIRES (10,000 RS. FINE)

NGT ORDER FOR DE-CHOKING TREES

DELHI PRESERVATION OF TREES ACT



SOS NUMBERS (TREES AND ANIMALS)

- NDNS - 9711115666
- Wildlife Rescue - 9810129698, 9810639698
- People For Animals - 011 23719293 / 9294.
- For Cows - Dhyan Foundation - 9999099423

A TREE IS BEING CUT?

- Click pictures
- Tell them to stop immediately
- Ask them to show the Forest Department permission.
- No permission, then Call 100 and wait till help arrives.
- Report the matter on the Green Helpline 011-23378513
- Write a letter to the Forest Department
- If they do have permission, then take the supervisor's details who must be present there and contact the Forest Department .

FOREST DEPT. EMAILS

SIGN UP!

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