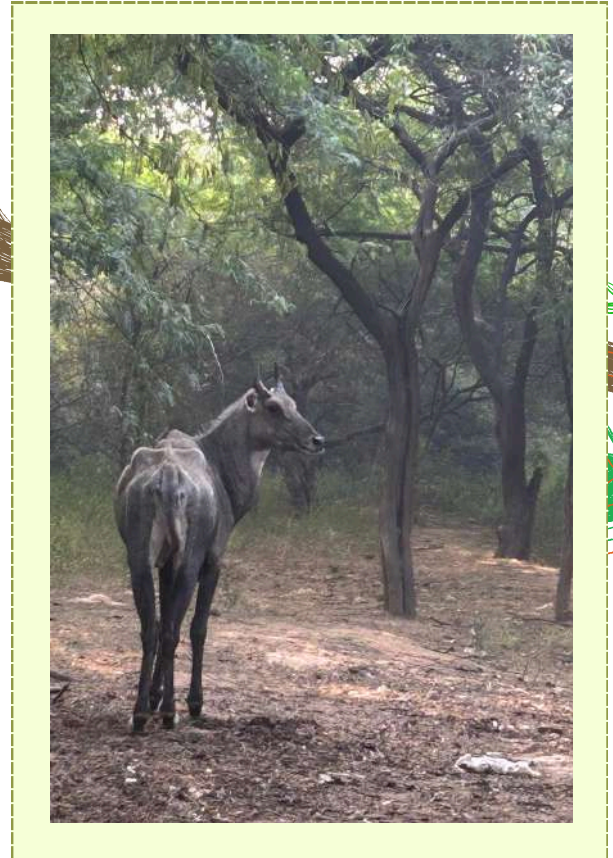


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Memes Of The Month



ANTI-SMOG GUN OPERATOR AT HOME



November Nature Walks



This November, we hosted 30 Days, 30 Nature Walks across 30 different greenzones of Delhi, bringing people closer to the city's vibrant biodiversity. Each walk offered a chance to explore trees, birds, wetlands, and lesser-known natural habitats, while learning about their role in keeping Delhi healthy. Through guided walks, stories, and on-ground awareness, we encouraged citizens, especially children, to value and protect our environment. The month-long initiative helped many rediscover Delhi's green spaces and inspired stronger connections with nature.

[Watch Videos](#)

“Tree Of Life” Art-Competition at INTACH



New Delhi Nature Society was invited by INTACH, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, a non-profit organization founded in 1984 to protect and conserve India's natural, built, and cultural heritage, to deliver an engaging session on the importance of trees to students from 50+ schools participating in the “Tree of Life” painting competition.

Our founder spoke about the vital role trees play in sustaining ecosystems, improving air quality, and enriching life.

The interactive session encouraged students to observe trees more closely, understand their value, and become active guardians of nature.

The young participants beautifully translated these learnings into their artwork, making the event both educational and inspiring for all involved.

Pragyan 2025 @ Kirori Mal College



New Delhi Nature Society was invited as a panelist for Pragyan 2025 at Kirori Mal College, where we spoke on “The Great Transition: Understanding the Climate Threshold – Limits, Risks, and the Path Forward.”

Our discussion highlighted Delhi’s urgent environmental challenges, the need to respect ecological limits, and the collective responsibility to act now.

We shared practical steps for youth-led climate action and emphasized restoring urban green zones.

The event inspired deeper commitment toward a resilient, sustainable future.



Eco-tourism @ College of Vocational Studies



NDNS was invited to College of Vocational Studies, Delhi University, to speak on the growing concept of eco-tourism.

We highlighted how the idea is meaningful only when it truly protects nature. Today, the term is often misused—gyms, cafés and commercial setups are being built inside reserved areas, leading to the loss of lakhs of trees.

We emphasized that real eco-tourism must follow coexistence: educating people, conserving habitats and celebrating nature without disturbing it.

Our message urged students to rethink and restore the true spirit of eco-tourism.

Felicitation at 12th NCRWA



The founder of New Delhi Nature Society was recently felicitated at the 12th National Conference of Resident Welfare Associations, centred on the theme Swachh Bharat.

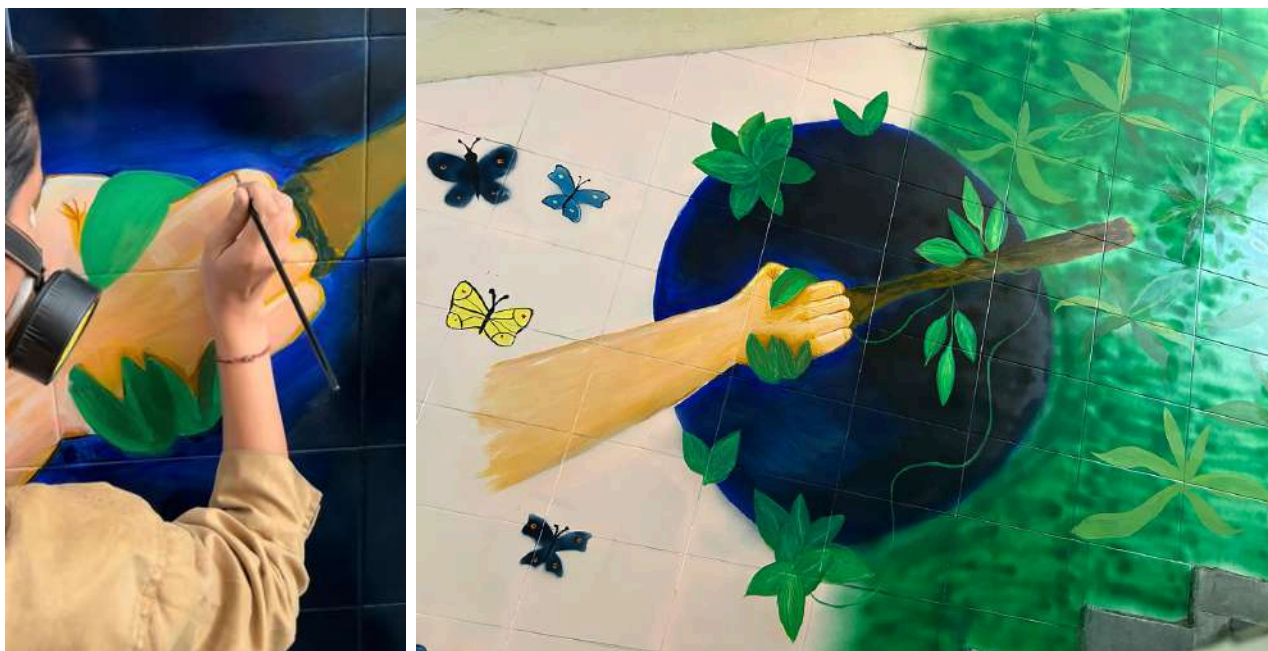
The recognition highlights his dedicated efforts toward nature conservation across Delhi.

Through our regular nature walks, we inspire citizens to reconnect with the environment and understand the importance of protecting it.

We also conduct impactful CSR activities, workshops, and awareness programmes to strengthen community participation in conservation.

Alongside on-ground action, NDNS continues to pursue legal interventions to safeguard Delhi's green zones and ensure long-term ecological protection.

Wall Painting @ Tihar Village School



NDNS recently created an environmental awareness wall painting at Dilli Nagar Nigam Prathmik Sah-Shiksha Vidhyalaya, Tihar Village, Delhi.

The vibrant mural highlights themes of how lives thrive when humans take care of nature.

Through colourful illustrations and messages, we aimed to inspire young students to appreciate and protect nature.

This initiative reflects our ongoing commitment to environmental education, encouraging children to become future guardians of Delhi's natural heritage.

The wall now stands as a daily reminder to choose a greener path.

Aurora Borealis



The Aurora Borealis, nature's breathtaking light show, recently lit up the night sky in dazzling shades of green and violet.

This month, the spectacle reached much lower latitudes than normal, thanks to an intense Category 5 geomagnetic storm caused by heightened solar activity.

For many, it was a once-in-a-lifetime moment to witness this celestial wonder far from the polar regions.

Such rare events remind us of Earth's quiet magic and the importance of protecting our fragile atmosphere.

Each glowing wave urges us to value and safeguard the natural marvels that continue to illuminate and inspire our world.

Media Coverage

Hindustan Times

SC halts relocation from Deer Park, orders survey

Utkarsh Anand

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered an independent, on-ground survey of Delhi's AN Jha Deer Park in Hauz Khas, flagging overcrowding of deer, chronic resource constraints and persistent managerial lapses in the 10.97-acre captive enclosure. The court also barred the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) from carrying out any further deer translocation or hosting "any commercial events, private parties or non-conservation activities" in the park's ecological zone and buffer.

A bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said a "scientifically grounded evaluation was imperative", citing a lack of reliable records on the current deer population, the number already moved to release sites, their survival status, and the ecological readiness for future relocation.

The court has now tasked the central empowered committee (CEC), functioning under the Environment (Protection) Act, to conduct the survey and submit a report within eight weeks. The panel will count the current deer stock, assess the park's ecological carrying capacity, determine "the maximum number of deer that can be sustainably retained", inspect release sites at the Ramgarh Vishdhari and Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserves, and draft a roadmap for any future translocation.

The case stems from a New Delhi Nature Society petition challenging the Delhi High Court orders in July 2024 and January 2025 that allowed the translocation of hundreds of deer to wildlife sanctuaries and



The panel will count the current deer stock and assess the park's ecological carrying capacity. SANJEEV VERMA/HT PHOTO

tiger reserves in Rajasthan and within Delhi, ostensibly to resolve overcrowding.

Petitioners have argued the plan breaches Central Zoo Authority norms, provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and IUCN Guidelines for reintroductions and conservation translocations.

Reviewing records from 2014 to 2022, the bench noted that the park has been operating "far below statutory standards" for years despite repeated warnings and compliance extensions. Reports between 2014 and 2022 documented sustained non-compliance in enclosure maintenance, veterinary infrastructure, record-keeping, habitat enrichment and monitoring systems, allowing the population to swell unchecked and exceed carrying capacity.

The court said the DDA lacked the veterinary and logistical capacity to manage a herd that has fluctuated between 350 and 600 for over a decade. The enclosure's spatial limits, compounded by insufficient fodder, water and supervision, were heightening welfare risks such

as chronic stress among deer, suppressed immunity and the potential for disease outbreak.

"In such circumstances, scientific population management through regulated translocation was foreseeable and indispensable," the bench said.

But the court made it clear that alleged irregularities in past relocation efforts — transport of pregnant does, juveniles and antlered stags, crowded loading conditions, absence of veterinary checks, tagging, and post-release monitoring, and concerns over release-site suitability — "could not be ignored".

It added that there was no documented proof of genetic screening, tranquilisation protocols, veterinary certification, habitat feasibility studies, or assessment of predator-prey balance and acclimatisation planning for deer released into tiger-occupied reserves. It further lamented that "without post-release surveillance tools such as telemetry or radio chips, the survival rate of translocated deer remains unknown."

The matter will be heard again on March 17, 2026.

Fight to save one of the very few leftover city forests in Delhi



ROHIT PRASAD

With the soaring AQIs, people finding it literally impossible to breathe and the start of long pending discussion on the removal of green cover off the Aravalli and how Delhi lost its green shield which saved it from the dust for centuries, it is imperative that every citizen values every single standing tree not just in solitude but as a intertwined network which selflessly makes our cities liveable.

Delhi's Deer Park has been a fine example of conservation of deer and as a green belt in the heart of Delhi, which not just helps us breathe but also provides a learning ground for city kids to understand biodiversity in its entirety.

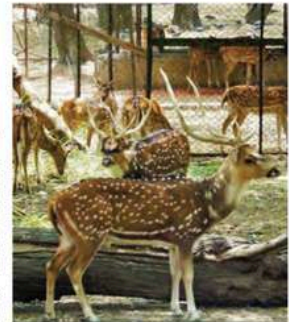
When the DDA decided to move the Deer from the Deer Park few years ago, alarm bells went off and some environmentalists including Verhaen Khanna, Barun Bhanot and Jeevesh Gupta along with their NGOs, New Delhi Nature Society and Campaign For Differently Abled picked up the cudgel to expose the mismanagement of the deer park, stop the movement of Deers and ensure that the land does not fall into the wrong hands.

The case which was dismissed by the High Court allowing the movement of Deer in favour of the DDA was move by Verhaen and Jeevesh in the Supreme court where they not just got a stay on the deer movement but also managed to expose the illegal jhuggis having come up in the middle of the deer park, sale of ducks from the district park lake and no international protocols and guidelines being followed for movement of deers.

During the hearing of the case on 26th November 2025, the Supreme Court observed that the translocation protocol and best practices incorporated in the guidelines issued by the Central Zoo Authority and IUCN Guidelines were not adhered to during the translocation of deer from Deer Park to Ramgarh Vishdhari Tiger Reserve and Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve in the State of Rajasthan.

There is no documentary evidence of pre-translocation genetic screening, tagging, tranquilisation protocols, veterinary fitness certification, or behavioural acclimatisation.

The Supreme Court has not just set aside the Delhi High Court's ruling which refused to interfere with the DDA's chronic mismanage-



ment in the functioning of the AN Jha Deer Park but has also appointed a Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to conduct an independent, on-ground assessment covering, actual population at Deer Park, its ecological carrying capacity, survival status of deer already shifted to Rajasthan, and a scientific, welfare-compliant roadmap for any future relocation. Further, the Court has asked the DDA to explain, within eight weeks, the reduction in the AN Jha Deer Park area and to stop leasing the park for commercial events from now onwards.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's intervention marks a turning point not just for the AN Jha Deer Park, but for how Delhi - and India - approaches urban ecology as a whole. At a time when the city is gasping under hazardous AQI levels and battling the consequences of decades-long environmental neglect, the Court's decision reinforces a critical truth: preserving natural assets is not a luxury but a civic obligation.

Deer Park is more than a green pocket; it is a living classroom, a biodiversity refuge, and one of the last remaining buffers protecting Delhi from complete ecological collapse. The Court's insistence on scientific norms, transparent governance, and accountability sets an important precedent for all future wildlife and green-belt decisions.

The author is a Professor of Economics and Public Policy at MDI Gurgaon. He has a Ph.D. in Economic Theory from SUNY Stony Brook, USA.

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[Supreme Court orders audit of Hauz Khas deer park; flags violations during shifting of 261 deer to Rajasthan](#)

[Supreme Court Stops Deer Translocation From Delhi's AN Jha Deer Park, Orders Probe Into Negligence By DDA.](#)

Media Coverage

Away from the city, hikers find clean air

Sara Siddiqui

A AQI in NCR oscillates between severe and hazardous levels, hiking groups and outdoor enthusiasts are devising an acronym in participation. Sibi Sinha, who runs a hiking group Delhi Society, says, "Some pollution levels have risen, we only go deeper into the forests, avoiding areas close to the city. The dense foliage lets in breezy fresh air. I've been hiking daily for the past two weeks - it's the only time when my lungs feel fine. The group is at full capacity right now."

HESITATION FADES AWAY AS CLEAN AIR COMES INTO PLAY

Varun Khanna, who has been running New Delhi

Nature Society for over 10 years, notices an initial hesitation to step out due to the risk of exposure to the pollution. "But after we go into these forests, everybody is experiencing cleaner air. The trees are absorbing all the pollution. We need to be surrounded by greenery to breathe."

Nakul Bhatta, founder of Capital Trails, reflects that these areas should remain natural and away from the effects of construction. He says, "Last year, we cancelled a hike due to pollution. We educate people to minimise their exposure and avoid large groups - the charm of these spaces lies in their untouched nature. Around this time, numbers drop because of the pollution. Hiking isn't a solution, it's a temporary escape for those who can go. I know people who leave the city for a few weeks as well."



ASOLA FOREST

'Hiking is more than just fitness'

While the pollution season in Delhi makes hiking popular, regulars are visiting the outskirts of NCR year-round. Manoj Singh, founder of Gurgaon Walkers, shares, "Over time, I've seen people transform - physically, mentally, and emotionally. Many joined us looking for fitness but stayed for the friendship, belonging, and peace they found in the group. Some overcome loneliness, others rediscovered joy and confidence. Each Sunday feels like a celebration of community, where everyone leaves lighter, happier, and more connected." Varun adds, "In the big cities, it's become almost like a luxury. It's out of our comfort zone and we are here to help people to explore these places and teach them about the names of the different birds and the trees."

It's fun going inside a deep jungle to feel the fresh air. Many like me enjoy nature as Sunday is the only time for self-care

- Surishi Saxena, who has been hiking for four years

These green landscapes are the only places where I can actually feel clean air entering my lungs

- Sourav, a regular at hikers



TIKLI VILLAGE



SANJAY VAN

THE GRAND HANDLOOM FAIR
Where: Dastkar Nature Bazaar, Andheria West
When: **Fri - Sun**
Time: 11am - 7pm

If you love experiences

DELHI THEATRE FESTIVAL
Where: Multiple locations
When: **Fri - Sun**
Time: Day-wise

30 DAYS, 30 GREENZONES
(Nature walk by New Delhi Nature Society)
Where: Tughlakabad Biodiversity Park
When: **Sun**
Time: 8am - 10am

KOREA STREET FAIR
Where: Worldmark 3, Aerocity
When: **Fri - Sun**
Time: 1pm - 10pm

DAMU'S HERITAGE DINE COMES TO DELHI
(A dining experience by Tales of City)
Where: The Kunj, Vasant Kunj
When: **Sun**
Time: Noon - 2pm

If you're into workshops

PRESSED FLOWER WORKSHOP
Where: SThe Green Room, GK 2, M-Block

[Away from the city, hikers find clean air.](#)



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

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!

World's once Greenest Capital is now the most Polluted one.

[Click to View](#)

Odisha imposes 7-month fishing ban to protect nesting Olive Ridley turtles.

[Click to View](#)

Ex-AIIMS Director warns Delhi's toxic air can cause heart & lung disease.

[Click to View](#)

Hospitals are witnessing a sharp rise in respiratory & cardiac complaints across all age groups.

[Click to View](#)

Delhi sinking fastest among Indian megacities due to 'excessive groundwater withdrawal

[Click to View](#)

Judges targeted for passing strong env orders.

[Click to View](#)

India soon will have only one National Park.

[Click to View](#)

25% of transplanted trees are dead.

[Click to View](#)

Uranium found in Delhi's groundwater.

[Click to View](#)

Trees and Heritage Trees, need 'protection' for their 'preservation'.

[Click to View](#)

The axes of Urban Disaster.

[Click to View](#)

Delhi is blanketed in a dense layer of toxic smog.

[Click to View](#)

Yamuna's true toxic state.

[Click to View](#)

Important Articles

Here are November's key nature stories—a mix of hopeful wins and growing concerns.

Explore the links to discover breakthroughs, challenges, and urgent environmental updates.

Stay aware and inspired by the changes shaping our natural world.

Nature takes stage, DDA's eco lab plan to blend craft and conservation along Yamuna.

Cloud seeding in winters to reduce pollution is bad science: Here is why.

SC tells DDA to plant 167k trees across 185 acres by March 2026

Unclean sweep: Worst 10 polluted cities all in NCR.

'Ped gir gaya toh bas sab khatam': How Delhi's trees are turning into daily hazards.

SC directs center to form expanded Delhi Ridge In 6 weeks.

NGT points out misuse of Bhati village forest land.

No FIR month after "mob attack" on forest officer.

SC issues norm to conserve tigers regulate reserve.

HC raps forest department for tree felling refusal.

Delhi govt notifies 4000 hectare of Southern Ridge as Forest Reserve.

SC nixes its own order, allows post facto green nod for public project.

SC recalls verdict rejecting green clearance.

Aravalli's death by defination.



Forest Survey had red-flagged but Govt took green shield off 90% Aravalli Hills.

Blocked by tree, parking lot stands obsolete.

Karnataka's green activist dies at 114

Important Articles

00:18
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📶
68%


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A Chicago study involving lakhs of patients that was published in 2023 said that the average lifespan of Indians is reduced by 5.3 years, and average lifespan of Delhiites is reduced by 11.9 years. (This data was part of the updated Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) released by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC) in August 2023. AQLI measures the impact of particulate pollution on life expectancy, and the report drew on particulate matter data from 2021. India was the second worst hit country after Bangladesh, and the report estimated that besides Delhi, air pollution was shortening lifespans by 11.3 years, 11.2 years, 10.8 years, and 10.7 years in Noida, Gurgaon, Faridabad, and Ghaziabad respectively.)

Please note that air pollution not only affects our lungs, but also other systems like the heart, brain, kidneys, intestines, the endocrine system, and immunity at large. There is an increased incidence of heart

‘Without full data, don’t know when to enforce GRAP’

►Continued from P1

There are newspapers after newspapers saying that monitoring stations are non-functional. If the monitoring stations are not even functioning, we don’t even know when to implement GRAP (graded response action plan)... Out of 39 monitoring stations, only nine were functioning continuously on the day of Diwali,” she said.

TOI had reported on Oct 22 and 27 that as air quality hit ‘severe’ levels on Diwali night, more and more monitoring stations stopped transmitting hourly data. By 3am, just 12 stations were working.

The amicus urged the bench to ensure that CAQM submits clear data and an action plan. She said the earlier orders mandated pre-emptive measures, rather than reactive steps, once pollution worsened.

“The CAQM is required to place on record an affidavit as to what steps are proposed to be taken to prevent pollution from turning severe,” bench said in its order.

The counsel for the CAQM said that the Central Pollution Control Board is responsible for monitoring data. However, additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati assured the bench that the agencies concerned will file the required report. ४११

Important Articles

दिल्ली के 18 भूखंडों पर 1.67 लाख पौधे लगवाए डीडीए : सुप्रीम कोर्ट

नई दिल्ली, प्रेस: सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने सोमवार को दिल्ली विकास प्राधिकरण (डीडीए) को उस योजना को मंजूरी दे दी जिसमें राजधानी में 18 भूखंडों को वन विभाग को प्रतिपूरक वनीकरण के लिए सौंपने का प्रस्ताव था। अदालत ने कहा कि यह कदम दिल्ली के लिए फायदेमंद होगा, जहां सर्दियों में प्रदूषण गंभीर समस्या बन जाता है।

न्यायमूर्ति सुर्यकांत, उज्ज्वल भूइयां और जोयमाल्या बागची की पीठ ने डीडीए को निर्देश दिया कि वह वन विभाग को लगभग 46 करोड़ रुपये प्रदान करे ताकि इन भूखंडों पर 1.67 लाख से अधिक पौधे लगाए जा सकें। अदालत ने यह भी स्पष्ट किया कि इन भूखंडों का उपयोग केवल वन उद्देश्यों के लिए ही किया जाएगा और किसी भी प्रकार का भूमि उपयोग परिवर्तन नहीं होगा। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने कहा कि भूखंडों की एक-एक इंच जगह का उपयोग सुनिश्चित किया जाना चाहिए।

अदालत ने डीडीए को यह सुनिश्चित करने का निर्देश दिया कि सभी 18 स्थलों पर सुरक्षा दीवार बनाई जाए ताकि लगाए गए पेड़ों की रक्षा और देखरेख हो सके। इसके साथ ही विशेषज्ञ समिति-



- दिल्ली रिज क्षेत्र में पेड़ काटे जाने का मामला, डीडीए की वनीकरण योजना को मंजूरी
- डीडीए को सभी 18 स्थलों पर सुरक्षा दीवार का निर्माण सुनिश्चित करने के निर्देश

46 करोड़ रुपये डीडीए की तरफ से मिलेंगे वन विभाग को, इन भूखंडों का किसी अन्य काम के लिए इस्तेमाल नहीं होगा

ईश्वर सिंह, सुनील लिमये और प्रदीप कृष्ण को पौधारोपण कार्य की निगरानी का दायित्व सौंपा गया। समिति की निगरानी अवधि को बढ़ाकर 31 मार्च 2026 तक कर दिया गया है।

कोर्ट ने समिति की उस अपील को भी स्वीकार किया, जिसमें कहा गया था कि ठंड का मौसम बीतने के बाद पौधे लगाए जाने चाहिए। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने मई में डीडीए अधिकारियों को दिल्ली रिज क्षेत्र में पेड़ों की अवैध कटाई के मामले में अवमानना का दोषी पाया था और 25 हजार रुपये का जुर्माना लगाया था। अदालत ने तब डीडीए को राजधानी के 185 एकड़ क्षेत्र में वनीकरण का आदेश दिया था।

हालांकि पीठ ने यह भी कहा कि डीडीए अधिकारियों का यह कृत्य अदालत के आदेशों का उल्लंघन था, लेकिन अद्वैतसैनिक बलों के अस्पताल के लिए सड़क चौड़ी करने की मूल भावना दुर्भावनापूर्ण नहीं लगती। सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने चेतावनी दी कि यदि यह पाया गया कि वह विकास कार्य वास्तव में निजी हितों को लाभ पहुंचाने के उद्देश्य से किया गया है, तो इसे अत्यंत गंभीरता से देखा जाएगा। अदालत ने कहा कि दिल्ली के पारिस्थितिक रूप से संवेदनशील रिज क्षेत्र में हुए नुकसान की भरपाई के लिए डीडीए और दिल्ली सरकार को तत्काल और समयबद्ध वनीकरण कार्य सुनिश्चित करना होगा।

Green-starved Delhi to get 185-acre afforestation boost

Dhananjay Mahapatra
@timesofindia.com

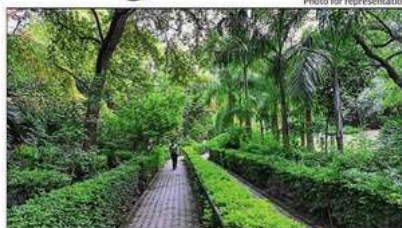
New Delhi: Perennially pummeled by pollution, Delhi's existing green cover is set to get a big boost by next monsoon with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) informing Supreme Court on Monday that 185 acres of land at 18 different locations has been handed over to the forest department for planting an estimated 50,000 native species of trees.

This compensatory afforestation was earlier directed by a bench led by CJI-designate Surya Kant as an act of atonement by the authorities for

felling trees to widen a road for access to SAARC University and a super specialty hospital in South Delhi, an episode that had led to the DDA vice-chairman and chairman facing the heat of the court.

Appearing for DDA, senior advocate Maninder Singh told a bench of Justices Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and Joy-malya Bagchi that a cumulative land parcel of 185 acres at 18 locations – 13 in north Delhi, four in south Delhi and one in west Delhi – has been handed over to the forest department of Delhi along with Rs 46 crores for maintaining the saplings for seven years.

Singh said that construc-



Land at 18 locations have been handed over to the forest department

tion of walls around the afforestation locations is necessary as it would be next to impossible to keep the saplings safe without such protection.

The bench asked the forest department to commence afforestation activities at the identified sites closer to the monsoon season to ensure

the success of the exercise.

When a counsel said that the afforestation pockets are spread out and may not offer as much benefit as a contiguous forest cover, the bench said that given the geographical spread of Delhi and its burgeoning population, it is better to have pockets of forest spread all over the national capital.

The bench said, "During these proceedings, we will ask the experts to determine the ideal forest cover necessary for Delhi given the population and its density, vehicle numbers and locations for creation of mini forests."

When the forest department said that of the 18 sites,

one at Sathari has been notionally handed over to it because of a dispute between DDA and the revenue department, the bench said the site would be handed over to the department notwithstanding the dispute.

If the forest department needs more funds for afforestation activities as well as the security, survival and maintenance of the saplings at the 18 sites, the DDA would provide the same, the court said. After the plantation work is over, the expert committee would identify more areas for planting a total of 1.67 lakh trees, including the 50,000 being planted at the already identified sites.

Important Articles

4,080ha of southern Ridge now 'reserved'

Jasjeet Gandhok

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NEW DELHI: Nearly 31 years after Delhi moved to protect the southern Ridge under Section 20 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the final gazette notification was issued declaring 4,080 hectares, nearly two-thirds of the total area, of this ecologically sensitive stretch as 'reserve forest'.

The gazette notification, issued on October 24 and published on Monday, comes after the Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta gave her approval for the same on October 13. The file was then sent to the Delhi lieutenant governor for final approval.

The development marks the most significant legal protection granted to the Ridge in decades, granting the forest and wildlife department full authority to act against any encroachments, with boundaries now conclusively demarcated and all claims on the notified land settled.

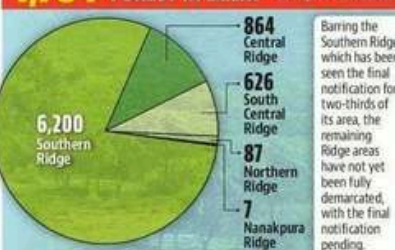
The Southern Ridge covers nearly 6,200 hectares, making it the largest of Delhi's four major Ridge zones. Yet until now, only 96.16 hectares had been notified under Section 20, the final step required to declare land as reserve forest. To be sure, Section 4 – under which Delhi first notified the Ridge on May 24, 1994 – only grants preliminary protection. For full legal status, the land must be surveyed, claims settled, and a forest settlement officer (FSO) must certify that it is free of encumbrances. The new notification completes this process for roughly two-thirds of the Southern Ridge.

This push for final notification comes after years of legal and political tussle over Delhi's Ridge lands, which have long been under pressure from real-estate interests, construction activity, and government projects. Environmentalists have frequently accused successive governments of delaying the protection process, despite a series of directions from the

Hindustan Times

How Delhi's Ridge is divided

7,784 AREA UNDER RIDGE RESERVED FOREST IN DELHI (All figures in Hectares)



Status of remaining 2,024 hectares of the southern Ridge not yet fully notified: Some tracts under legal proceedings; 307 hectares encroached

4,080 Declared as reserve forest on Monday | 96 Reserved earlier | 2,024 Not notified

National Green Tribunal (NGT). Experts said the sheer scale of encroachment – coupled with the slow pace of boundary settlement – has meant the Ridge has steadily shrunk even as litigation continued. Monday's notification, they said, is a landmark step, but one that comes "woefully late" for an already degraded landscape.

The document, a copy of which HT reviewed, states that a joint survey report with village-wise survey maps was submitted on April 5, 2019. It adds that FSO "inquired into and determined that no right exists in favour of any person... and has certified that no claims or appeals thereof are pending".

With this, the lieutenant governor formally declared the listed parcels as reserve forest. "The Lt Governor of the National Capital Territory of Delhi is pleased to hereby declare such lands as specified in the schedule below, as reserve forest, with effect from the date of publication of the notification in the official gazette," it said.

The notified area spans 13 vil-

lages, including major forested tracts: 770.1 hectares in Bhatti, 651.7 hectares in Dera Mandi, and 542.3 hectares in Asola. Together, they form the forested backbone of south Delhi, connecting Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary with Aravalli landscape extending into Haryana.

Delhi's Ridge – often described as the city's "green lungs" – covers roughly 7,784 hectares and includes the central Ridge (864 hectares), south-central Ridge (626 hectares), and northern Ridge (87 hectares). A seven-hectare stretch in Nanakpura also falls under the south-central zone.

Environmentalists, however, say the delays cannot be explained away. Bhavreen Kandhari, an environmental activist questioned the delay. "It has been three decades now and even then, it was not pro-active-ness of the department but rather, the NGT nudging them forward. The delay has meant already so much area of the Ridge in Delhi is encroached upon and removing this will take several years," she said.

Justice Bhuyan dissents in SC's green nod ruling

Utkarsh Anand and Abraham Thomas

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Invoking the "deadly Delhi smog" as a symbol of India's deepening ecological crisis, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan on Tuesday delivered a strong dissent against the Supreme Court's decision to recall its May judgment that had prohibited ex-post facto environmental clearances for industrial and real estate projects.

Aligning his dissent with a vivid reminder of the public health catastrophe unfolding in the Capital, Justice Bhuyan said the bench "cannot be seen backtracking on sound environmental jurisprudence, that too on a review petition filed by persons who have shown scant regard for the rule of law". "The deadly Delhi smog reminds us everyday about the hazards of environmental pollution. The Supreme Court, as the highest constitutional court of the country, has the duty and obligation under the Constitution of India and the laws framed thereunder to safeguard the environment."

Justice Bhuyan's caution came even as Delhi's air quality remained "very poor" for the fifth straight day, with a dense blanket of smog hanging over the city and the AQI touching 344 for harm.

The majority had permitted the review filed by the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Association of India (CREDAI) on the ground that an earlier set of Supreme Court precedents had not been considered in May, and that strict enforcement of that judgment would cause hardship due to the potential demolition of buildings and consequential pollution. Justice Bhuyan rejected this reasoning as "arbitrary", cautioning that the decision takes a "complete U-turn" and risks weakening the architecture of environmental protection built over decades.

Justice Bhuyan wrote that the May judgment, delivered by a bench that comprised him and Justice Alkesh Singh, in the Vanshika case had faithfully followed binding precedents such as Common Cause (2017) and Alembic Pharmaceuticals (2020), which held that prior environmental clearance is mandatory and that ex-post facto approvals are anti-

theoretical to environmental law.

He contrasted this with a later group of rulings – Electrosteel (2022), Padma Plastics (2022), and D Swamy (2023), which allowed retrospective regularisation. These later judgments, he said, failed to consider earlier binding authorities and were therefore per incuriam, meaning rendered in ignorance of the law. Therefore, the judge held, they could not tie the hands of the Vanshika bench, nor justify recalling its judgment.

Throughout the dissent, Justice Bhuyan repeatedly questioned the premise that economic inconvenience could serve as a basis to dilute environmental compliance. He wrote that law violators cannot seek "novel grounds" such as demolition-related dust pollution or business loss to avoid accountability, and warned against a growing "false narrative" that portrays environmental safeguards as impediments to development.

"Ecology and development are not adversaries," observed the judge, stressing that sustainable development rests on the "delicate balance" between the two, with neither being expendable.

In a pointed observation, he noted that the Centre itself had not filed any review petition against the May verdict, despite taking a position in court that appeared aligned with developers.

Justice Bhuyan emphasised that the "polluter pays" principle, which the majority relied on, cannot be treated as a substitute for the precautionary principle that forms the foundation of India's environmental jurisprudence. The latter, he held, imposes an affirmative duty on the state and the courts to ensure environmental harm is prevented, not merely compensated after the fact.



Justice Ujjal Bhuyan

Can violations be regularised after damage, ask experts

Jasjeet Gandhok

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Following the Supreme Court's decision – by a 2:1 majority – to recall its May judgment barring ex-post facto environmental clearances (EC), legal and environmental experts said the ruling reopens a contentious debate around whether violations can be regularised after damage has already occurred. While the majority cited judicial discipline and binding precedent to justify the recall, environmentalists warned that the underlying issue remains unresolved and fraught with environmental risks.

Debaditya Sinha, lead, climate and ecosystems at Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, clarified that the May ruling has not been undone on merits but merely recalled for a larger bench to examine. Sinha said an ex-post facto EC fundamentally weakens the framework meant to ensure a project is evaluated before work begins.

"Securing an EC is designed as a safeguard to decide if a project should be allowed at a particular place at all, taking into account the ecology, its biodiversity, and the risks of permanent environmental harm. It goes far beyond pollution control, thus, EC exists to answer the fundamental question: Is the project feasible for the particular site?" Sinha said, stating even though the order has been recalled on technical grounds – that it should be considered by a larger bench – it was crucial this interim period is not misused to push through destructive projects.

"In this context, the Vanshika judgment played an important corrective role... It pushed back against the growing pattern of fait accompli, where projects start work first and seek clearances later," he said, stating India cannot afford to lose more eco-

systems and livelihoods because of administrative shortcuts or regulatory capture.

The Supreme Court's recall order restores, for now, the 2017 notification and 2021 office memorandum that permit post-facto approvals in certain situations. But several experts said these mechanisms remain environmentally regressive regardless of procedural legality.

"There may exist one or two exceptions, but in most cases, the damage is enough to not warrant or allow an EC afterwards," said a retired IFS officer, on condition of anonymity. "Retrospective ECs serve no real purpose as the process of securing an EC exists for a reason. It indirectly promotes loopholes and destruction," the official said.

Environmental lawyer Ritesh Datta, founder of Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE), also criticised the concept of post-facto approvals. "Such clearances are contrary to every principle of environmental jurisprudence. It violates the rule of law itself. So in that sense, there are no two ways about it. However, this is not a reversal, but a recall for a larger bench to hear the matter again," Datta said, stating status quo returns until a fresh judgment is passed now. "This does allow developers to secure a retrospective EC in the time being," he said.

Activists, however, said the recall risks reopening the very loopholes environmental groups have spent years challenging. Activist Bhavreen Kandhari said the majority judgment can give an open license once again – for the time being, to violate and then appropriate the violation too. "This was already happening but once again becomes the rule, which is a dangerous precedent. We hope the fresh bench ensures such clearances don't happen," she said.

Important Articles

CURRENT EVENTS

On Nov 20, 2025, the Supreme Court may have handed a death sentence to the Aravalli hills (and the Delhi-NCR region) by accepting the Indian government's new definition of Aravallis. It says any landform with elevation of 100 metres or more above local relief qualifies as "Aravalli." This definition strips protection from over 90% of the Aravalli Hills.

Aravalli

references that, experts red-flag, may lead to the exclusion even of many hills 100-m or higher.

"The FSI cautioned that the 100-m cut-off would protect only a few guard posts while surrendering the fences below. Loss of lower hills is likely to expose vast areas to sand and dust particles blowing from the Thar desert to the Indo-Gangetic plains and endanger the livelihood of farmers and health of people, including those living in Delhi-NCR," said an Environment ministry official on condition of anonymity.

Consider the telling submissions by the ministry in the affidavit:

SLOPE DILUTION: The ministry told the SC that the average slope in 12 of 34 Aravalli districts (across four states) on its list was under 3 degrees implying that these districts would not be categorised as Aravalli Hills if the FSI's 3-degree slope formula was accepted. It glossed over the fact that most parts of these districts are plains and, taken as a whole, the average slope of such a district would naturally be far lower than the slope of its hilly areas.

HEIGHT DISTORTION: The ministry justified its 100-m cut-off by arguing that the "average ground elevation" of not a single Aravalli district was below 100m. But the average elevation of the district is measured in terms of height above mean sea level, while the hills are measured over and above their immediate sur-

roundings, making the two sets of numbers incomparable. In other words, if a hill is 190 m above sea level, under the new definition, it will not be counted as Aravalli since the surrounding areas themselves are more than 100m above sea level — making the hill effectively 90 m high.

AREA EXCLUDED: The ministry's list of 34 Aravalli districts across four states left out many districts with an established presence of Aravalli. For example, Rajasthan's Chhitorgarh district, famous for the fort built on a high outcrop of Aravalli and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is not in the list. Also missing is the district of Sawai Madhopur famous for Ranthambhore tiger reserve nestled at the convergence of the Aravalli and the Vindhyachal ranges.

The ministry's affidavit noted considerable variation and heterogeneity in both elevation and slope within the Aravalli as well as the occurrence of similar topographic features in adjoining non-Aravalli regions, cautioning that using only these two parameters may lead to inclusion errors.

"There can be variation in elevation and slope in many areas so the Government should have erred on the side of caution, instead it has leaned in favour of exclusion from protection," said environmental lawyer Ritwick Dutta.

Asked about these, Environment Secretary Tanmay Kumar said in a written reply: "In its final judgment on November 20, the Supreme Court, while commending the work of the com-

mittee, has also appreciated its recommendations aimed at preventing illegal mining and permitting only sustainable mining in the Aravalli Hills and Ranges. The Hon'ble Court has accepted the committee's recommendations relating to: (i) the uniform definition of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges; (ii) prohibition of mining in core/ inviolate areas; and (iii) measures for enabling sustainable mining and preventing illegal mining in the Aravalli Hills and Ranges."

Santosh Tiwari, Director General FSI, said he took charge only recently and would look into the matter.

A CEC member said that the committee did not receive any "formal report" from the FSI on Aravalli.

Former FSI Director General Anoop Singh, under whom the definitions were formalised, has been repatriated to his parent cadre Andhra Pradesh on October 31. When asked about the panel ignoring FSI's concerns, he said: "I am no longer with the FSI and cannot comment on these matters."

In May 2024, the SC had asked the ministry to form a committee under the Environment Secretary to "come out with a uniform definition" for Aravalli to protect the hills from mining. This committee, in turn, formed a technical sub-committee (TSC) in June 2024 under the FSI with Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Survey of India (SOI) as members.

Back in 2010, the FSI had proposed that all areas above the minimum elevation of an Ara-

valli district — 115m in case of Rajasthan — with a slope of at least 3 degrees be delineated as hills together with a uniform 100-metre-wide buffer downhill. A succession of such hills within 500m intervals were to be considered a hill range.

In October 2024, the FSI-led sub-committee modified this benchmark to define Aravalli Hills and Ranges as "the Proterozoic fold belt... forming a linear series of alternate hills (including tablelands) and valley" with a slope of at least 8% (4.57 degree) and elevation of at least 30m.

In September 2025, the FSI submitted a report to the Environment Secretary, presenting districtwise hill maps of the entire Aravalli region. "Even modest hills of 10-30 m act as strong natural windbreaks, creating sheltered zones that extend many times their height downwind and thereby effectively haking near-surface sand transport," the report said.

In October, however, the ministry submitted to the SC that the Aravalli states "have agreed to the criteria of elevation of 100 m and above from the local relief/ ground level, along with supporting slopes, presently followed by Rajasthan for regulating mining in the Aravalli Hills and Ranges."

Accepting the 100-m height definition last week, the apex court has asked the ministry to develop a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining with the help of Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) for the Aravalli Hills under the new definition.



Important Articles

LOKMAT TIMES

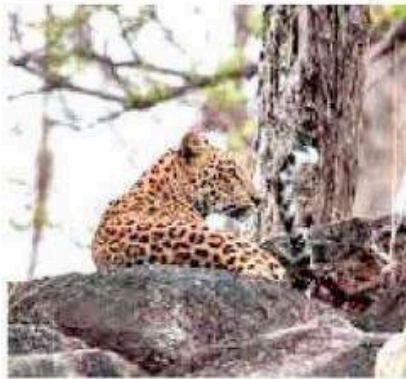
Maharashtra to relocate 1,500 leopards to Vantara

Forest min announces ₹10 cr for cages, Leopard Task Force to capture big cats

**LOKMAT TIMES
Spotlight**VIJAY PINJARKAR
LOKMAT NEWS NETWORK/NAGPUR

In a decisive move to tackle the rising human-leopard conflict across Western Maharashtra, the state's wildlife wing has proposed capturing leopards frequenting sugarcane farms and relocating them to the Vantara animal facility in Jamnagar, Gujarat. The proposal has been sent to the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) for approval.

The decision follows a spate of leopard attacks in sugarcane-growing areas, the latest being the mauling of a 13-year-old boy in Shirur on Sunday,



which sparked widespread protests. Responding to the mounting tension, Forest Minister Ganesh Naik convened a high-level meeting on Tuesday with senior officials including Additional Chief Secretary (For-

What has been decided

- Establishment of Leopard Task Force.
- Relocation of 1,500 leopards to Vantara.
- ₹10 crore sanctioned for 1K leopard cages.
- Proposal to reclassify leopards from Schedule I to Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972.
- 100% subsidy to farmers for installing solar fencing under the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Solar Scheme.
- Immediate funds for solar lights, vehicles, torches, and AI-based monitoring systems for field staff.
- Daytime power supply to farmers in leopard-prone areas to reduce night-time exposure.
- Plans to send a delegation to Delhi to pursue policy changes at the Central level.

ests) Milind Mhaikar, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (HoFF) MS Rao, PCCF (Wildlife) MS Reddy, CCF Jitendra Ramgaonkar, Pune District Collector Jitendra Dudi, SP Sandeep Singh Gill, and

DCF Prashant Khade from Junnar division and others.

Although leopards are protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which forbids their capture

Turn to Pg-3

Buddha Jayanti Park-

Beautiful Water Bodies can be seen, Some of the old pits remain empty.



Raising Awareness

World Fisheries Day

WORLD FISHERIES DAY



World Fisheries Day is celebrated to highlight the importance of healthy aquatic ecosystems and sustainable fishing. It raises awareness about threats like overfishing, pollution, and climate change, while reminding us of the vital role fisheries play in food security and livelihoods. The day calls for global efforts to protect fish habitats and ensure a sustainable future for our waters.

International Jaguar Day



International Jaguar Day is celebrated to raise awareness about protecting jaguars and the forest ecosystems they support. The day highlights threats like habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict, while reminding us of the jaguar's vital role as a top predator. It encourages global efforts to conserve their habitats and ensure the survival of this powerful and iconic big cat.

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/1yN5wKNEFmzmtCSIRZzO1shu1fAMDD/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](#)

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, PWD, 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-Noils, Ch-Tree guard chocking)
7. Width of open soil around the tree :
(A- Up to 1 ft, B- 1 to 2 ft, C- 2 ftft, D-4ft, E- Over 5ft)
8. Ground condition, outside the open soil :
(S- loose soil, C- cemented, M-metalled, T-tiled)
9. Remark:

Download the form :



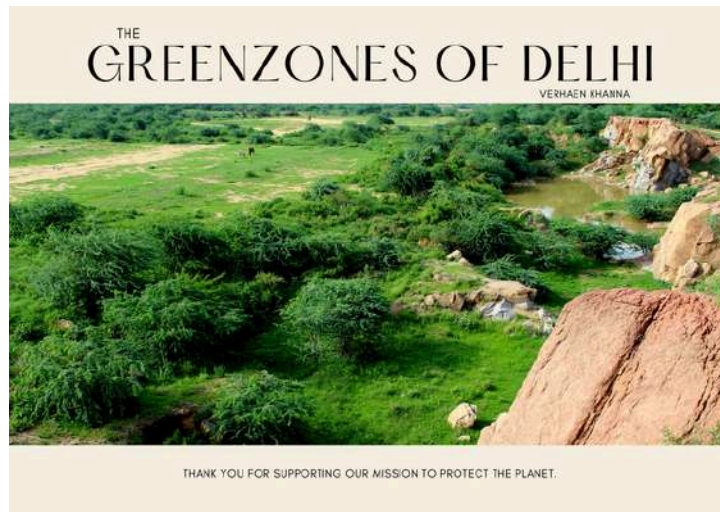
We're offering free reflective collars for street animals and tree care brochures to spread awareness and safety.

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](#)

NDNS Coffee Table Book



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.

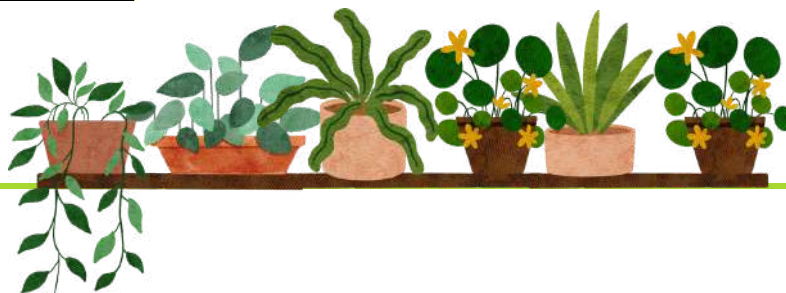
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Adoption Alert!

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.



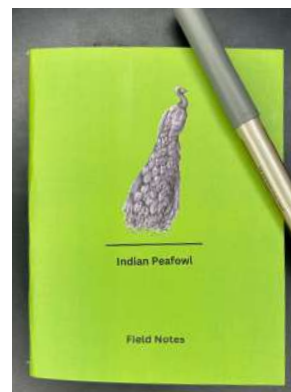
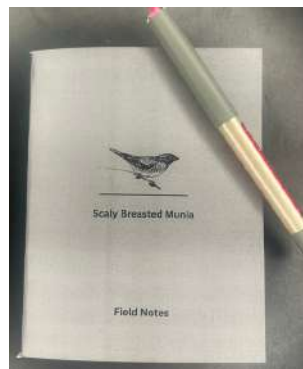
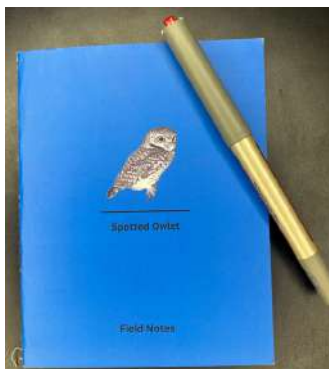
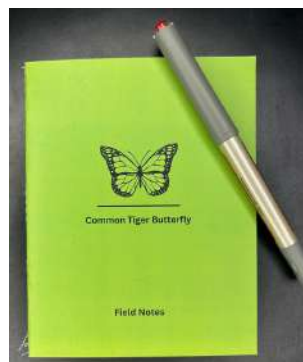
[Adoption Form](#)



NDNS Diary



[CLICK HERE](#)



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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

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